

HOW SCIENTISTS PROPOSE THE STATE SHOULD UTILISE THE CONDEMNED CRIMINAL

Instead of Sending the Condemned to the Gallows or the Electric Chair He Should Be Handed Over Alive to a State Medical Commission for Purposes of Investigation.

COULD DEBAR INVESTIGATIONS DANGEROUS TO HUMAN LIFE OR ENTAILING SUFFERING

Medical Science Is In the Dark Regarding Many Vital Problems—Their Solution Would Mean Much to the Health and Well-Being of the Human Race—Why Not Utilise the Criminal?

It is not intended within the limits of this article to discuss the right of organized society to take human life. Organized societies do take human life, and it is generally considered as having that right, either for its own protection or by way of punishment for certain crimes.

"Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man," was written four thousand years ago, and since this divine sanction of the law of life was promulgated the rule of a life for a life has been observed to a greater or less extent throughout the world.

Life For Life

In early times individuals exercised the right to require for the life of his kinsman the life of his neighbor who slew that kinsman, and as men gathered together in families and tribes the family or tribe avenged the death of one of its members killed by a neighboring family or tribe. Later on, money or property was frequently accepted in lieu of the life demanded, and finally organized society as a collective body asserted the exclusive right to execute retribution upon neighboring nations by war and punish its own citizens for crimes committed by them, or by others, within its territorial jurisdiction, on the theory that the crime was an injury to the sovereign power which represented the entire community.

Should Be Corrective

The theory of modern criminal statutes is that they should be corrective and their sanction is intended to act as a deterrent rather than as a punishment. The idea theoretically is that the consequences which the law says shall follow any prohibited act shall be calculated to prevent the commission of the act, and in the case of minor offences, if the act be committed, shall tend to reform the evildoer and show him the iniquity of his ways. Wilful murder, however, has always been in a class by itself and regarded as such a serious offense that the life of the murderer or his "legal death" by life imprisonment has been required by society in expiation of the crime, and, as an example, best calculated to deter others from the wilful taking of human life.

Methods of Punishment

Under present conditions when society forfeits the life of a criminal, he is put to death usually by hanging or electrocution, and much of great value has been learned from electrocutions as to the effect of electric currents of high voltage upon the human system, but there is an almost limitless field of research as to the effect of various drugs upon the human body, and as to the possibility of so controlling its functions that operations now considered impossible of performance may become a matter of every day occurrence. Great strides have been and are being made in surgery. It is reported that the heart of an animal has been stopped for two and half minutes without any trouble following, but as yet there has been no opportunity to test the method on man.

Effects Not Yet Known

In the medical field new drugs are being discovered and new serums prepared, the effects of which upon the human system are yet to be determined whether or not the blood can be diverted from the veins, and, driven by a small electric pump, forced through a filter bed inhabited by minute species inimical to disease germs in the blood, or whether some artificial means cannot be devised for the mechanical increase of the leucocytes in the blood.

With a properly constructed machine, various poisons could be introduced directly into the blood and their effects noted while the blood itself is passing through glass or other transparent tubes as living blood, the small portion so treated being switched out of the artificial circulatory system and not returned to the body.

Moving Pictures

An appropriate moving picture cam-

era properly adjusted would record the various changes in the composition of the blood. Such a camera would also record the changes caused by drugs administered internally. Machines now in use would register the action of the heart under the influence of various stimulants and narcotics. The effect of the X-ray, the N-ray, the ultra-violet ray and all the other rays yet to be discovered, upon human tissues and human nerves could be studied, the action and reaction of human nerves under stimulants and sedatives could be determined, and the field of human knowledge as to man and his body immeasurably increased, if the subject of these investigations could be obtained.

The Better Way!

How much more scientific, therefore, instead of blotting out a life that is forfeit to the State, to utilize that life in the interest of science, and for the purpose of assisting man in his fight against disease and for the relief of human suffering.

Startling, you will say, perhaps cruel. Yes, but is it not cruel to put a man on the gallows or in the electric chair and take his life to no purpose?

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other than to deter others from the commission of the crime of which he has been convicted, and in States where there is not capital punishment, is it not cruel to deprive a man of his liberty so long as he shall live, and decree him to be "civilly dead"? When we speak of punishment, we must differentiate between cruelty which is wanton and the infliction of suffering for a justifiable end. Under the plan now suggested there need not be, nor should anything be allowed to be done calculated to inflict torture or any real suffering. Men have lived for years with a fistula, without experiencing any serious inconvenience, but these men being physically and legally alive could not be compelled to submit themselves to observation.

Not Necessarily Cruel

To compel a man to lie in practically the same position for several hours need not cause any suffering. Drugs and serums which have been perfected as far as possible in experiments on animals, so that they are believed to be harmless to man, can be tried on a human being without serious pain or inconvenience. Sufficient human blood can be taken to completely replace the blood of a rat or rabbit without danger to the man, though the consequences to the rat or rabbit may be disastrous; but if the human blood which completely replaced the blood in the small animal retained its characteristics, which are materially different from those of the animals blood, much invaluable information could be gained by experimenting on the animal. In fact, there is a limitless field for scientific investigation without cruelty to the individual, or suffering on his part, which would result in the greatest benefit to mankind, and to incarcerate a man for life for the purpose of scientific investigation, would probably be as great a punishment to the individual himself and as great a deterrent to others as the death penalty.

The Investigations

Of course, the investigations to be made would have to be in the hands of men of the highest standing. Each test should stand alone, and an application for permission to make it must be made in writing, describing fully what is proposed to be done, and a certificate for that particular test must be issued for each particular test, which should be made in a room or place to which medical and scientific men and others who are not influenced merely by morbid curiosity should have access.

Objections Likely

Undoubtedly some would object to the plan proposed on the ground that it would be cruel and inhuman. Many of those persons now object to all tests and experiments on animals. It is a fact, however, of which there is abundant proof, that tests on the lower animals have resulted in the greatest good to humanity. Smallpox has been practically stamped out. Diphtheria has lost its terrors. Typhoid fever, which killed more soldiers in the Spanish war than bullets, is now under control. Yellow fever has been conquered at the expense also of human life voluntarily offered as a willing sacrifice, in the search for the cause and the cure of this dread disease. These tremendous achievements have been accomplished as the result of experiments, which, at the time they were characterized by some people as cruel, inhuman and barbarous. But cruelty does not consist in the infliction of pain, but in the "disposition to give unnecessary pain to others," and the question whether or not pain is necessary depends upon the object in view and the merit of the object, and that in turn depends upon the state of mind of the community.

As To Cruelty

It cannot be laid down that the infliction of any pain is cruelty. To drive a hypodermic needle into the arm or body of a child without motive would be cruelty, but if the pain be

inflicted to save the life of the child by checking the ravages of diphtheria, or anticipating an indicated attack of that disease, the act would be the most humane possible. To cut off an arm or a leg wantonly would be barbarous, but if the amputation be indicated as the only means of saving life, to refrain would not only be a cruelty, but also would subject a medical man to charges of incompetence or malpractice.

War and Peace

Nations send the flower of their manhood to war with the absolute knowledge that many will be killed, many more frightfully mutilated and maimed, and many, many more be claimed by disease, and when the Grim Destroyer has done his deadly work, we meet to dedicate a portion of a great battlefield as the final resting place of those who died that the nation might live, and each one of those grassy mounds and every one of the white tablets which strew the hillside tells its story of an innocent life given for general good.

Graves and Graves

But there are other graves, and they hide tragedies decreed by the State! Had another course been taken, there would have been but one grave, a mile stone in human progress, or perchance no grave at all, until in course of nature the condemned man, having by his aid in humane search for the yet unknown, fully expiated his crime against his fellows, lay himself down

to his last long sleep in the consciousness that, after all, he has not lived in vain, and that the world is, on the whole, better off because he has lived. How much better than an ignominious death upon the gallows, under the guillotine or in the chair! How much greater the conservation of human life!

But if the infliction of necessary pain upon an individual for his own good is justifiable, why should not the least necessary amount of pain be inflicted vicariously for a justifiable end?

The battles of peace are far more important to humanity than armed conflicts, and why should not those who have sinned so grievously against their fellowmen that society has cast them out, be conscripted and put on the firing line?

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