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PART 1.—ORIGINAL ARTICLES.

On the Hereditary Connections between Certain Nervous Diseases.

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It is a great pleasure to me to have the opportunity of speaking to a number of my professional brethren on the subject announced for to-night's lecture—a subject whose vastness and far-reaching connections with the problems, not only of practical medicine, but also of physical and mental education for the young, are daily presented to my mind with increasing force by the facts that I observe in hospital and private practice. The inheritance of the neurotic temperament, with its ever shifting modifications and transformations of outward form, I need hardly tell you is not exactly a new discovery. Commenced, as far as scientific research goes, by Morel, in his treatise, "Des Dégénerescences Humaines," the investigation of the hereditary neurosis has been since carried out by many observers, and has been specially illustrated by one of the most eminent alienists of the present day, Dr. Maudsley. It has now been sufficiently demonstrated in a general way, that there is handed down, in certain families, a tendency of the individual members to inherit from their parents either a particular nervous disease—for instance, insanity—from which they suffered, or else—and this quite as frequently—some other disease of the nervous system. Thus it often happens in these neurotic families, that an insane progenitor will endow a variable number of his descendants respectively with epilepsy, with neuralgia, with insanity, with invincible tendencies to drink, with brain softening, or with chorea; the more fortunate of his descendants escaping with only some more or less strongly marked irritability of nervous

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system, which may express itself chiefly in mental sensitiveness and impulsiveness, or in the existence of some slight local spasmodic affection, or in a general eccentricity of character which it is impossible to define. Or it may be that the vicious circle of nervous degeneration began at an earlier stage; for instance, the insane progenitor was himself the child of a drunkard, whose habitual intemperance had been the starting point—as there is reason to believe it often is the starting point—of a lowered nervous organisation of the family stock, which will show itself in the various ways already mentioned. These general facts are doubtless familiar to your minds, and you are also well aware that this sad inheritance is a curse that seems to fall with special weight upon families, many of whose members are of a mental calibre that would fit them to be the salt of the earth, possessing quickness of insight, original cast of thought, genius for mechanical invention, or, it may be, delicate artistic faculties. These are the men that really make the world march; it is they who give society its impulses to progress of all kinds; but, unhappily, it must be also said that they are too frequently the victims of their inherited temperament, and that their lives, even when they are not interrupted by any positive catastrophe, are too often overshadowed by the gloom of hypochondriasis, or poisoned by some unhappy intellectual or moral weakness, which may be known only to themselves, but is to themselves a perpetual misery, perhaps even a perpetual terror. Of course I am not here referring to the possessors of the highest kind of genius, that rare excellence which flowers only once or twice in a century of a nation's history; such natures are calm and strong, the typical embodiment of the *mens sana in corpore sano*, at its highest and best. Your Shakespeare or your Goethe is no weakling. But, unhappily, it is not such as these that bear the heat and burden of modern progress, and among the men of second rank, upon whom that burden actually falls, a lamentable number are the victims of that inherited defect of nervous balance which is at the foundation of those associated hereditary neuroses, respecting which I ask permission to say a few words to you. And if we further reflect on the fact that for one such partial, even if brilliant and useful success, as nature achieves in the persons of these neurotic men and women of talent, she probably makes at least two failures in the shape of their relatives who are nervous, but *not* talented, we cannot avoid the conviction that the subject of inherited neurosis is one of the

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most important that engages the attention either of the physician or of the student of social science.

It is now nearly fourteen years since my attention was first actively directed to the study of nervous diseases, and during that time I have preserved, with a greater amount of care than I have been able to give to the records of any other class of medical facts, such particulars as could be obtained from apparently trustworthy sources as to the personal and the family history of nervous patients coming under my care in dispensary, hospital out-patient, and private practice. In fact, I had been engaged for some considerable time in this investigation before I read the treatises of Morel and Moreau of Tours, and before Dr. Maudsley's book was published, although these works greatly enlarged my view of the importance of the subject. But although I have thus had both the inclination and, in some measure, the opportunity to work out these questions with reference to actual patients, it has happened, as is probably the case with almost every inquirer, that experience has come to me in a very unequal fashion, allowing me to collect a greatly larger mass of information respecting certain kinds of nervous diseases than respecting others. For example, with regard to alcoholism, epilepsy, neuralgia of all kinds (including angina pectoris), and spasmodic asthma, my historic data are on a pretty large scale; with respect to insanity they are not inconsiderable, but with regard to other forms of nervous disease they are by no means so extensive.

It is not my intention to detain you with vague general remarks on this great subject of inherited neurosis; I rather prefer, on practical grounds, to confine my attention to one special aspect of the matter. The point which I wish to bring before you is this: I believe that the inherited neurosis may be manifested in two varieties, or degrees if you will; one of which is sufficiently familiar and easy of recognition, while the other, on the contrary, is scarcely acknowledged to exist, and is particularly liable to be ignored under circumstances when it is of the highest importance (if my view be correct) that no such error should be made. I shall call the first variety (for this occasion at least) the Active Hereditary Neurosis, and the second variety I shall call the Dormant Hereditary Neurosis.

1. The manifestations of the Active Hereditary Neurosis are so remarkable and so patent, in many instances, that the only wonder is that they should have remained without any-

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thing like scientific classification until quite recent times. You all remember the standard example, doubtless a somewhat extreme one, which Morel gives in his work, of extreme intemperance in a great-grandfather leading to a series of severe neurotic catastrophes in successive generations of his descendants, ending with sterile idiocy of the great-grandchildren and extinction of the race. It is of course impossible to know whether the intemperate progenitor was not himself descended from a stock already strongly tainted with neurotic imperfection; but it is evident, from Morel's account, that his habits at least prodigiously accelerated the degeneration of his race. And I am inclined to believe, from my own observation, that alcohol, of all depressing agencies, has the most decided power to impress the nervous centres of a progenitor with a neurotic type, which will necessarily be transmitted, under varied forms and with increasing fatality, to his descendants. I suspect, and for reasons which are none the less weighty to me that it is impossible for me to publish them in detail, that there are many families now suffering from, and many more that have been decimated or even extinguished by, fatally progressive neuroses that had their origin simply in the reckless habits of port wine drinking that were in fashion for at least three generations after our statesmen practically excluded the light wines of France from the English market. It is the old story—that "the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge." Here is one case, which I select from a list that I have published in my work on Neuralgia. The patient was a gentleman, aged 54, who applied to me on account of severe neuralgia of the third division of the fifth nerve. He was himself a great drinker, and drinking had been hereditary in his family for several generations. His grandfather had become epileptic; his father died insane; a sister was consumptive; and two brothers very eccentric. I considered that the family was likely to be extinguished in the next generation, so completely had the type become degraded, so incompetent did the race appear to produce even a single individual whose nervous centres came up to an average standard of organization. In another case referred to in my series I had reason to suspect that drink had been a main original cause of the degradation of the family stock, on the paternal side, in a previous generation; but here the catastrophe was probably much hastened by the fact that both the parents were neurotic. The actual patient was a

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man who for many years suffered repeated attacks of frontal and nasal neuralgia, complicated, and sometimes alternating, with erysipelas of the painful region. He was naturally of an amiable disposition, and possessed refined tastes; but towards middle life his whole *morale* broke down, he took to drink and outrageous profligacy, and died in a state of acute insanity. This man's father committed suicide; his mother was a sufferer from epileptiform neuralgia; one of his children died in convulsions, and another has been choreic.

No doubt, however, the degrading influence of alcohol upon the nervous centres rarely stands alone; there is very frequently simultaneous indulgence in other exhausting vices, and still more often there is at least the negative evil that the drinker ceases to cultivate the higher intellectual and emotional faculties, which, accordingly, dwindle in comparison with the merely appetitive nature.

There is some doubt in my mind whether the Active Hereditary Neurosis is ever *originated* in a family stock except by one of four causes. The first is drink, of which we have spoken. The second is extreme sexual excess; but it may well be doubted if that, unaided, is capable of implanting the stamp of progressive degeneration on a race, except, indeed, in the case of masturbation, and even that tends to personal sterility rather than the begetting of neurotic children. The third is habitual and long-continued insufficiency of food—a most potent cause undoubtedly. The fourth, which unhappily is often added to the third, is total vacancy of mind from the want of education: a Wiltshire or Dorsetshire farm labourer, on 8s. a-week, offers a painfully vivid illustration of these conditions. Any one of these causes, with the doubtful exception of the second, however, is probably capable, at anyrate in a generation or two, of fatally perverting the organization of the nervous system, and evoking the Active Hereditary Neurosis.

The extent to which the Active Hereditary Neurosis prevails among all classes may be somewhat appreciated by reference to my fourteen years' statistics of neuralgia, always premising that that part of the information which was derived from ill-educated persons must be taken with abatement; though I can safely say that all possible care was taken to exclude doubtful-sounding statements. Of 83 hospital and private patients, I obtained evidence of the existence among blood-relations of the following diseases:—Epilepsy, 14 cases; hemiplegia, or paraplegia, in nine cases; insanity, 12 cases;

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drunken habits, 14 cases; consumption, 18 cases; "St. Vitus's dance," four cases. It was a remarkable thing that that common and, as many people think, trivial complaint, migraine, was exceedingly often found in family relation with very serious neuroses, and in particular had a very marked hereditary relationship to epilepsy. I am gratified to see that my original statement to this effect, in "Reynolds' System of Medicine," vol. ii., is expressly confirmed by Dr. Eulenburg in his recent treatise on Functional Nervous Diseases.

As an example of the extraordinary and really terrific way in which the inherited temperament will sometimes break out in an individual who seems to have been perfectly free from nervous disease, but who belongs to a family in whom the neurotic disposition is Active, and affects many persons—take the following case. It is that of a young lady who might have been selected as a type of healthy beauty, but who belonged to a family in which neuralgia and other evidences of the neurotic disposition were uncommonly prevalent. This girl met with an accident, in which she suffered compound dislocation of the ankle; the limb was beautifully set, and it was just the case in which one would expect that the restorative powers of healthy youth would ensure recovery. Unhappily tetanus set in, a very few days after the accident; and, moreover, it was tetanus of that fatally continuous and severe type which no remedies ever seem to influence in the least degree. It killed her in about sixty hours; and, for my part, I was entirely convinced that the occurrence of tetanus at all, and much more its occurrence in this severe form, must be altogether referred to the neurotic elements existing from birth in this young lady's system.

This last case seems to form an appropriate bridge, as it were, by which we may pass over to the consideration of the Hereditary Neurosis in its distinctly Dormant variety. Under this heading I refer to cases as to which the hypothesis is,—that the neurotic disposition has at one time been active in the race,—that favourable circumstances (especially intermarriage with healthier stocks) has mitigated it, and practically reduced its action to a nullity—the members of the family now exhibiting no evident tendency to nervous diseases—but that, nevertheless, a concealed bias to such diseases does still exist, and is capable of being called out, in any individual of the race, by certain unfortunate influences or conjunctions of influences. I grant that the proof of the existence of this variety of Hereditary Neurosis is less easy

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than is the proof of that of the Active type; but the following considerations seem to afford very powerful arguments in its favour. In the first place, as to the probabilities from analogy, I think there can be little doubt. Every step that we take in the improvement of Biological Science seems to bring us nearer to an unreserved acknowledgment of the imperishable nature of the marks left by ancestors upon their descendants. They may be concealed, but they are *not* destroyed. You shall take some trivial matter that distinguishes a man—some slight turn of a feature, some petty muscular trick even; you shall observe it disappear utterly in his immediate offspring, and then your successors, if they watch closely, may find it turning up in his granddaughter's child. I could cite such instances in plenty—one or two of them within my own knowledge—and so, no doubt, could many of my audience. In like manner, a disease such as epilepsy, or the more intractable forms of neuralgia, cannot easily be supposed to leave *no* mark upon offspring subsequently begotten, even though no traceable result can be recognised in the second generation. It is in the supposition of such temporarily impalpable, but really imperishable traces, that I find the only possible solution of a multitude of vital and clinical facts. There is one example that I would especially press upon your notice, viz., the phenomena of true dipsomania or oinomania; I do not mean the ordinary weakness of yielding gradually to the temptation of drink, but that much more singular affection in which the patient is periodically liable to unaccountable outbursts of drinking, which are in absolute and most hideous contrast with the remainder of his conduct in life. It seems to me that this is a striking example of that imperishable organic memory of the body, the existence of which Dr. Maudsley has so forcibly vindicated; for although I have seen a considerable number of these cases, I have never met with a single one in which there had not been both drunkenness and some mental eccentricity, if not downright insanity, among the ancestors of the patient. In one case of the sort I was much struck by the fact that we had to search a long time before we came to the intemperate ancestor, but that when we had discovered him there was no doubt whatever of his influence upon the nervous type of the family organisation. Fortunately that influence, though extensive and affecting many individuals, was evidently not of the highest grade of strength, for I could find no further tendencies to drink, nor any positive insanity, among the des-

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cendants of this forgotten drinker. And to this fact I felt myself compelled to attribute the recovery of my patient, which is the solitary instance of the kind that I have ever known. The true oinomaniac, as distinguished from the ordinary drinking sot, scarcely ever shakes himself free of his tendency; but then he almost invariably belongs to a race that has already been degenerated to the point which is marked by the frequent outbreak of insanity among its members.

It appears important to inquire—first, what are the signs, if any, of the Dormant Hereditary Neurosis in individual persons: and, secondly, what are the influences which have special power to bring out the hidden mischief?

Now as regards the signs of a dormant neurosis, I submit the following, not with absolute confidence, but still with a strong belief, to your notice.

The first that I shall mention is the premature occurrence of puberty in a child; premature, that is, as judged by the standard that prevails in the family. It has occurred to me several times to see this phenomenon of a precocious sexual development in children whose relatives were generally normal, some perhaps more than usually late, in coming to puberty, and I have never failed to observe neurotic mischief of one kind or another in after life. No doubt in many instances this precocity of sexual development is the direct result of bad habits acquired by the children at school; but it is not always so. Some boys, and a rather larger proportion of girls, surprise all their friends by a wonderful precocity of development, and yet are distinguished by the most childlike innocence. And no doubt in some English families the development of puberty naturally occurs very early, just as it does in tropical countries. But even in those instances where the precocity is quite *un*natural to the family, and evidently has been at least assisted by the early acquirement of bad habits—even in these cases, I say, there is grave reason to doubt whether hereditary influence does not count for something. Upon this point I was much struck with what Dr. Hermann Weber lately told me. He said he was quite amazed at the amount of evidence which had come under his notice tending to show that masturbation in the young is at least very often the result far more of impulse, derived from innate temperament, than of accidental companionship with dirty-minded children. Now, as tending to prove that there is such a thing as a Dormant Hereditary Neurosis, I would point

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attention to the fact that among families of which the prevailing sexual temperament is decidedly calm, we occasionally meet with a child (I have a recently observed instance in my mind at this moment) who, upon the smallest provocation or no provocation at all, takes to sexual thoughts and sexual acts with the energy of a demon. I believe that such an occurrence is no more an unmeaning result of chance than is the inflammation of the stomach which follows a drink of strong sulphuric acid. I believe that such an occurrence marks the fact that the old stain left in the family organization by some forgotten drunkard or lecher of the race is *not* wiped out; that for the individual himself there is certainly, and that for other members of the family there is possibly, neurotic danger looming in the future. I must here put in a caution against one possible source of mistake in this matter; the precocious puberty may be the purely accidental result of such causes as irritation of the testis by reason of its retention in the abdomen, or the inguinal canal, or irritation of the ovaries by worms, or by habitual loading of the bowels; and then of course no such prognostic inferences could be rightly drawn.

Among the signs that the neurotic temperament, previously dormant in the family, is about to reappear, I am afraid we must also, however reluctantly, notice the unexpected development of intense artistic feeling in children born of a family who are naturally common-place and prosaic. It is, however, a far less serious indication prognostically than is sexual precocity, for it admits of being turned to excellent account in the prophylactic treatment, if rightly managed.

The other grand indication of the revival of a hitherto dormant neurosis in a family, is the seemingly causeless occurrence of convulsions during dentition in a child whose brothers and sisters altogether escape the infliction; it being of course assumed that there are none of the ordinary and well understood accidental causes at work.

I might mention other matters which may, with more or less probability, be assigned as indications of a previously unsuspected neurotic temperament, and particularly such *novel* features as the unexpected development of a habit of *lying* or *stealing* in well-brought-up children. But of the force of such moral indications as these my friends, the alienist physicians, are far better judges than I.

And now, as regards the circumstances that especially tend to bring out the hidden mischief of a dormant neurosis, with

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certainly evil results to the individual, and with the possible resurrection of an Active Hereditary Neurosis, once more casting abroad its "arrows, firebrands, and death" among a family that might have seemed to have escaped its dangers.

Time forces me to be very brief, but I shall specify the following:—"1st, deficient nutrition in childhood; 2nd, preponderance of emotion over steady intellectual work, in the ordinary brain-life of an individual; 3rd, the occurrence of phthisis more especially, but also of any disease which by involving protracted suppuration, or in any other way, exerts a prolonged and steady depressive action on nutrition. 4th, unwise intermarriages.

1. Upon the subject of the defective nutrition of infants and children, it is not now-a-days necessary to dwell so urgently as it would have been a very few years since. I fear, however, that there is still a large remnant in the profession of that extraordinary and most tyrannical superstition—that children are liable to "grossness of blood," if well fed, which has in its day been ten thousand times more murderous to human life than was ever the cholera or the plague. How it was even possible for scientific men to forget that a child *not merely lives but grows*, I cannot guess; but without wasting more breath than is necessary for one hearty imprecation on the stupidity of some of our ancestors in this respect, let me implore every one present to do his part to establish it as an unquestioned rule of practice, that (with proper attention to obvious matters as to its *quality)* the food of children up to, and especially during, the trying period of sexual development, should be practically unlimited except by the limits of appetite, or the occurrence of positive and unmistakable failure of primary digestion. And let this rule be enforced with most especial stringency in every case where the hereditary neurosis either confessedly exists, or from signs that we notice may be expected to revive.

2. The predominence of emotional over intellectual work, in the daily life, whether of child or adult, especially when this is associated with an absence or insufficiency of that habitual physical exercise which is so necessary to preserve the vital balance of the organism, is a most serious cause of evil. It is confessedly most disastrous in its action upon persons who are distinctly of a neurotic family type; but it can itself apparently create that type, or rather, as I believe, merely revive the dormant mischief which descends from a now forgotten genealogical source. The most intense type

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of this emotional ascendency is often seen in preachers of the rhetorical turn. I don't mean mere spouters, but really eloquent and earnest men, more especially if there mingles with their earnestness some considerable dash of ambition or love of spiritual power. And the neurotic result is apt to fall, as one might well expect it would fall, especially on the apparatus of circulation and of respiration. From inquiries that I have made, it is really appalling to learn how frequently clergymen of this type are partially or wholly disabled by neurotic asthma and neurotic angina pectoris. The first case that occurs to me is one which, from time to time in its treatment, has caused me great anxiety. It is that of a clerical gentleman, whose nervous system has really seemed, during a great number of years past, to be a mere playground for the whole tribe of so-called functional diseases. Thus, he has had spasmodic asthma for more than 20 years, and for the last five years neurotic angina pectoris in addition; some of the earlier attacks of the latter were so severe as nearly to prove fatal. Moreover, the angina is complicated with singular vaso-motor paralyses in the arms, and with the occasional appearance of psoriasis on the palms of the hands. Again, it should be mentioned that this gentleman has always been very liable to facial neuralgia, and that the attacks of this are frequently complicated with erysipelatoid inflammation of the kind which I have shown* to be a secondary result of neuralgic affections. And, finally, it should be said that the general temperament of this individual is eminently "nervous;" he has all the sensitive feeling, æsthetic taste, and rapidity of thought, that so constantly distinguish the "artist born." So remarkable were both the mental characteristics and the pathological sufferings of this patient, that I confidently presumed we should find, on inquiry, a strong family history of nervous disease; and it was, at first, a regular knock-down blow to me when I learned that the case was *very much the reverse.* This gentleman's information did not extend to more than two previous generations, and even for these was not absolutely complete; still, he was very decided in saying that, during that period, it had been notorious that his family had been exempt from nervous diseases, and, indeed, rather specially healthy and long-lived. This discovery for the moment seriously staggered me, and even induced me to waver in the belief which I had previously, and

* *Vide* Reynolds' System of Medicine, vol. ii. Art., "Neuralgia;" also my book, "Neuralgia, and Diseases that resemble it."

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which I do now, most firmly entertain—that all the so-called functional disorders have really an organic basis, and that that organic basis is something capable of being transmitted from father to son. I may add that, last year only, I saw another case of neurotic angina, also in a clergyman, of which the general history and features were singularly like those of my first case. But in my latest reflections on the subject, I have found it impossible to believe that the morbid events, in either of these cases, was due entirely to the pressure of external circumstances, independently of any influence from original bodily constitution. It is true that, in my recent work on neuralgia, I have spoken of these and similar cases as examples of the creation of the neurotic temperament; and, for practical purposes, such as I had then chiefly in view, it is often useful to regard them in that light. But in addressing you, gentlemen, who are biologists, and are in the habit of believing that *ex nihilo nihil fit*, one should speak more precisely. And as the clinical facts of these two cases are precisely similar to those of very many other examples of asthma, and angina, and of the closely allied trigeminal neuralgia, which have come within my knowledge, and in which there *was* a distinct neurotic inheritance, I cannot seriously doubt that the evil was simply dormant, not non-existent, in these two patients, from the moment of their birth. It is of course not only clergymen that suffer from emotional excitants, nor is excessive *religious* emotion the only kind that wears and strains the life of the medulla oblongata and spinal cord centres of the cardiac and respiratory nerves; one of the most striking examples of neurotic angina that I ever saw occurred in an exceedingly able man, an engineer, who had suffered keen anxiety and disappointment at the failure of certain important schemes. There, too, the source of neurotic inheritance was not immediately obvious; but it existed, nevertheless.

3. The intrusion of *phthisis* into an individual case, or into the history of a family, has often a most disastrous influence in evoking a hereditary neurosis that was previously quite or nearly dormant. I commend to your attention, in this respect, the first of the medical genealogies (that of one of my sciatica patients) given in my work on neuralgia; it will be seen that the marriage of a somewhat neurotic person with a phthisical lady was productive far more strikingly of neurotic than of phthisical tendencies in the descendants. I could produce other instances, equally noteworthy. It does not seem

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to me that there is anything more special in this influence of phthisis in heightening family neurotic tendencies, than is accounted for by its position as *facile princeps* among debilitating constitutional diseases. In this respect I decidedly incline rather to the view which (if I understand him rightly) Dr. Blandford takes in his interesting lectures on insanity, than to that of Moreau, of Tours, who, in his "Psychologie Morbide," seems to me to make an unnecessary mystery of the connection between the strumous diathesis and the neurotic cycle of diseases.

4. Lastly, among the influences which, if any can, do most undoubtedly assist the resurrection of a seemingly long-buried neurotic family temperament, we must certainly reckon the results of imprudent marriages. We have only to reflect on the continual intermixture of families which goes on, to perceive that small portions of the neurotic tendency must really by this period of the world's history have infected nearly every family that exists. Thus we must suppose that the essential elements of a potential neurosis exist, at any rate in the dormant form, on every side, and we are bound to seek some explanation of the fact that so many families escape, for generations together, anything like severe or active outbreaks of the neurotic tendency. I cannot doubt that the preservative agency is to be found, to a large extent, in the regeneration of families by the infusion of fresh and healthier blood by marriage. Surely the results of the opposite course are to be traced in the notorious facts on which is based the half-popular, half-scientific view that the marriages of first cousins are followed by the birth of unhealthy children, and that insanity and phthisis are especially often the curse of such offspring. I have seen nothing to lead me to believe that this really occurs, except in the instance where the family, two members of which thus breed in, is, or has been, somewhat strongly infected with the neurotic or the phthisical tendencies. But, doubtless, the reduplication, in the children of a husband and wife who belong to the same distinctly neurotic family, of the physical qualities that are the bane of the race, must multiply, in geometric rather than arithmetic ratio, the chances of disaster.

Time fails me, or I should much like to enter on a discussion, without which my paper must need seem incomplete, as to the educational prophylaxis—bodily and mental—which these views of hereditary neurosis, the Active and still more the Dormant, irresistibly suggest. I must reluctantly with-

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hold it, but I would not conclude without one last word of a practical tendency. To some minds, and those among the most powerful in our profession, there is nothing but gloom in the prospect which these terrible facts of hereditary neurosis seem to present. It seems to them as if the "tyranny of our organisation" were not merely tremendous but altogether irresistible, as if our whole moral and physical nature were the mere sport and toy of an inexorable fate. I cannot share these opinions, or I should shrink in horror from the analysis of the facts. I believe, on the contrary, that this analysis really suggests the true method in which, by constantly acting on the rising generation, we may hope indefinitely to reduce the kind of dangers of which we have been speaking. *Venienti occurite morbo* is not less true as a maxim of educational than of strictly medicinal means for stifling the first beginnings of mischief. The views I have now (most imperfectly as I well know) put before you, seem to point to us what these first beginnings are, and faint and glimmering though the picture be, I believe you may accept it as a not untrue foreshadowing of an improved organisation of our defensive warfare against disease, in which we may find the pledge of a true emancipation of the human race from many of the most painful consequences of the Neurotic Inheritance.

Feigned Attempts at Suicide. By DAVID NICOLSON, M.B. (Aberd.), Assistant Medical Officer, Her Majesty's Invalid Prison, Woking.

That our convict prisons should be the theatres upon whose stage are enacted day by day a varied round of farces and burlesques of a more or less tragical significance, is a thought whose development may be interesting, or simply amusing, according to the direction in which our fancy for the time being leads us.

One of the earliest features in the history of dramatic art in England was the introduction of what were called "Moralities." These plays, we are told, consisted in the personification of such allegorical characters as Charity, Sin, Death, Faith, and the like; and they were not unfrequently performed in churches, the clergy and the choir taking part in the representations. "Moralities" and the religious spectacles of

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