

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.

The duty of a medical journal is to discuss all topics concerning the welfare of the people from the standpoint of the prevention of crime, disease and death. If any given form of punishment is found by experience to fail as a preventive of crime, then it is the duty of publicists to seek out something better.

Quite recently we have had several trials for murder. One of these was the very sad case of Mrs. Robinson, of Sudbury. She was charged with the crime of having murdered the illegitimate children of her daughters, born to her own husband. The jury twice returned a verdict of not guilty, notwithstanding that there was not a shadow of doubt as to the evidence. When the jurors were informed that they must render a verdict of guilty, they did so, but with a strong plea for mercy.

Here the jurors shrank from the thought of capital punishment under the circumstances, and were twice willing that Mrs. Robinson go free.

Then came the trial of her husband, Mr. Robinson, for murder. The evidence was all in the direction that he knew of the murder of the children, and had urged his unfortunate wife to take the life of one of them at least; nevertheless, the jury returned a verdict of not guilty. If he had not been held on other charges he would have been discharged as a free man. Here we see how unwilling jurors are to impose the death penalty unless the evidence makes it quite clear that the accused did without doubt commit murder.

Then we have the Blythe case. Whether drunk or sober matters nothing, he beat his wife to death. He was tried and found guilty and sentenced to be hanged. The case was fought out in the courts. He was twice granted a stay of execution, and finally a new trial. He was again put on trial for the murder of his wife, and the jury took it upon themselves to say that it was not murder he was guilty of, but only manslaughter, and so he was sent to penitentiary for twenty years.

Then there is the case of Mrs. Turner. She was put on trial for killing a child that was in her keeping. The jury in this case came to the conclusion that the death of the child was somewhat of an accidental character, and so returned a verdict of manslaughter. People who cannot reason with that precision granted to juries fail to see how this verdict could be found. Yet it is the one found

But there is one more. There is a foreigner who cannot speak English, and who has foreign ideas in his mind; and he is accused of killing a companion from his own country. The jury in this case find that Step-off killed his companion and render a verdict of guilty of murder, and he was duly sentenced to be hanged.