The Professor concluded his lecture by the narration of a very interesting case of eczema exfoliativum which he had at present under treatment; this case was accompanied with all the symptoms already detailed, and, in addition, with loss of the nails and loss of the hair. The patient was a man of gouty diathesis, and was also the subject of *lepra vulgaris*.

"IS IT PROPER FOR CONSUMPTIVES TO MARRY?"

By CHARLES J. B. WILLIAMS, M.D., F.R.S.

THIS question is too wide and vague to admit of a direct answer; but it may be usefully debated by those who have had much study and experience in connexion with the subject.

Holding, as I do, that consumption in its widest sense—including not only cases of distinct tuberculosis, but those also of caseous pneumonia and chronic inflammation, which are only different forms and degrees of the same malady—is a disease of degeneration and decay, it can hardly be supposed that I should generally recommend consumptives, with the seeds of decay in them, either to waste their remaining stamina by sexual indulgence, or to incur the risk of unhealthy propagation from their own decaying stock; and yet I have advised many a consumptive to marry, and in numerous instances the result has been happy and fruitful.

For a patient in *confirmed* or *active* consumption to marry, could never be advised by any rational physician, on either physical or moral grounds. Both reason and experience forbid such a step, as fraught with perils and penalties, present and future.

It is different with many of the now numerous class of cases of *arrested* or *limited* disease, in whom the bodily functions are active and vigorous, and in whom there is a probability of life for many years under *favourable circumstances*. Among these favourable circumstances may often be counted the increased social and domestic comforts and the *enlivening* communion and sympathy of a well assorted and well regulated married life. To those who have not the gift of continence, and whose affections have been already engaged with the hope of marriage, a single life is one of unnatural restraint and disappointment, injurious to health, and likely enough to accelerate disease and decay. To such, a judicious marriage and the moderate exercise of the sexual functions become a source of bodily health, as well as of mental happiness, the beneficial influence of which can hardly be overestimated. To such, the new life seems to have a regenerating influence, with increased vitality and energy, extending even to the organic functions of assimilation and nutrition. I believe that these remarks apply to both sexes, including childbearing and lactation in the female. So long as all these processes go on normally, with good and regular feeding and digestion, the maternal organism receives fresh vigour from the quickening influence of foetal and infantile life; and processes of degeneration and decay are retarded or suspended. So far is correct the common belief that pregnancy and lactation retard the progress of phthisis. But such remarks do not apply to sickly pregnancies, to severe and exhausting confinements, and to excessive or disordered lactation. Such unfortunate contingencies, which cannot always be foreseen, pretty surely impair the vital powers and hasten the progress of decay.

Further, there is a considerable number of consumptive individuals for whom, although the disease be limited and not active, marriage is not desirable. To say, in general terms, that these are *weakly* individuals, does not sufficiently characterise them. Weak they are, both in body and mind; but there is also a nervousness which aggravates the weakness and adds to sensibilities and sufferings. The weakness extends to the sexual function; and although, unfortunately, it does not extinguish desire, it renders the exercise of that function harassing and exhausting. To such persons, married life would prove a perpetual snare and worry; and their safest course is to cultivate the grace of continence in single blessedness.

The apprehension of procreating unhealthy children is an objection more valid with physicians and friends than with the consumptive himself when his affections are engaged; and we are bound to consider that its weight varies also with circumstances. In predicating anything concerning a future generation, it must be borne in mind that we can deal only in terms of probability; and to give them numerical value would require larger statistics than any yet available. Although our experience abounds in examples of children born of consumptive parents being unhealthy, and sooner or later falling victims to some form of the disease, yet the exceptions are numerous also, and prove the power of young life to countervail any inherited proclivity to decay. I could cite many cases, but it would take more time and space than can be given here.

Guided by general principles and experience, we may well warn all consumptives born of one or both consumptive parents, or having several blood-relatives consumptive, that there will be great risk of their own children proving consumptive also, and that the risk is further increased when a consumptive marries into another consumptive family; and on this consideration, as well as for their own sakes, we cannot sanction the union of such consumptive persons.

On the other hand, consumptives whose malady originated in an inflammatory attack, without any clear history of family taint, and whose present condition is that of arrested disease, with good general health, need have no unusual solicitude as to the healthiness of their progeny, if due care be taken with their hygienic and dietetic management. In this respect, as well as in the general treatment of consumptives, the affluent might have a better chance than those in straitened circumstances; for change of air, a salubrious residence, and a variety in the best kinds of food, are potent but expensive means for the restoration and preservation of health. But the indolence and caprices of the affluent often deprive them of their advantages; and, even when they seek advice, they too commonly are guided by their own inclinations as to how far they will follow it. Whilst I was writing these lines, a gentleman entered my consulting-room, saying that he wished for my advice about the propriety of his marrying. Eight years ago, he had been sent home from India, condemned as a consumptive, having spit blood daily for several weeks, and lost much flesh. However, he so far recovered as to be able to return to his military duties in India, from which he again returned invalided two months ago, with a renewal of pectoral symptoms. It is needless to enter into details; but I found signs of limited disease in one lung, which, as I told him, was probably inflammatory, and might be removed with proper treatment and care, and then he might entertain his marrying project. "O!" said he, "I am going to be married the day after to-morrow."

ON MODERN TREATMENT BY DRUGS:

An Extract from the Annual Oration before the Hunterian Society, 1871.

By T. BOOR CROSBY, M.D., F.R.C.S.

LET us now consider the modern method of treatment of disease by drugs. As a natural sequence of altered opinion respecting the utility of bleedings for the suppression of acute disease, the antiphlogistic class of therapeutical agents, especially such direct cardiac depressants as antimony, fell from common use, and are now only employed in special instances. Not only did this change occur, but faith in the curative action of drugs was shaken to its foundation, and thoughtful minds began to question the value of the universal physic-giving practice of former days, from "which scepticism" have arisen great improvements—"a rational selection" and "an improved mode of administration."

Modern therapeutics owes much to the past for many valuable remedies handed down to it, with an authority of the best possible kind—"the test of experience"—more to the application of chemical laws and to results of physiological experiments. Pathology teaches us the stern fact that many morbid conditions are out of the pale of therapeutical control. A careful watching of the efforts of nature herself under disease, unaided by medicines, has shown how powerful is the *vis medicatrix*; these two circumstances have contributed much that is valuable to the *reason-why* of modern medicine. I will now direct your attention to the application of some part of the above reasoning.

To chemistry we owe much that is effective and easily explainable in the employment of drugs, and for the simplification and multiplication of remedial agents. Gout and acute rheumatism are diseases attended with, if not wholly caused by, an accumulation of acid in the system, of uric acid in the former, and lactic acid in the latter. Modern medicine has brought chemistry to its assistance in both, and, by the alkaline treatment, may fairly claim to have diminished the severity and duration of the acute forms of both diseases. Both diseases are accompanied by pain, generally of a severe character; for its relief we have a remedy—colchicum for the one, and of the application of blisters to the swollen and affected joints for the other. For this plan of treatment of rheumatic pain, which experience proves to be most valuable, we are indebted to our able coadjutor Dr. Herbert Davies.

To the empiric experience of the past we are wholly indebted for the valuable specific colchicum—specific certainly it is, as it possesses no