

Medico-Legal Note.

ANOTHER singular case in Kenya Colony is reported in the *Times* of May 22.

A boy, æt. 14, was playing with a pointed stick, apparently throwing it after the fashion of the javelin used by athletes. The stick struck a tree and glanced off, killing another lad. The culprit was brought before the tribal elders, who decided that, in accordance with custom, he must pay "blood money". The boy pleaded that he was unable to find the money. He was then informed that it was his duty to commit suicide. He fled to the forest, but was recaptured. Having been taken to a tree, he was given a rope by the elders, told to fasten the rope around his neck and to climb the tree. He was then instructed to jump, and obeying this order he hanged himself. Seven of the elders were brought before the High Court at Nakuru, and were sentenced to terms of imprisonment, varying from two to four years, for "counselling and aiding the boy to commit suicide".

To counsel or to assist another person to commit suicide would amount to murder in English law. The present case illustrates the difficulty of employing British standards when an act, which would be criminal under those standards, is dictated by native custom and belief. The case may be compared with the custom of "suttee" in India, and with a Rhodesian case reported in this journal in 1923.

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