

MEDICINE

Salt For Dyspepsia

Common salt is as effective as any other remedy for dyspepsia according to reports of research at the University of Melbourne, Australia. Dr. F. A. Apperly has found that common salt helps certain types of plain dyspepsia.

Doctors have long been puzzled because either sodium bicarbonate or hydrochloric acid, direct chemical opposites, proved efficacious in remedying some dyspepsias. The reason appears to be that the governing factor is the total salt strength of the stomach contents and not the reaction. The contents may be either right or wrong as to acidity but if the salt strength as a whole differs from that normally in the small intestine at rest, the intestine will promptly reject the mixture back into the stomach until it is of the right concentration. This rejection prevents the stomach from emptying and this, in time, gives the patient also an unpleasant sense of fullness.

Taking either hydrochloric acid, sodium bicarbonate or common salt will in any case increase the salt concentration of the stomach contents of such patients until this equals that of the contents of the small intestine. Then the intestine ceases to reject the mixture from the stomach and digestion proceeds without discomfort. Needless to say, no patient can casually experiment with himself and an examination of the stomach contents remains obligatory in any scientific treatment of dyspepsia, but Dr. Apperly's finding clears up the mystery so far surrounding the nature of certain types of simple dyspepsias.

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CRIMINOLOGY

An Eye for an Eye?

By LEWIS E. LAWES

Mr. Lawes, as warden of Sing Sing, knows criminals as few experts get to know them. His views on the death penalty, recently voiced at a meeting of sociologists and criminologists, aroused considerable interest. In the following article he states exactly why he considers capital punishment antiquated, inefficient, and inhuman.

The infliction of the death penalty originated among primitive savages by whom it was used to eliminate their "unfit," i. e., the deformed, crippled, aged, insane, and others who might hamper the family or tribe in its movements. If this seems cruel, one should bear in mind that the practice at least served a practical purpose that can be defended with better logic than capital punishment for murder at the present time.

As mankind progressed through

barbarism into the early stages of civilization, the principle of atonement and "an eye for an eye" evolved from animistic religious beliefs. This principle is not mentioned in the Bible until after the Jews had come under the influence of the Egyptians—Cain was not killed for the murder of his brother —, and the Mosaic law was repudiated later in the teachings of Jesus.

The tendency of enlightened civilization has always been toward the abolition of the death penalty. Greece in its "golden age" substituted exile or a money settlement and Rome abolished capital punishment in 453 B. C. When an attempt was made to restore it later, Cicero led the opposition declaring that "not only the execution, but the apprehension, the existence, the very mention is disgraceful to a freeman and a Roman citizen."

It was in England during the reign of Henry VIII that the death penalty was most widely inflicted. At one time during this period 240 different offenses ranging from the theft of a handkerchief to murder were punishable by death. Crime was not decreased thereby but on the contrary it increased the identical crimes for which it was specified. At the present time England prescribes the death penalty for only two offenses.

In the United States the death penalty was at one time prescribed for over 100 different offenses. Gradually, however, the capital offenses have been reduced or abolished altogether. In fact, at the present time it is absolutely mandatory for murder in the first degree in only eight states, although it can be applied as punishment for rape, robbery, arson, horse theft and other crimes in certain states. Incidentally, those states that inflict the death penalty have the most crime, including the crimes for which capital punishment is prescribed.

The death penalty for first degree murder assumes (1) that murder is the worst of all crimes, and (2) that it is the severest penalty and, therefore, best fits the crime of murder.

Granting for the sake of argument that first degree murder is the worst crime and that the severest penalty should be prescribed, is the death penalty in fact the most severe punishment? It is my judgment based upon the observation of over 500 murderers that life imprisonment is a greater punishment and feared more than death in the electric chair. In the infliction of the death penalty in the

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NATURE RAMBLINGS

By FRANK THONE



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One would hardly be likely to think of the porcupine as a fur-bearing animal, any more than he would think of the cactus as a leafy plant. Yet the spines of the porcupine are nothing but bundles of hairs cemented together and brought to a point, just as the spines of the cactus are merely reduced and modified leaves. Moreover, the porcupine belongs to one of the most prominent of the families of fur-bearing animals, to-wit, the rodents, and is therefore a kinsman of the beaver and the muskrat and the humbler but still popular rabbit. His name, by strange perversity of Early English derived from French, means "spiny pig"; he thus shares the dishonor of misnomenclature with his rodent cousins, the guinea-pig, and the ground-hog. There is nothing at all porcine about any of them, except that they are all inordinately fond of eating.

The greediness of "porky" may yet be his undoing. Hitherto regarded by woodsmen as a harmless enough creature, and handy to have around if one ran short of meat, he is increasing in numbers in almost the ratio that our native timber supply is diminishing, and he is increasing at the expense of the trees. For "the fondest thing which he is of" is to climb about half-way up a promising tree and then gorge himself on the bark, tearing off great areas of it and frequently completely girdling the tree, which then of course dies. A "red-top" in a pine forest usually means there has been a porcupine at work there; and it may become necessary to withdraw the tolerance he has always enjoyed for the sake of the trees. One cannot afford to fatten porcupines on potential houses.

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There are about 160 different species of persimmon, but only two are found in the United States.

A scientist has figured that once around the universe is 63,000 billion times the distance from the earth to the sun.