

much loved but ancient family dog just because it is no longer able to deter burglars and chase cats. I hope that in my lifetime we will have developed drugs that will prevent the onset of disorders that lead to dementia. When an effective cocktail of cleaving agents, anti-oxidants, free-radical scavengers and neurochemical enhancers is available we will all be having our cognitive

functioning tested by primary care on an annual basis much as we do now with our blood pressure. The ageing pooch will then die quietly in its bed.

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Stewart, R. (2002) Vascular dementia: a diagnosis running out of time. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, **108**, 152–156.

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One hundred years ago

Insanity and the death penalty

SIRS: – I have read with interest Sir W. T. Gairdner's letter in your issue of July 26th, p. 242, but I cannot agree with him that any idea of vengeance is present in the punishment meted out to the criminal by the State. Vengeance is entirely a personal emotion but the State knows no such passions, being impersonal, and in a strictly impartial manner enforces by suitable punishments the laws it has enacted. If the punishments do not have the desired deterrent effect they may be useless, but I submit that they cannot be regarded as State vengeance

on the criminal. It is true that the poet speaks of "the wild justice of revenge", because the act of the vengeful man and that of the State may equally deter from crime, but the motives of the act in the two cases are altogether different. With regard to verdicts, "Guilty, but insane", they would be contradictory under the present law. If a criminal is insane in the legal sense he cannot be guilty in the eyes of the law. That the legal definition of insanity in McNaughton's case is by no means in accordance with our present knowledge of mental disease may be readily admitted, but none the less I am one of those who do not think

that the public safety will gain by modern views of mental pathology being permitted further to diminish criminal responsibility.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Hackney-road, N.E., July 26th, 1902.
M. GREENWOOD

REFERENCE

Lancet, 2 August 1902, p. 313.

Researched by Henry Rollin, Emeritus Consultant Psychiatrist, Horton Hospital, Epsom, Surrey

Corrigendum

Psychotherapy for sexually abused girls: psychopathological outcome findings and patterns of change. *BJP*, **180**, 234–247. The sixth author's name should read: D. Glaser.