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CONTACT THE MJA

AMPCo House, 277 Clarence Street, Sydney,
NSW 2000. ABN 20 000 005 854.
Post: The MJA, Locked Bag 3030, Strawberry Hills,
NSW 2012. Tel: (02) 9562 6666. Fax: (02) 9562 6699.
mja@mja.com.au

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Tel: (02) 9562 6621.
advertising@mja.com.au, reprints@mja.com.au

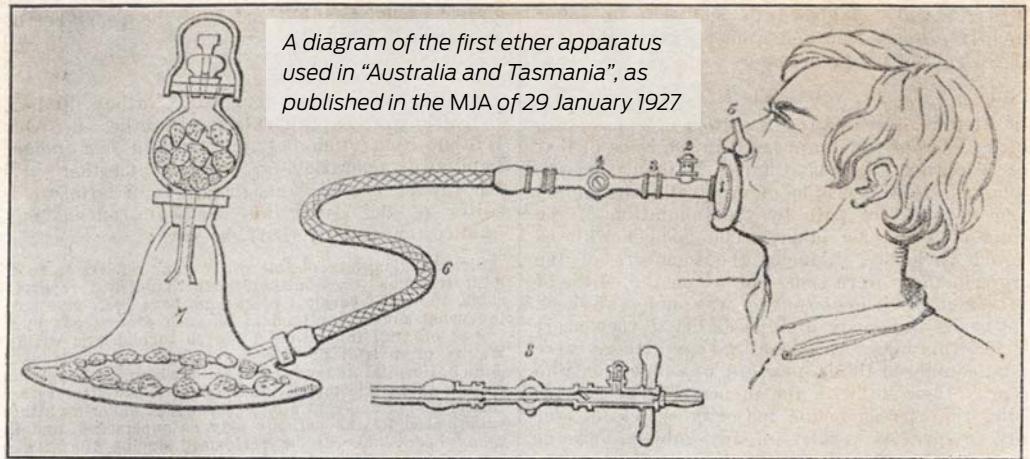
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2014 Annual subscription (+ GST):
Individual: RRP A\$410.00 (new), A\$350.00 (renewal).
Institutions: on application.

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Highlights from our 1927 archives



Criminality and mental deficiency

It has been shown by many investigators that the intelligence of a large proportion of criminals is below the accepted standard of normality and that among the criminally insane crimes of certain types are associated with intelligence of low grade.

In discussing the question of the criminally insane it must be remembered that under utopian conditions all mental defectives would be recognised early in life.

The routine examination and mental testing of children would result in the control or segregation of those whose mental equipment renders them unfit for the hardships and hazards of the workaday world.

Under present day conditions the higher-grade defectives and morons, unlike the imbeciles and defectives of low grade, are not recognised as such.

They are the class from which so many criminals are recruited.

At the same time, the crime of the criminally insane is not due to mental defect per se.

It is in large measure the result of association with persons of criminal tendencies, if not with actual criminals.

It thus follows that any attempt at treatment of

mentally defective criminals is somewhat in the nature of shutting the stable door after the horse has escaped.

But the horse after his escape need not be placed behind the sliprails in a paddock with vicious animals from whom he will acquire new and evil ways.

The obvious thing to do with all criminals is what has been done in Tasmania. They should all be graded and segregated according to their mental condition.

The defectives of a lower grade will then be kept apart from those whose influence will lead them further into antisocial habits.

Few will fail to agree that anyone claiming to have expert knowledge in the treatment of persons suffering from mental disease, must have a thorough understanding of the normal processes and must be able to determine the extent of any departure from normal standards of mentality.

In other words, every psychiatrist must be a psychologist. Under no conceivable conditions should a layman be allowed any say in the disposal, in other words, in the care of mentally affected persons.

Editorial (edited extract) 16 April 1927

A matter of Greek

Sir: Some years ago Dr F Guy Griffiths published a somewhat severe article on the English of medical writers. Those of your readers whose literary withers were wrung by his critical spurs may find some slight consolation in the reflection that the Greek, at any rate, of the good doctor himself is not what Caesar's wife should have been but apparently wasn't. In his recent paper on Laennec and the stethoscope he tells us that *φῶνεν* means "to hear". My learned friends of horrible memory, Liddell and Scott, on the contrary, agree with me that it means "to

speak clearly"; and when Dr Griffiths translates the line from Homer with which he closes his interesting contribution as "The physician is the most honourable of men", he makes the poet express a sentiment more flattering to us than was intended. Lang Myers and Leaf render the line and context: "For a leech is worth many other men, to cut out arrows".

*Eric Jeffrey
Tasmania
29 January 1927*