STERILIZATION OF CONFIRMED CRIMINALS, IDIOTS, IMBECILES AND OTHER DEFECTIVES BY VASECTOMY.*

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Students in sociology have called attention to two important facts: First, that the birth rate of the criminal and defective classes is increasing much more rapidly than that of intelligent and law-abiding citizens; second, that vices and defects are very generally passed along as an inheritance from parent to child.

Statistics show that criminals, imbeciles, rapists, idiots and the defective insane multiply twice as fast as the rest of the population. There are several reasons for this increase. The most obvious lies in the fact that these defectives have no sense of responsibility and seek only the gratification of their animal natures, while the more intelligent classes, realizing the responsibilities and burdens of rearing families, seek to limit the number of their offspring.

According to Dr. Belfield, "The records of the Illinois State Board of Charities show that the average number of inmates in the State asylums for the insane and feebleminded had increased from 1,981 in 1880, to 11,157 in 1907; in other words, from about 600 per million to about 2,000 per million inhabitants."

The homicides also showed a rapid increase. According to the same source, "during the eight-year period, 1872-9, there were approximately 32 homicides per million of people throughout the United States; during the eight-year period from 1899 to 1906 the ratio had increased to 75 per million. In the ten-year period, 1886-95, there were in England 5 homicides per million inhabitants, in Germany 5 per million, in France 12, in Spain 45, in Italy 76 per million. Thus Italy alone rivals the United States in contempt for society's edict against murder. (It is a notable coincidence that, while prior to 1880, less than 7 per cent. of our white immigrants came from Southern and Eastern Europe, since 1900 over 70 per cent. have come from these regions.)"

If now we turn to the second fact—heredity—we find the strongest evidence in its support. There are many examples to show this, but perhaps none is more convincing than the history* of the famous Jukes family, which has been carefully studied, and is full of instruction. The ancestral breeding place of this family was in a rocky, inaccessible spot in the State of New York. The ancestor of the family was born about 1720. This man lived to old age, when he became blind, and he left a numerous, and more or less illegitimate, progeny. Two of his sons married two out of five more or less illegitimate sisters. These were the Jukes. The descendants of these five sisters have been traced with varying completeness through five subsequent generations. The number of individuals thus traced reaches 709; the real aggregate is probably about 1,200. This vast family, while it included a certain proportion of honest workers, has been on the whole a family of criminals, prostitutes, vagabonds and paupers. Of all the men not 20 were skilled workmen, and 10 of these learned their trade in prison. One hundred and eighty received outdoor relief to the extent of an aggregate of 800 years;*Gaver in Ohio State Medical Journal.
or, making allowances for the omissions in the record, 2,300 years. Of the 709 there were seventy-six criminals, committing 115 offenses. The average of prostitution among the marriageable women down to the sixth generation was 52.240 per cent. The normal average has been estimated at 1.56 per cent. There is no more instructive study in criminal heredity than that of the Jukes family.

Every one of us, whose professional practice covers a decade or more, can add illustrative cases from his personal experience. A study of the animal creation confirms this doctrine of heredity. The raiser of fine stock discards the vicious, and breeds only from those with desirable qualities. How often we notice among our domestic pets the inheritance of traits, good and bad, running along through generation after generation. I leave it for the neurologists to explain whether the defective neuron of the parent is transmitted to the offspring. However that may be, transmissible degeneracy remains as a fact.

Realizing then the existence and importance of these conditions—the increasing numbers of criminals and defectives and the heredity of these defects—society has sought to protect itself against these demoralizing and destructive tendencies. Punitive laws have been enacted. Institutions have been erected, in which to maintain, correct and educate these defectives. Punitive laws fail of success. Instruction falls on the poor soil of mental and moral defectiveness and takes no root or soon withers away. These creatures are, therefore, for their lifetime a care and expense to their various communities. This is no inconsiderable tax. It is stated that in 75 years this aforementioned Jukes family cost the people of the United States $1,308,000. The support of charitable institutions for the care of the feeble-minded, imbeciles and epileptics coupled with the maintenance of prisons for the criminal classes places an immense burden of taxation on the resources of the people. Much of this could be lifted and permanently removed if we had the power to prevent the propagation of defectives. Some States have sought to obtain this by the regulation of marriages. Kansas has a very stringent marriage law, which provides "that no woman under the age of 45 years, and no man of any age, except he marry a woman over the age of 45 years, either of whom is epileptic, imbecile, feeble-minded, or afflicted with insanity, shall hereafter intermarry or marry any other person within this State." It is also made unlawful for any person to perform the marriage service for these defectives. Children born after a parent becomes insane shall not marry except under the above conditions. Michigan, Delaware, Connecticut, Indiana and New Jersey also have marriage laws. But unfortunately marriage is not necessary to propagation and it is notably true regarding defectives that many children are born to them out of wedlock. So long as these weak-minded and vicious people are kept in institutions they are safe, but without restraint they easily go astray. We thus have illegitimacy added to degeneracy.

This brings us face to face with the problem—how best to limit or prevent the propagation of defectives?

Segregation or colonization is costly and in addition deprives many otherwise more or less useful citizens of their personal liberty. There is a certain stigma attached to being subjected to such restraint, and this is felt oftentimes more keenly by the friends and relatives than by the subjects themselves.

Castration unsexes the individual, and, while advisable as an additional punishment for a limited number of criminals, is objectionable as a general measure.

The X-ray has been known to produce sterility in a large number of persons, but our knowledge of this agent is too limited and the experiments are too few to determine absolutely that it is certain, safe, effective and permanent in its results.

There is, however, a simple, safe and thoroughly efficient operation, which will prevent procreation and yet not unsex the individual. This is vasectomy—division of the vas deferens. It is a very simple operation and can be done with a local anaesthetic or with no anaesthetic at all. Dr. Harry C. Sharp, of Indianapolis, who was for thirteen years chief physician in the Indiana State Reformatory, and who has done many hundreds of vasectomies, uses no anaesthetic. He simply pinches up the cord in the groin, cuts down on the vas, separates it from the vessels and nerves, ligates, ressects a small part on the testicular side and leaves that end of the vas open. He uses no sutures. The time of the operation is three minutes and the subject is back at his customary work in less than an hour. He states that this operation in no manner limits the marital relations, except in the prevention of procreation.

In order to secure the beneficial effects
of such a procedure several States have passed laws making it compulsory for these defectives after proper examination to submit to operation.

The Indiana law has been in force for two years and I submit its draft for your consideration:

"Whereas, Heredity plays a most important part in the transmission of crime, idiocy, and imbecility;

"Therefore, Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Indiana, that on and after the passage of this act it shall be compulsory for each and every institution in the State entrusted with the care of confirmed criminals, idiots, rapists and imbeciles to appoint upon its staff, in addition to the regular institutional physician, two skilled surgeons of recognized ability, whose duty it shall be, in conjunction with the chief physician of the institution, to examine the mental and physical condition of such inmates as are recommended by the institutional physician and board of managers. If in the judgment of such committee of experts and the board of managers procreation is inadvisable, and there is no probability of improvement of the mental and physical condition of such inmate, it shall be lawful to perform such operation for the prevention of procreation as shall be deemed safest and most effective. But this operation shall not be performed except in cases that have been pronounced unimprovable; Provided, that in no case shall the consultation fee be more than three dollars to each expert, to be paid out of the funds appropriated for the maintenance of such institution."

We believe that a law similar to the above should be enacted in every State. It would be wise to have its provisions extended so as to include habitual paupers and the defective insane.

At the recent meeting of the American Medical Association a paper on vasectomy was presented and elicited an able discussion. Dr. Sharp, the writer of the paper, operated on over 200 criminals by voluntary request, between the years 1899 and 1907. Since the enactment of the Indiana law he has operated on 256 under the provisions of that law. He has also done experimental work on the lower animals such as young calves, severing the vas in the male and the tube in the female. In the female he ligates the end next to the uterus, leaving the end next to the ovary open. In the male he leaves the end next to the testicle open. He finds that this prevents cystic degeneration of these glands. In none of these cases does this operation unsex the animal, even though it be done before subject is sexually mature.

Dr. Sharp states that he has never seen any unfavorable symptom follow this operation, no atrophy of the testicles, no cystic degeneration, no mental disturbance; on the other hand, he has seen the operation develop a more sunny disposition, a brighter appearance; sullen, vicious characters become cheerful and docile; neurasthenics and the victims of self abuse have their power of self-control restored and many of the confirmed criminals who resisted most violently and with threats of personal injury to the operator, came back afterward to express their thanks for the great benefit the operation had been to them; and, more than this, they urged their fellow convicts to submit to the operation for their own good. And just here is where this method of preventing procreation has the advantage over all others proposed—it changes the violent, vicious and dangerous characters into quiet, peaceful and useful citizens; it makes advocates of its subjects.

We may not be able to perfectly explain these results, which are very frequent though not invariable, but they seem to confirm the deductions of Brown Sequard as to the effects of the testicular juices. Certain it is that the retention and reabsorption of these secretions seem to be accompanied by a restoration of mental and moral equilibrium and a greater power for the resistance of impulses.

We have said but little except by inference of the corresponding operation on the female. While somewhat more severe, yet in proper hands it should very seldom be followed by unfavorable results. The mortality rate with experienced operators is practically "nil." Its benefits are as great as those of its companion operation in the male. When we think of the thousands of young female defectives shut up and supported in the various reformatories and other institutions in this country, who cannot safely be allowed their liberty, because of their inability to support themselves and from the great frequency with which they fall under temptations and soon return to bring forth children, thus becoming a double expense to the community; and when we also think of how by a comparatively safe operation the general condition of many of them could be so improved and their power of self-control so increased that they could be safely permitted to go outside
and obtain some humble, honorable, self-supporting position in life, it seems but a matter of simple justice that we should demand a law giving them also the benefits of operation.

Dr. Charles T. Belfield, secretary of the Chicago Society of Social Hygiene, recently wrote me requesting that this subject be presented to you at our annual meeting. He says “that the sterilization by vasectomy of confirmed criminals and other defective legalized in Indiana two years ago, and recently in Oregon also, is attracting widespread attention. For obvious reasons the public looks to the medical profession for advice about accepting this measure. Every medical society to which it has been presented, has passed a resolution approving such sterilization and recommending to the Legislature of its State the enactment of the Indiana law or its equivalent.”

In compliance with Dr. Belfield’s request I have collected a few facts and touched upon a few details sufficiently to introduce the subject to you. There are men much more experienced and able than I who will engage in the discussion. I trust that as a result a resolution may be passed instructing our Committee on Legislation to prepare a bill on the lines of the Indiana law and present it at the next session of our State Legislature.

**DISCUSSION.**

**DR. GEO. H. BALLERAY,** Paterson—Crime and its punishment properly come within the purview of preventive medicine. If the race is to be improved, the criminal element must be eliminated. Vicious tendencies are transmitted by heredity and modified by environment. The only efficient way of preventing crime is to unsex all criminals. For every crime above petty larceny, this punishment should be inflicted. As a means of determining would-be criminals from indulging in their propensities, there is nothing which would act more powerfully than the fear of being unsexed. A male criminal may be willing to risk his liberty, or even his life, but not the witnesses of his manhood. Crime is often committed in order to obtain the means of satisfying the sexual propensity. The killing of a hated rival in order to remove an obstacle to the enjoyment of the woman of his choice, or the murder of a rich relative to obtain the means of satisfying his sexual desires, are common crimes of men. Among men criminals, robbery to obtain money to purchase the favors of some fair and frail one is of frequent occurrence; and its perpetrators are of all classes, including the burglar who breaks the bank from without, and the bank president who breaks it from within. Man, like the male of the lower animals, will incur any risk to satisfy his sexual instincts. This makes him a source of danger in the community. When a man allows his sexual passion to override his judgment, he then reduces himself to the level of a brute and should be treated as such. After he has been unsexed, such a man becomes a better citizen and may be a very useful member of society. The incentive to commit crime to obtain the means of satisfying his sexual desires is removed when he becomes useful in proportion as he becomes sale. The patient ox and the gentle gelding are not less useful than the fierce bull and the vicious stallion.

When one considers the perfect abandon with which the modern woman submits to the evisceration of her pelvis by her pet gynecologist, he concludes that the fear of being unsexed would not act as a means of deterring from crime, so far as women are concerned; but the fact of being rendered sterile would prevent them from propagating offspring that would inherit their tendencies, and in that way diminish the number of criminals. For that reason female criminals should be treated in the same manner as their male companions in crime. For murder the penalty should be death, but for rape, arson, highway robbery, burglary, grand larceny and criminal abortion, the criminal should be unsexed.

Criminals of all classes are increasing, but this is one result of the degeneracy of the race. Juvenile criminals are increasing in all so-called civilized lands. Statistics show this to be the case in Russia, Germany, France, Italy, Holland, England and America. In Germany, in ten years, adult criminals have increased thirty per cent., while in the same time juvenile criminals have increased fifty per cent. In Holland, in twenty years, juvenile criminals have doubled in number in proportion to the population. If, as seems proved by statistics, eighty per cent. of the parents of criminal children are themselves criminals, or moral delinquents, is not the only remedy the prevention of the propagation of criminals? This can only be done in the way in which I have indicated. Why not try to reform criminals instead of unsexing them? For the reason that it would prove a useless task. If a man is accidentally subjected to an arrestment by a skunk, it will avail him nothing to pour currant cologne on himself: the proper thing to do is to buy his clothes. The mere suggestion of the remedy which I advocate as the only efficient means of eradicating or minimizing crime, is enough to raise a howl of protest from the sentimental class. The antis, like the poor, are always with us. We have the anti-vaccinationists, the anti-vivisectionists, et c. hom genus omne. These people are on a pari with those refined ladies who visit a brutal murderer in his cell, bring flowers and delicacies to him, and treat him as if he were a hero. Verily, if “conscience makes cowards of us all,” sentiment makes fools of us.

**DR. THOMAS P. PROT** , summit, said that it seemed to him that a procedure of this sort should be undertaken with some trepidation, as little is yet known about the ultimate effects of vasectomy. One cannot generalize much from three or four hundred cases, especially as they were done by performing this operation on a lot of criminals places them in a position of absolute irresponsibility. If they are allowed their liberty, an element is freed into the community that is going ultimately to give a great
deal of trouble, because the responsibility of the individual has been taken away. Then while it would seen that vasectomy is a move in the right direction, Dr. Prout thought that it ought not to be undertaken without some thought regarding its ultimate effects. His own feeling was that the great problems of heredity would not be solved in this way. He considered it a sort of short cut in evolution, and said that short cuts in evolution did not go very well. By the problem in this nation, medical men are putting many of the real problems of criminology behind them and adding less and less to human knowledge, which he did not consider a good thing. A question of this sort, he said, should be thought of very seriously before it is undertaken by the State.

Dr. E. English, Summit, said that he too had thought of the point referred to by Dr. Prout, making the criminals irresponsible; but he had further thought that they are already about as irresponsible as they can be. He was not in favor of the operation for females, in whom it is more serious than in the males. If done it might be attended with some deaths; and this would bring the whole movement into disrepute. His impression was that very few prostitutes bear children; and almost none, more than one child, before the Fallopian tubes become sealed up with gonococci to such an extent that they are not able to have any more offspring.

Dr. Walter S. Cornell, Philadelphia, said that he had read last year a very interesting case illustrating the tendency of the irresponsible defective to produce illegitimate children. In an institution for the feeble minded in Pennsylvania (and this was only one of several cases), there was an attendant employed to look after a certain number of these children. One day she came to the superintendent and said that she was going to resign. When asked why, she said that she was going to get married. The superintendent asked her whom she was going to marry. She said she was going to marry Tom. Tom was a feeble-minded boy in the institution. The superintendent said, “You cannot marry a boy like that.” “Well,” she said, “I love Tom, and he loves me; and we are going to do it.” In the absence of any law to prevent a person of twenty-one years (Tom was as old as this) from marrying, they got married; and the result was three feeble-minded children.

Dr. Cornell said that he had told this story to Superintendent Johnstone, of Vineland, who remarked: “That is the history of every feeble-minded training school in the United States.” Therefore, while this was one specific instance, it could be duplicated at almost every other institution.

Dr. Neff, of Philadelphia, had consulted with Dr. Cornell in the preparation of a resolution to set aside a building for the separate care of the feeble-minded now in Blockley, for the reason that the care of the feeble-minded in that institution is so loose that every year one or two illegitimate feeble-minded children appear. These defective feeble-minded women are preyed upon by the boys, and it is impossible to prevent these occurrences; so that the treatment of these people with the ordinary paupers was the second point Dr. Cornell wished considered.

On one occasion, while visiting the New Jersey Training School, Dr. Cornell asked what were the ordinary causes of the feeble-mindedness, and was told that three-quarters of the inmates were degenerates. Therefore, three-quarters of the three or four hundred of these people in New Jersey are the children of people who have not been educated; and a further quarter representing accidents of birth and other accidents. This was Dr. Cornell’s third point.

So far as Dr. Chandler’s paper was concerned, Dr. Cornell wished to make two or three comments. The first was about the number of children. Dr. Chandler had said that the present birth rate for the feeble-minded in Illinois was twenty per thousand. Dr. Cornell said that this agreed with the figures of the Indiana State Board of Charities, which state that one in every five hundred children born is feeble-minded. The majority of these children, however, die before they are eighteen years of age; and this reduces the figures considerably. So far as the Kansas law prohibiting the marriage of such persons is concerned, Dr. Cornell said that this will not have had a fair trial until the surrounding States have the same law; because all a man has to do is take his fiancée and step over the line to get married, just as a good many Philadelphia people go over to Wilmington.

The results given in the paper regarding vasectomy. Dr. Cornell said, lack the accuracy of scientific verification. As to the fact that some criminals said that they felt better after an operation, Dr. Cornell said that if the same, they were lucky. He thought Chandler’s was a rather rosier view of the situation. The feeling of betterment, if it did exist in any case, was probably due to suggestion.

Dr. Chandler, in closing the discussion, said that Dr. Balleray seemed to regard the treatment suggested as punitive. Dr. Chandler did not think it ought to be considered entirely so, as many of these persons are not criminals. They have not committed any crime; they are merely weak-minded. He thought that if these people could be put into a safer and better condition by this procedure, it was well to employ it; but he did not think that they should be punished at the same time. He thought that some of the criminals, also, could be improved by operation and stated that Dr. Sharp had done five hundred of these operations himself and has seen their beneficial effects in many cases. One man, a violent criminal, condemned as unimprovable (this being the only class operated on), said, when told that the operation was to be performed: “You can do what you like with me here, for I am entirely in your power; but when I get out, I will take it out on you.” Dr. Sharp nevertheless performed the operation, after which the man was detained for a time. In the course of a few weeks, he came to Dr. Sharp and said: “Doctor, I do not feel so bitter toward you as I did.” A little later, he said to Dr. Sharp: “You have done me a great deal of good. I no longer feel such incapacity for self-control as I felt before you operated.” This man improved steadily, and gained more and more control over his impulses. Dr. Sharp explains this by saying that the testicular juices,
which continue to be secreted, are reabsorbed, and act as a general tonic and stimulant, resulting in a greater ability to exercise self-control by improvement. This is in line with what Brown-Sequard claimed for these juices.

Dr. Sharp also spoke of the effect of the operation on other habits, especially that of self-abuse, and mentioned the case of a young man who wanted him to operate for this. Dr. Sharp refused to do so for a long while, but finally was persuaded to do so. A short time afterwards, the boy said that he did not think the operation had done any good. In two or three weeks, however, he said he was much better, and was troubled only very infrequently. Later on, he said he was not troubled at all. The operation seems to produce beneficial effects not produced by castration or any other procedure; and Dr. Chandler said that if, while preventing the increase of these defects, it would at the same time benefit them, he thought that they should have the advantage of it.

In regard to the question of irresponsibility, he said that these people are no more responsible after the operation than before, but are better able to restrain and control themselves; so that the effects of this operation, which has been done for several years (since 1900), though the law has not been in effect more than two years, has been observed for some time, and no harm has been noted by any of the observers, either from the operation in the male or from the resection of the tubes in the female. A law in New Jersey, he said, would double the taxation for the support of these people. Many young girls, who are now a burden upon the community, could be operated upon and sent out to work for their living, and thus would not risk their moral character. The operation will thus prove a source of relief to their friends.

Dr. Pratt is somewhat over-protective as to the "ultimate effects of vasectomy." These ultimate effects concern mainly the individual criminal. He cannot transmit anything to posterity as he cannot have any descendants. Its effects on the individual have already been shown to be never injurious and frequently most beneficial. Instead of "freeing a number of irresponsible criminals," we find that those operated on often develop an increased sense of responsibility and are thereby far more likely to become good citizens. It is not a "short cut in evolution," but a practical cut-off of evolution. We are not seeking to obscure nor to evade the "real problems in criminology" but only to offer an additional stepping stone in their solution.

Dr. Balleray added to his remark that he would like to compromise with Dr. Chandler. He was willing that the operation should be performed on the feeble-minded; but when it came to punishing the criminal, he thought that the testicles should be removed. He thought this would have more of a deterrent effect than anything else that could be done, and would remove the sexual impulse. Such a man could not commit a sexual crime after: but if the testicles were removed, it would be a finished job.

Dr. Chandler replied that in the main he agreed with Dr. Balleray, and that in his paper he had recommended castration for certain kinds (rapists, etc.) of criminals.

**PATHOGNOMONIC SIGNS AS RELATING TO APPENDIX LOCALIZATION.**

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It is not my intention to speak or touch upon the typical and characteristic manifestations presenting when appendicitis occurs, for the symptoms of the disease, such as pain, tenderness, muscular rigidity, etc., are too well known to require any further elaboration.

More to the point, however, are a number of distinct signs which, if carefully observed and studied, permit a line of reasoning leading in the great majority of instances, to a correct opinion as to the location of the appendix; its pathological condition and, very often, a prognostic outlook of the disease. The importance of these signs carries weight with the general practitioner who meets with the condition in its first stages insofar that, in conjunction with other symptoms, he may be able to follow the pathological changes more intelligently and to decide with greater certainty than heretofore when to bring about surgical intervention. To the surgeon, the symptoms are of importance as from their interpretation he is able to locate and modify his incision, thereby avoiding a prolonged appendicular search at the time of operation.

The various positions which the normal appendix is able to assume present certain characteristic signs which we can safely classify as being diagnostic of these positions whenever the disease has advanced sufficiently to make these symptoms manifest. These signs are the important exhibitions controlling appendicular topography. They are brought about, not only from pathological changes of the organ itself, but also from the anatomical relation the appendix bears to surrounding adjacent tissue. In other words, they are produced by the pathologico-anatomical alteration taking place during the progress of the disease.

It has been plainly shown that appendicitis is caused from an infection brought about by bacterial migration and lodgment into the recesses and ridges of the Lieberkuhn crypts with their further invasion into

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