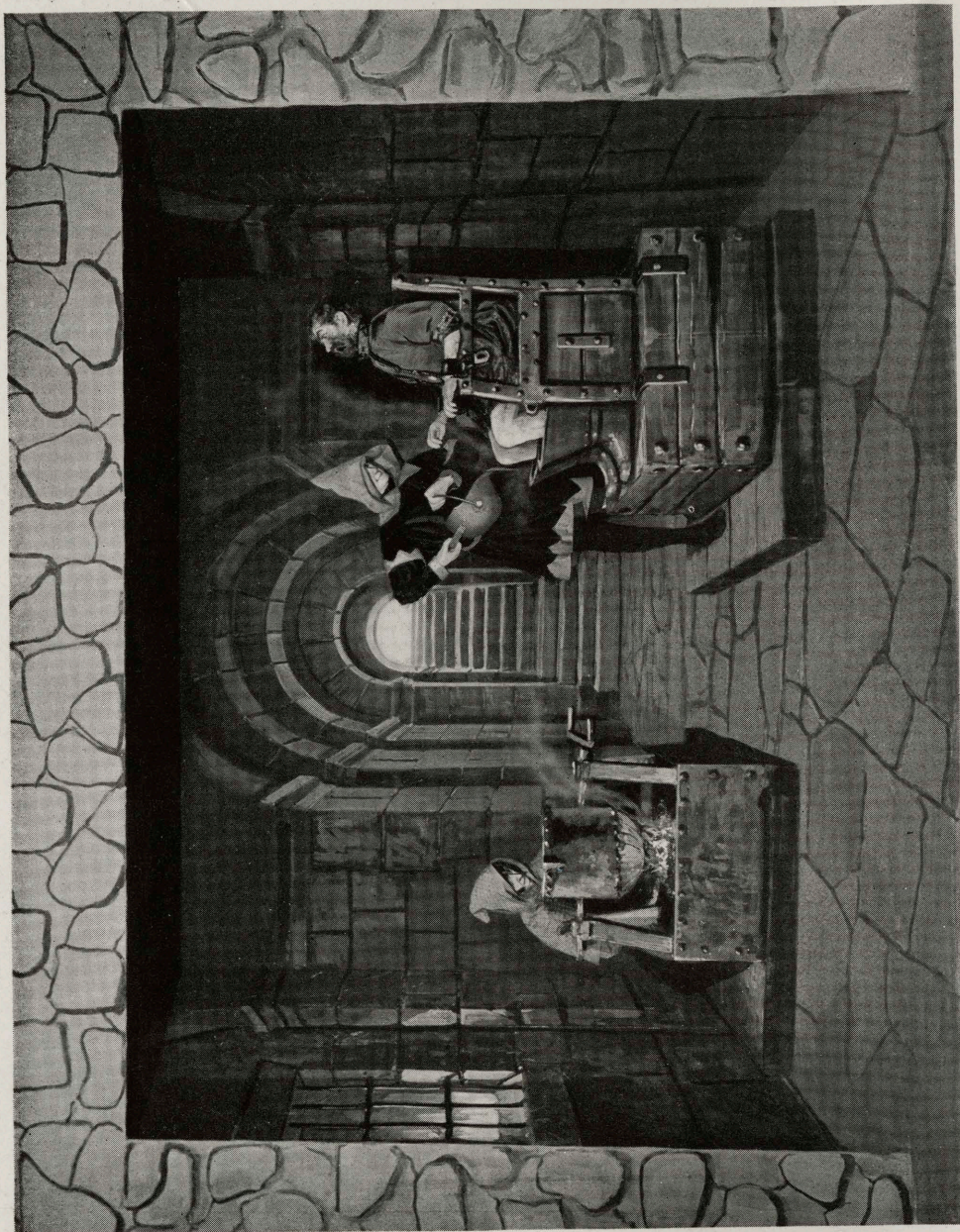


# *The History of* **TORTURE**

by **LEON MORGAN**







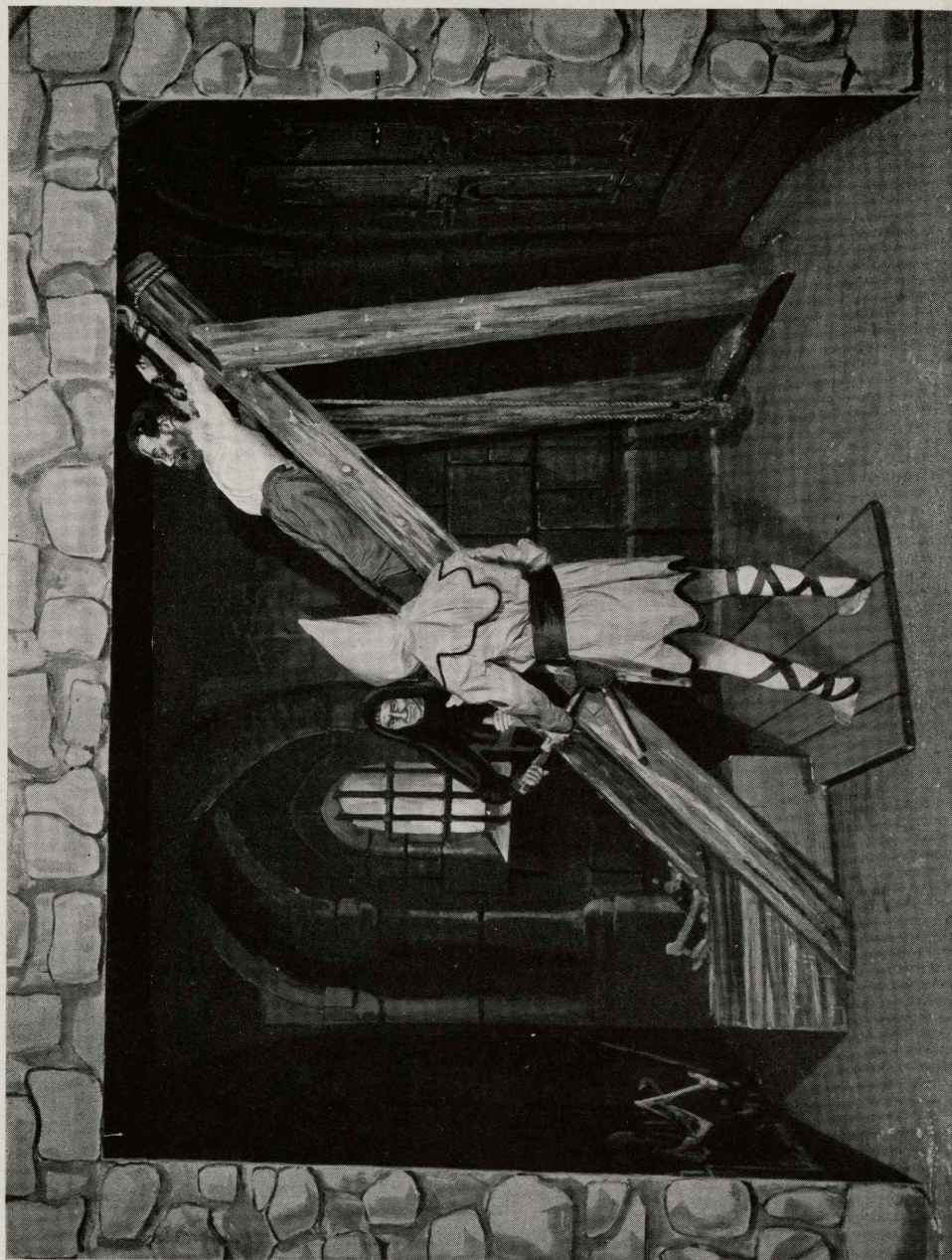
The Iron Boots

## Introduction

The Torture Chamber was designed and built by Messmore & Damon of New York City. It stands as one of the most unique exhibits of the Century of Progress. The figures are all life size and are filled with gears, cams and levers, operated by electrical motors, and yet so well has the task been performed that in reality they seem to breathe, move, and actually live as they did hundreds of years ago.

The costuming and details are worked out with the greatest accuracy and all the tortures shown are exact copies of the fiendish forms used in the middle ages. In some cases the actual implements that were used are shown. So lifelike are the figures and so exact in reproduction that many people have been forced to turn away in horror, unwilling to witness "man's inhumanity to man." The effect is heightened by the close synchronization of sound to motion, made possible by the latest development in the sound engineer's art. Thus in the Torture Chamber you not only see the tortures as they were practised in the middle ages, but you hear again the questioning of the inquisitor, as well as the screams and groans of the unfortunate victims.





The Rack

## THE HISTORY OF TORTURE

Underlying the veneer of civilization in mankind there is a voracious delight in the pain and torture of his fellow man. Watch any crowd gather around an accident drinking in the gory details. In the circus it is the breath-taking leap of death—the man shot from a gun—the aerialist who performs high above the crowd without a net, which bring in the biggest gate receipts. Why? Because unconsciously the audience is waiting, even hoping, for an accident.

Today torture is illegal in all civilized countries, and yet our newspapers constantly expose the sweat box or chain gang, flogging and other tortures still in use to satisfy the demands of the law.

## TORTURE IN GREECE AND ROME

As far back as we can trace, history tells us of torture. Sometimes it was used to wring testimony from the unwilling lips of witnesses. Sometimes it was used as punishment and sometimes simply to provide pleasure for the entertainment of the king, emperor or noble in power. In ancient Greece and Rome the law made it impossible to use the testimony of a slave unless that testimony was given under torture. It must be remembered that the slaves at that time were to a large extent the most intelligent men in the community—scribes, philosophers, poets—usually, captives brought back from some foreign triumph. The law also provided that in case of permanent injury due to the torture, the owner was to be reimbursed to the extent of the injury. Nothing was said, however, concerning the feelings of the slave.

In Rome the decadent orgies of the emperors often gave way to the most bestial forms of torture, and the religious sect then known as Christians offered suitable material for these persecutions. Nero, for example, after tying Christians to stakes, covered them with oil and pitch and set them on fire, living torches to his triumphal procession.



## FAVORITE FORMS OF TORTURE

Torture has usually taken three forms. The victim is flogged or beaten across the back, chest or legs, and in some cases the feet, as in the bastinado of Spain, or he is cut with sword or knife. Sometimes small pieces are removed until his death, or oftentimes fingers, toes, hands or feet are removed. The third and most popular form is the chaining, wherein the victim is fastened in a dungeon or to a rock and left until he starves to death or is eaten by wild animals or torn apart by birds of prey. Even today in Africa a variety of this punishment is in existence, where a native, accused of the more serious crimes, is smeared with honey and chained near an ant hill. These large, ferocious ants, often an inch in length, slowly and painfully feast upon the victim until nothing is left save his whitened skeleton.

## TORTURE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

It was with the entry into the middle ages, however, that torture became more refined in its application, and many mechanical methods were invented for causing pain and torment, the purpose being to keep the victim alive as long as possible in order that his testimony might be secured or his punishment be the greater. The Inquisition is probably responsible for the most unique forms of torture. The Church at this time was making an effort to stamp out heresy throughout Europe, and special tribunals were formed under the control of churchmen with the single object of capturing and punishing heretics and in turn making them confess their heresies as well as heresies of their families and friends. Under the influence of torture a man would often confess anything to be relieved of his intense pain, and the injustice of these tribunals may be well imagined. As a rule these tortures consisted primarily of different forms of beating, cutting, etc., although at times the more ingenious inquisitors developed mechanical means of torture truly horrible. One of these is known as the iron boots, wherein the victim is chained to a heavy oak chair which is in turn fastened to the floor, his feet

placed in boots of wrought iron, the tops of which flare out to form a funnel. Molten lead or hot oil is poured into these boots until the victim confesses or dies from the extreme pain.

## TORTURE BY THE RACK

Another similar form of this torture was the placing of the victim's feet in boots made of metal staves or oak laths. These were bound together with wire, and as pressure was applied, gradually the staves contracted until the foot and leg were crushed to a pulp. This same form of torture was applied to fingers, arms and one instance is on record where a crown was made consisting of a metal band with a sharp pointed spike at the front. This was placed over the victim's head and slowly contracted by means of a spring until the point punctured the brain and the victim died.

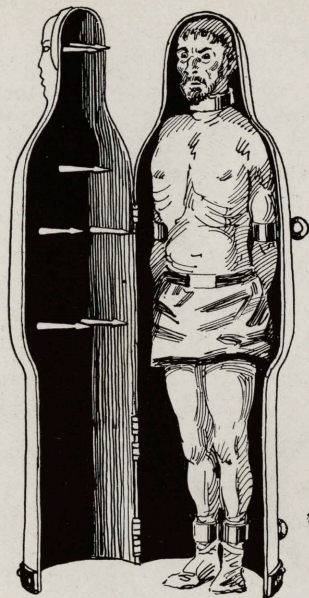
By far the most popular form of torture using a mechanical means is the rack. It is also one of the most aristocratic forms of torture, its history dating back into Babylon and Persia. In this torture the victim was stretched onto a rack, usually constructed of oak. He was chained and handcuffed to this rack and his feet were fastened by means of iron cuffs to a rope, which in turn passed over a windlass. As this windlass was turned it tightened the rope and slowly pulled the victim limb from limb. This was used both to wring confessions from unwilling witnesses and also to torture those accused of crimes. Another form of this same torture was the tying of the victim's hands and feet to horses or oxen which were in turn struck with whips and goads. The victim was thus torn apart by means of these animals.

## THE BULL WHEEL

The wheel is one of the favorite forms of torture and is mentioned throughout literature of all ages. In Greek mythology Tantalus is shown bound to a wheel, and history records many criminals who have been broken on the wheel. This form of



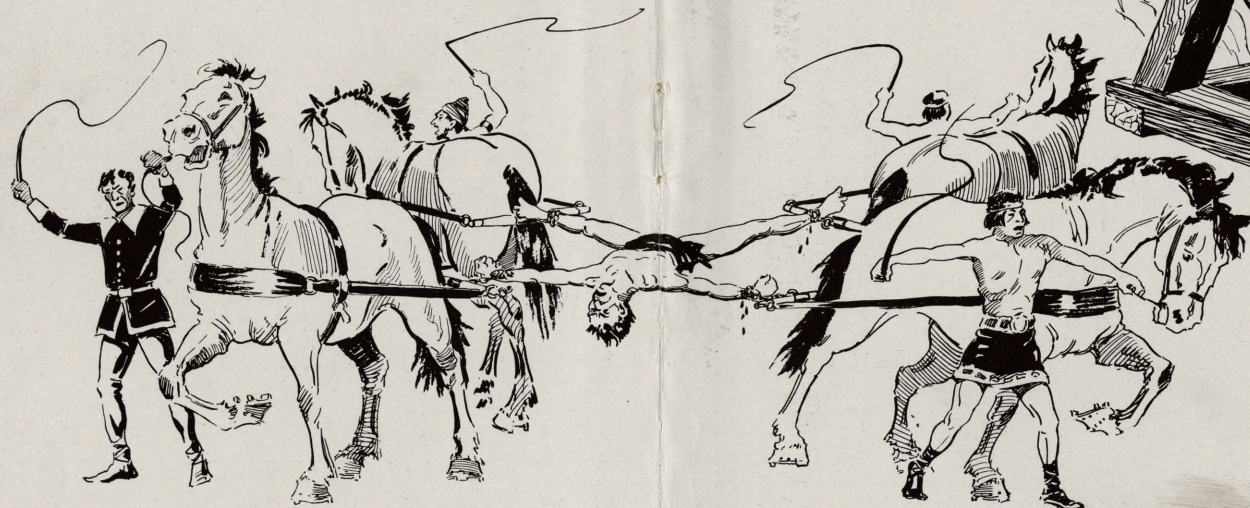
# TORTURES of MEDIEVAL TIMES



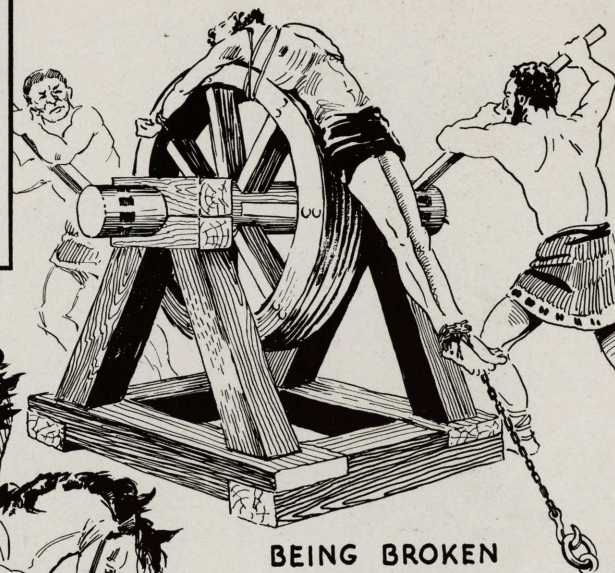
THE IRON MAIDEN



THE SPIKE CROWN

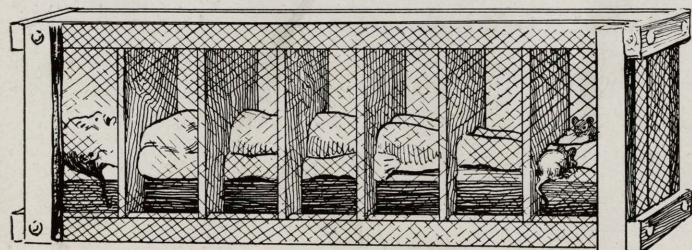


TEARING APART BY HORSES

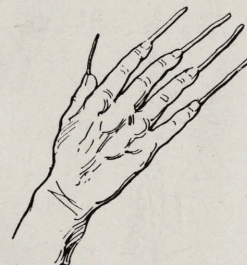


BEING BROKEN  
ON WHEEL

BURIED  
ALIVE



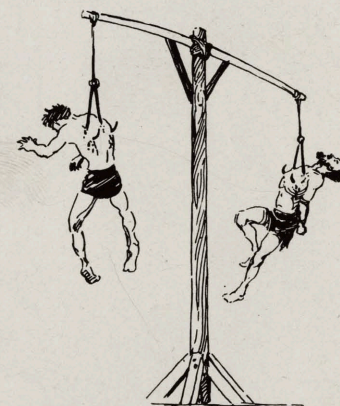
SEVEN STEPS TO HEAVEN



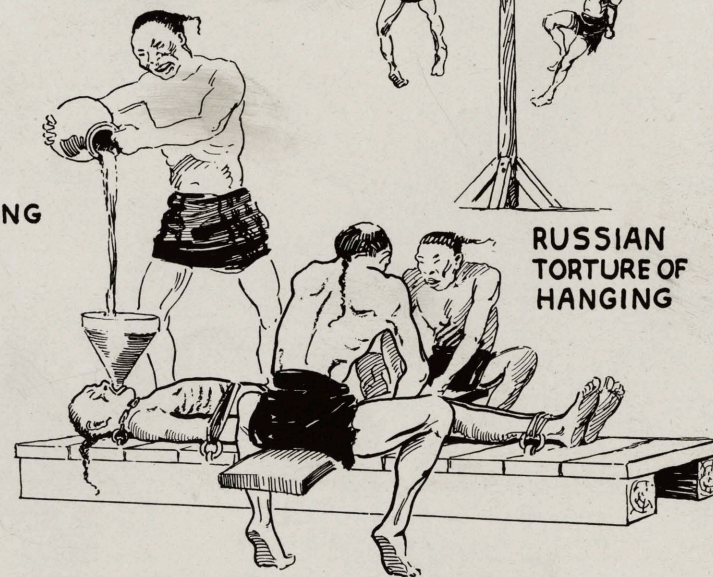
FINGER RACK



ROASTING  
ALIVE

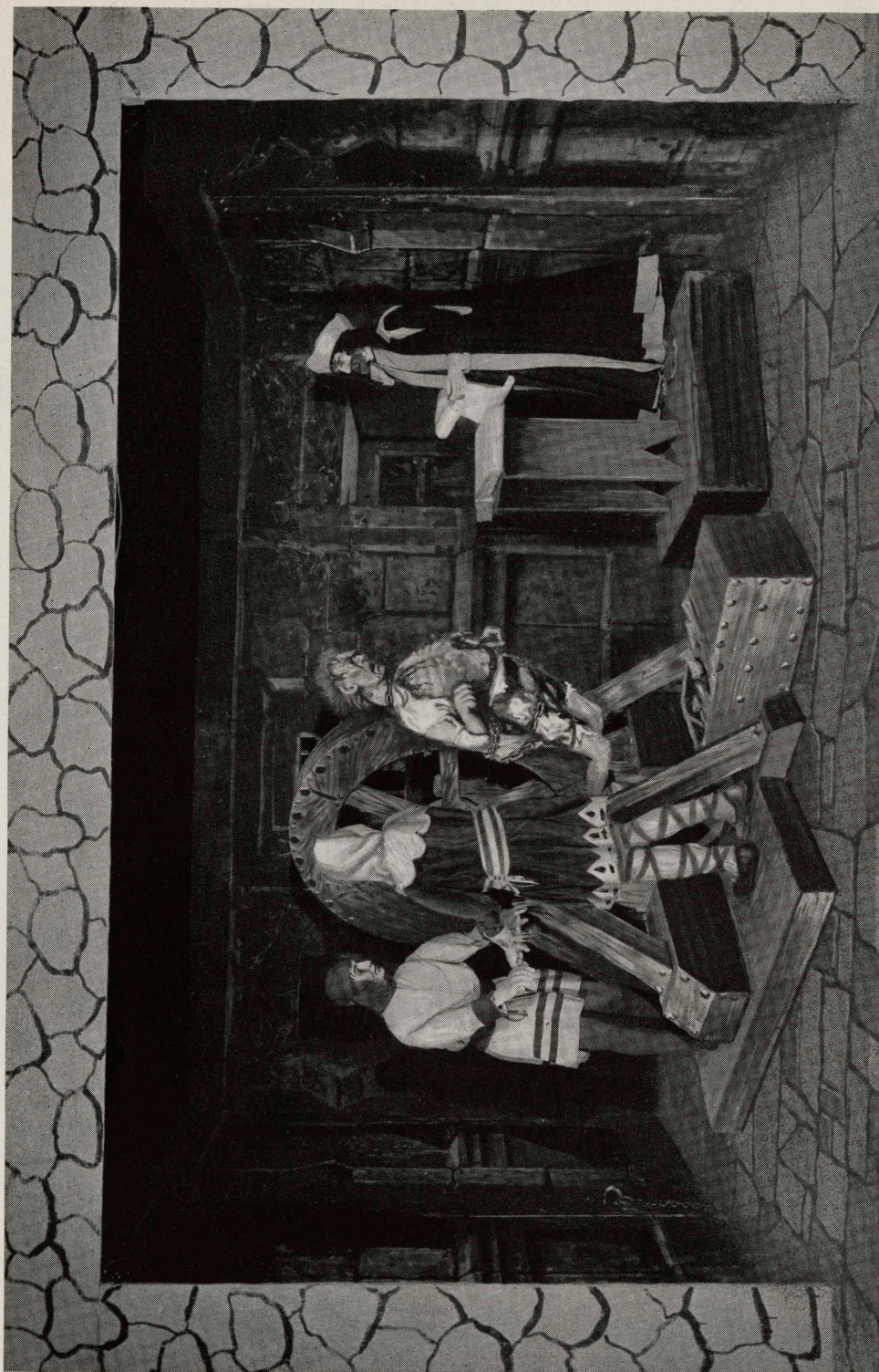


RUSSIAN  
TORTURE OF  
HANGING



CHINESE WATER TORTURE





The Bull Wheel

torture consisted of lashing the prisoner's arms to the spokes while his legs were chained to a wall as the wheel was turned his body was gradually pulled apart. Still another adaptation of this form of torture is the bull wheel, which was a device of the Inquisition. This torture was used primarily to extract confessions and the victim was lashed to the wheel by heavy chains while the wheel was slowly turned, passing the victim over a hot fire. By this method he was slowly roasted alive, and it did not take many minutes until the pain-racked prisoner was willing to confess anything to be relieved from the torture.

The Iron Maiden was another device which, however, was used more for execution than simply punishment. It was a favorite throughout middle Europe, principally in Germany, and consisted of a case of iron shaped to resemble a girl. Two doors swung open, and fastened to these doors were long, pointed spikes. The victim was placed in the case and the door was closed slowly. As this was being done these spikes were automatically driven through his body.

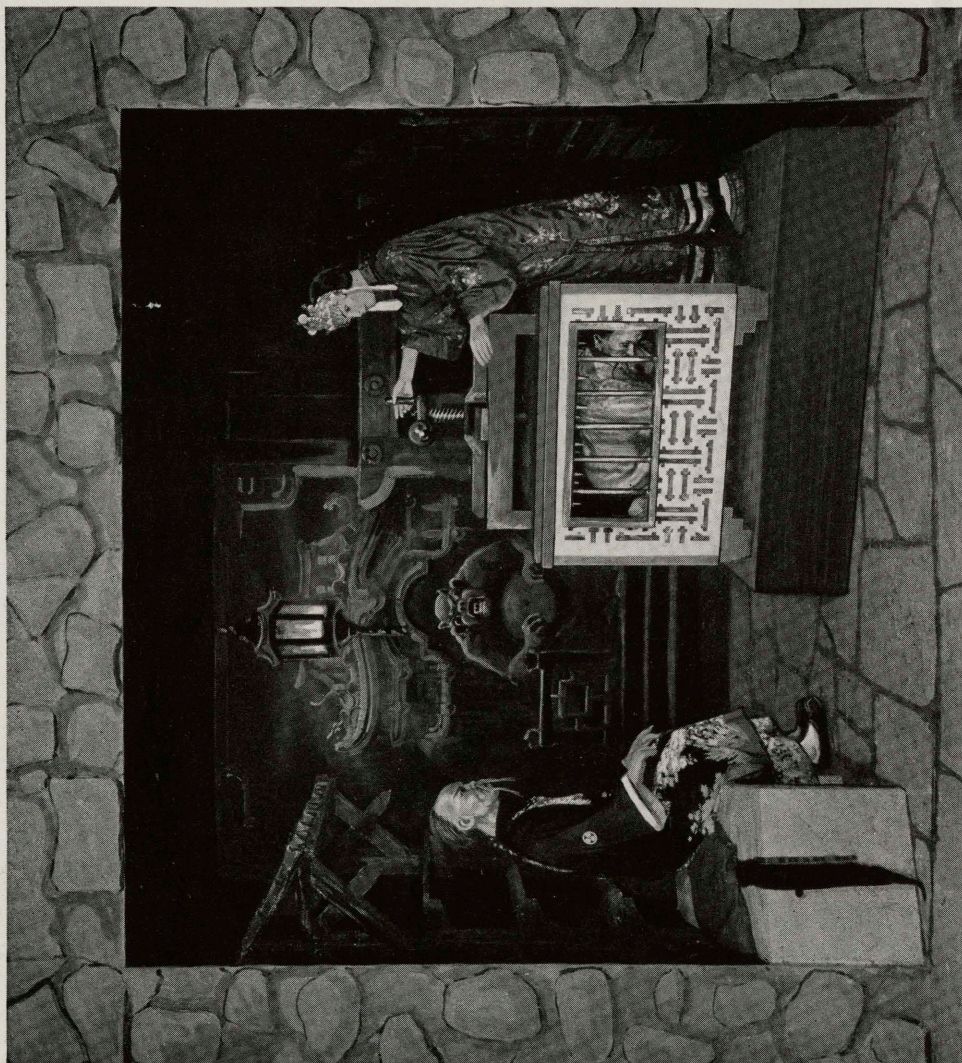
Another similar device whereby the prisoner was impaled on stakes was used about the same period. A trench was dug to a depth of ten or twelve feet, and sharp, pointed wooden stakes lined the bottom. The victim was thrown over the edge of the pit and impaled on these stakes, suffering unknown torture until death finally relieved him of his pain.

The suspending of victims by iron hooks run through thighs, arms or feet was a device used in Russia for criminals, particularly political ones. The victim was suspended from a post or tree and mocked by everyone passing by. Some of the stronger prisoners lived for several days under this torture.

### ORIENTAL TORTURE

But it was in the Orient that many of the refinements of torture were really developed. This is not due to any greater lack of humanity in all probability, but simply to the fact that civili-





The Chest of Celestial Bliss

zation has been in existence longer in the Orient and the more primitive methods of torture known in early Europe were not sufficiently refined for the educated Oriental mind.

One instance is on record where a Manchu of China built a cage of wire netting in which he placed the victim condemned for execution. The cage was divided into seven sections each representing one of the seven heavens through which man's soul was supposed to pass. Large, voracious rats which had been starved for several days were then introduced into the first section by the victim's feet. As these rats appeased their hunger from the writhing, torture-torn victim, new ones were introduced, and one by one the gates were raised until a vital organ was struck and the victim died.

Bandits were executed by being buried alive, but this torture left much to be desired, as the torturer had no opportunity of witnessing his victim's death agony. So an improvement was made wherein the victim was buried up to the neck, his arms fastened behind him. In this defenseless position he was left to die of hunger and thirst or of being attacked by myriads of insects and wild animals.

The Chest of Celestial Bliss was another Oriental torture, more humane, however, than those previously mentioned. This torture consisted of a box just large enough to hold the victim's body. About six inches of space was allowed between the lid and the victim's back. Fastened to this cover were long, sharp knives and, by means of a screw on the top, this cover was slowly pressed down, inch by inch, until the knives were driven through the body of the victim.

### THE FAMOUS WATER TORTURE

Another torture familiar to any reader of Chinese history is the famous water torture. The victim is laid on a table with a funnel thrust in his mouth, his hands and feet are tied, and water is poured down the funnel until his stomach is swollen.





The Foot Torture

At this point a board is laid across his stomach, on which the executioner jumps, rupturing the stomach and forcing water out of the victim's eyes, ears and mouth. Witnesses to this torture claim that the sight is a most horrible one. This torture has the advantage of quick death to commend it, unlike that other well known water torture wherein the victim was chained to a rock and water was dropped slowly on his head. Unable to move he sat there day after day, with the water constantly dripping. He was fed and cared for, but after a short length of time the monotonous dripping of the water drove him mad and he became a raving maniac. The murderer of one of the kings of Spain was punished by this method.

In the space of this book it is impossible to do more than outline the tortures that man has devised to harass his fellow man. Fortunately, as civilization has progressed, the use of torture has diminished. It is safe to say, however, that as long as mankind exists, there will be individuals who will gain pleasure out of seeing their fellow men bruised, beaten, cut and tortured.





