Notes and Queries.

Dr. Mercier's suggestion has not awakened that amount of interest which we expected; but we are favoured with these replies, which may yet be followed by others.

As to the children of general paralytics begotten in the early stages of the malady, Dr. Clouston can only recall one case of idiocy.

Dr. Norman, in reference to the meaning of the word degenerate, is unprepared to say very much, as he conceives Dr. Mercier's query is intended to draw some expression from those who use the term degenerate with the looseness which has become so common. "Let the galled jade wince." But he thinks it may clear the ground for further discussion to point out that Morel, from whom the moderns who talk of degeneration profess to have derived their inspiration, thus defines degeneracy or degeneration (*la dégénérescence*):—"The clearest idea which we can acquire of degeneracy of the human species is by representing it to ourselves as a morbid deviation from a primitive type." Again, he speaks of what "*les êtres dégénérés*" really are: "a morbid deviation from the normal type of humanity." The vagueness of this has apparently been the cause from whence sprang the quite unscientific modern use of the word, but it should be remembered that Morel only implicitly sanctioned such usage, which he probably did not foresee. In his book on degeneracy he deals almost exclusively with very definite causes which tend to bring about short-lived and morbid varieties of the race—alcohol, lead, paludic poison, the essential factors of cretinism and of pellagra, starvation, etc.

The word is commonly applied to any and every phase of structure, conduct, mind, or appearance, normal or abnormal, to which the user of it wishes to apply an abusive term with a scientific flavour. A man is called a "degenerate" if he is a thief or a murderer, a sexual pervert, or any other form of criminal; if he is insane, or eccentric, or a genius, or clever, or stupid, or commonplace; if he has a misshapen jaw, or ear, or

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head, or nose, or hand, or foot; if he has a tattoo mark on his arm, or a wen on his neck, or a cast in his eye, or a carious tooth; if he is solitary or social, benevolent or morose, a philanthropist or a miser, married, single, or widowed, tall or short, black-haired or red-haired. There is nothing that can be predicated of man that may not be called a mark of degeneracy.

C. A. M.

Dr. Urquhart asks, What is the meaning of the word *neurotic?*

The word "neurotic" has much the same meaning as the word "degenerate." The meaning commonly attached to it would be best expressed by "something the matter with the nerves," "the nerves" being understood in a popular and ladylike sense. If a man has epilepsy, he is neurotic. If he had chorea when a child, he is neurotic. If he starts on hearing a noise, he is neurotic. If his grandfather was insane, he is neurotic. If he does not sleep very well, he is neurotic. If he suffers from migraine, if he has tic convulsif or tic douloureux, if he has asthma or neuralgia, if his great-aunt committed suicide, or his nephew is in Earlswood, if he is addicted to drink, or is a fanatical teetotaler, if he is worried by loss of money or elated by success, if he is dyspeptic, or gouty, or diabetic; if, in short, we want to say of him something that will comfort us with the assurance that we know more than we do know about him, we call him neurotic; and we receive an access of complacency from the use of the term. Neurotic is the Mesopotamia of neurologists. It is such a comforting word!

C. A. M.

Dr. Clouston suggests for consideration the question, Is there any record of murder having been committed by a general paralytic while he was as yet in the early stage of the malady?

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