REFERENCES


ANNOTATION

"Mors ultima linea rerum est"

In spite of Horace's dictum which we take as our title there have been many instances in history in which the dead have served the living. In more primitive times the manner in which this was achieved was often crude, for instance, in military engagements the dead were sometimes made to serve as decoys or used as protection for the hard pressed defenders.

In one of Caesar's Gallic wars a barbarian leader hemmed in by a besieging Roman army and hard put to it for food supplies appealed to the aged to sacrifice their lives for the ideal of nourishing those who were young and had to resist the enemy, and even in Napoleon's retreat from Moscow the dead served in a nutritional rôle.

With the march of science other means of utilizing the material of the dead for the needs of the living have been elaborated. In the Great War 1914-1918 there were rumours that human corpses were being utilized for the extraction of animal fats. To-day there is in Moscow a well organized blood transfusion service which utilizes the blood of cadavers to supply the living. To Professor
W. N. Shamov and Professor S. S. Yudin must go the credit for their research work which has made this procedure a safe practice. Soon after death two litres of blood may be withdrawn from the jugular vein and preserved for several weeks at ice-box temperature. The blood is a suitable colloidal fluid, retains its rôle as an oxygen carrier and seems to produce a less hostile reaction and a better stimulus to new blood formation than living blood. Professor Shamov has disposed of the bogey of harmful cadaveric toxins. The surgical and accident department of the Sklifosovsky Institute in Moscow has now at its command large quantities of blood available for immediate use, day or night, and sufficient to serve the needs of a city of four million inhabitants.

Also in Russia there has arisen a service for the supply of cadaver's eyes for the purpose of transplantation of the cornea. Filatov has achieved some success by utilizing corneal grafts cut from a cadaver's eye which has been removed soon after death and preserved in the cadaver's fresh clotted blood or citrated blood at ice-chest temperature of 4° to 6° C. In one case transparent union resulted from a graft taken from an eye which had been preserved for six days, but in most cases the eyes had been preserved for 10 to 56 hours. (Some of the technical details and results were given in an abstract on p. 510 of the September number of this Journal.)

At first certain difficulties in obtaining the necessary material from cadavers had to be overcome. To the primitive mind the blood is the bearer of mystic qualities and the Russian has an instinctive fear of giving away something so valuable. To some persons there is also a distaste for disturbing the repose of the dead. In this country it is unlikely that these objections would be raised at least by that section of the community among whom cremation is desired, and the idea that even post-mortem they could render some service to suffering humanity would appeal to them and make their passing not altogether devoid of some satisfaction.

ABSTRACTS

MISCELLANEOUS


(1) Jablonska strongly recommends autogenous staphylococcus vaccine therapy in blepharitis. Injections are made subcutaneously