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MONTREAL, MARCH, 1894.

HOW TO PUT A STOP TO HEREDITARY CRIMINALITY.

On several previous occasions we have called attention to the stupidity which characterizes society's present method of dealing with habitual criminals. During the last few years the view has been steadily gaining ground that impulse to crime is an inherited taint; that the criminal is an atavistic creature no more to be blamed for his acts than the child of syphilitic parentage to be called to account for his unlovely skin, or bones, or teeth; and yet every year several hundred thousand habitual criminals, who have been convicted several times of brutal crimes, are allowed to go forth from the prisons to sow a crop of several hundred thousand children, who will be born criminals, and who will in due time prey on society, and require in turn to be imprisoned at society's expense. The whole tendency of science at the present day is to prevent rather than to go on from generation to generation treating disease. Thus have cholera, the black plague, small-pox been almost made to disappear from off the earth, and before many years we will be able to say the same of diphtheria, scarlet fever, measles and consumption. Why should not the physician in charge of social disorders take the same preventive measures? Why go on eternally imprisoning and executing the aberrant race of criminals, when, by a simple and painless operation, an end could be put to the breed forever? Asep-

tic castration applied to every man or woman convicted twice of deadly assault or highway robbery, to every man convicted twice of rape or other abominable crime, would forever remove from them the power to inflict their beastly character upon thousands of innocent babes condemned from their birth to a childhood of misery and a youth of crime. There is nothing cruel or savage about the idea: for it is not to be compared with judicial murder which society fully justifies for her own protection. On the contrary, castration would be an ideal punishment, for all treatment of criminals should be directed to the sole object of preventing crime in the future rather than to have revenge for it in the past, and it would probably in most cases convert the criminal into a gentle and useful member of society. Not only would castration empty our prisons in a generation or two by the lack of supply of criminals, but even the immediate effects upon the diminution of crime in one day would be very marked, for the deterrent effect of this penalty would be even greater than the penalty of death itself. In our former article we quoted from the criminal statistics in England, showing that one criminal alone left behind him nearly one hundred descendants to occupy the prison cells. We feel sure that this remedy has only to be more fully considered in a truly philanthropic light in order to receive the approval of our legislators and of public opinion at large. Without castration, society must, for its own protection, continue to treat cruelly and unjustly unborn generations of wild beasts in human form. It would be more merciful to them as well as to their innocent victims if the criminal class should, by the above means, forever cease to be.

BOOK NOTICES.

A TEXT-BOOK OF PHYSIOLOGY. By Michael Foster, M.D., F.R.S., Prelector in Physiology in the Univ. of Cambridge; Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, New (5th) American from the 5th English edition, thoroughly revised, with notes and additions. In one handsome octavo volume of 1083 pages with 316 illustrations. Cloth, \$4.50; leather, \$5.50. Philadelphia: LEA BROTHERS & Co., 1893.

Both teachers and students of physiology in