

## EDITORIAL

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### NO LAW IS STRONGER THAN THE PUBLIC OPINION BEHIND THE LAW.

**O**F the making of laws there is no end, particularly those for the control and sale of narcotics. But, it is becoming more and more evident that these laws are not yielding wholly satisfactory results; and, as the New York *Commercial* of recent date (January 25, 1921) editorially states, under the subject of "Laws for the Control of Narcotics:"

"The tendency is, when a situation involving enforcement of the laws gets out of hand, to seek new laws still more drastic in the hope of correcting the situation. Present laws for the control and sale of narcotic drugs were regarded as drastic enough at the time of their passage, and yet seem to have failed of their purpose for one reason or another. The real reason, so far as the drug trade seems to be able to determine, is the lax enforcement of the present law, and there is no assurance that anything of a more drastic nature would correct the evil if there were the same lax enforcement.

"Law-abiding citizens obey the law of their own accord. Those of evil tendencies disobey the laws and are the ones to be watched. A more drastic law will have the effect of dealing more harshly with those at whom it is not especially aimed, while those who have no compunction about breaking laws will break a severe one with as little hesitation as a mild one. The main thing is to secure an impartial enforcement of existing laws, which is not being done now.

"The abuses at which the new legislation is aimed in the bill introduced by Senator Jones and Representative Miller have grown up, not because of any defect in the law, but because of the defects in its enforcement. The danger is, as the New York Board of Trade and Transportation points out, that the effect of this new legislation would so seriously interfere with the legitimate trade in narcotics that it would also have a serious effect upon trade in other drugs. It is not new legislation that is wanted so much as better administration."

The fact cannot be too strongly emphasized that no law, alone, however drastic, is a specific for abnormal conditions of the city, state or national body, any more than a drug can be a specific for an ill of the human body irrespective of its indication or manner of application. In both cases, *i. e.*, the law and the drug, the use of each must be clearly indicated, and fearlessly and intelligently applied, and in the former case applied, also, irrespective of political influence and opportunity.

How can the narcotic laws be better administered? There is only one answer. By public opinion expressing its approval of them and demanding their strict enforcement. No stream can rise higher than its source, and the strength of all

law, in its administration, is in the public opinion behind it. With strong public opinion behind a law, the weakest law will be administered efficiently by public officials, as a rule; with weak public opinion behind the strongest law, its administration will be weak and inefficient or sometimes worse—a law for revenue only by grafting officials.

What this country needs to-day is not more law, but the better administration of law; not more drastic control of individual liberty, but more civic righteousness; not license, but stronger moral sense in the individual and greater respect for constituted law and order, and the only way to secure these things is through the education of the individual—for public opinion is simply collective individual opinion—to the end that there may be bred higher ideals of individual thought and conduct, especially with reference to the rights of others. Law is simply a rule of action established by authority, and in this country, thank God, authority established by the consent of the governed—by the majority and not by the minority.

General Grant was right when he said that the quickest way to secure the repeal of a bad law was to rigorously enforce it, and public opinion would then compel its repeal; for no law is stronger than the public opinion behind the law.

J. W. ENGLAND.

#### DEDUCTIONS FROM A PASTEUR LECTURE.

THE Pasteur Lecture by Graham Lusk on "Some Influences of French Science on Medicines" is printed in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, January 1, 1921. The development of the sciences is traced, and the influence of the work of pharmacists plays no unimportant part, notably that of Scheele. The author makes the following statements:

"It is interesting to consider the differences in the lives of the men concerned in the great discoveries of the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Priestley, an indigent clergyman; Cavendish, of whom it was said that he was the most wealthy of learned men and the most learned of the wealthy; Scheele, a poor Swedish apothecary; and Lavoisier, a man of affairs, a noble of high social position in receipt of huge personal revenues. What is it, then, that makes for greatness in science? Would Lavoisier have accomplished more had he been on a 'full-time' basis with a restricted income? It is a question of individual opinion, but to most people it would appear that scientific greatness depends primarily on the quality of the intellectual protoplasm of the brain, on the advantages offered to the functioning of that brain, and on the possession of a good conscience. These factors and not a coerced limitation of income are the driving forces toward the revelation of scientific truth."

"If we can only learn what the conditions are for the production of scientific men, and provide such conditions, the world will gain hugely."

The author quotes a British scientist in saying that "The Greeks had no classical education, but they had the two essentials of true education: first, the ability to express themselves correctly in words, and, second, to appreciate their own relation to their surroundings, which latter is science." He concludes, "It is in this sense that Lavoisier and Pasteur brought understanding into the minds of men."

In contemplating his results in the first respiration experiments on man, Lavoisier said:

"This kind of observation suggests a comparison of forces concerning which no other report exists. One can learn, for example, how many pounds of weight-lifting correspond to the effort of one who reads aloud or of a musician who plays a musical instrument. One might even value in mechanistic terms the work of a philosopher who thinks, the man of letters who writes, the musician who composes. These factors, which have been considered purely moral, have something of the physical and material which this report allows us to compare with the activities of a man who labors with his hands. It is not without justice that the French language has united under the common expression *work* the effort of the mind with that of the body, the work at the desk with the work at the shop. \* \* \* "

Lavoisier's life outside of his laboratory was that of a public official, a tax gatherer, a manufacturer of gunpowder, the quality of which he greatly improved. He purchased a large landed estate and made experiments in scientific agriculture, doubling the wheat crop, quintupling the number of beasts on the land, and earned thereby the enduring gratitude of French peasants. He exemplified science and industry in coöperation.

Such coöperation is needed to-day to open the marts of the world; selfish motives of nations, corporations and individuals should be displaced by the spirit which actuates scientists. Truth is essential in science, and equally important in business; it is the basis for the restoration of confidence and that seems to have been somewhat lacking in commerce and among governments; the activity of interrelation and rational, reasonable coöperation is necessary for healthy conditions.

There is also needed a closer relation of universities and schools with the people; there is to some extent a lacking in understanding, wherein both are at fault, and the only way to bring about the right relation is for the universities to study the life of the trades and industries, and extend the field of their usefulness. Great work along these lines has been done; there are opportunities for largely extending it; essential thereto is a livelier appreciation of coöperation by universities and schools and a growing realization by the people that "the cultivation of science in its highest expression is perhaps even more necessary to the moral condition of a nation than to its material prosperity." E. G. E.

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