THE MILROY LECTURES ON DARWINISM AND RACE PROGRESS.

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By JOHN BERRY HAYCRAFT, M.D., D.Sc., F.R.S.E.,
Professor of Physiology, University College, Cardiff.

[ABSTRACT.]

LECTURE III.—CRIME AND INCAPACITY.

MANY criminals, perhaps the greater number, are the creatures of accident, or of vicious training. Many are incapables, driven to crime through their incapacity. But over and above there are a band of innate criminals. The pedigree of many criminal families has been written, but perhaps the best known is that of the Jukes (written by R. L. Dugdale), who for seven generations contributed to the community as their share of effort an unparalleled history of pauperism and crime. In this, as in other cases, we have to eliminate the factor of personally acquired influence of parent upon child, of one companion upon another, and it is impossible to say how much of the residue is due to inheritance. We are bound, however, to assume this inherited tendency, for people of normal individuality tend by wider influences to adopt the average vices and virtues of the community in which they live. It is seldom that the history of crime can be traced, as in the Jukes family. Intermarriage, it might be assumed, is the most ready way of getting rid of criminal taints; but our inference is rather that the tendency has by intermarriage become in each case less, but that the cases are by so much the more multiplied. While we cannot cease to view the criminal as one organically diseased, we are also bound to provide that his strain shall stop with him, and not perpetuate itself. As Pitré remarks,¹ "Perpetual imprisonment of the irremediable—imprisonment not only nominally but really for life—would be among many causes of that change in the general tone of society which is shown by history to be the greatest preventive of crime as now understood."

Our forefathers were more discriminating in their treatment of "the poor" than we are, and even back into the reign of Henry VIII the line was drawn between "poor impotent sick and diseased folk, the sick in very deed and not able to work, who may be provided for, holpen and relieved, and such as be lusty, who having their limbs strong enough to labour, may be daily kept in continual labour whereby every one of them may get their living with their own hands." As physicians, we are compelled to draw still finer lines of distinction, and to separate the poor into classes. We have three distinct classes treated in the same way by the Poor Law: those brought to poverty by stress of circumstances, those who are by nature incapable of work, and those who are too lazy or improvident. Where laws or regulations are framed to deal with these three classes as if they formed one natural class, the greatest injustice of necessity follows. The law makers have to deal with the idle and vicious as well as with the deserving and distressed, and lumping these classes together and framing regulations to apply to all, some are of necessity treated more kindly than they deserve, and the others treated with unmerited brutality. To the habitual drunkards and criminals, to the idiots, insane, epileptics, and others suffering from severe constitutional defects, have to be added the vagrants who will not do, and cannot do, regular work.

We can hardly fail to see in this class in many cases the direct descendants of our more savage ancestry. These forefathers most probably have never mingled in the streams of civilisation that have flowed by their side. They have continued to exist by the primitive and precarious means adopted by early men to gain their livelihood. Here, clearly, is a case for segregation, as with the drunkard and others of this class. All are obviously unfit to perpetuate themselves, and in the interest of human kindness they should be prevented from so doing. But the criminal and incapable classes form only a small section of the community,

and we have seen that in all classes, owing to the removal of selective agencies, physical deterioration is in progress; we have now to see how innate mental capacity and good conduct are being affected. As regards general good conduct, one can hardly doubt that the habits of the community are daily progressing.

The improvement in general morality may be a matter greatly of education, but this will react upon the race by the premium for goodness which this establishes, and by the fact that the man of personal goodness will always obtain this premium, while the man of selfish disposition will rarely be able to disguise this inherent trait. When we turn to a study of those conditions which are modifying the general intellectual capacity of the race, we find that we are certainly giving an extended advantage to those who are intellectually capable, and withdrawing artificial props to the incapable.

The Scottish University has been the teaching organ of the whole people down to the small farmer, while the more modern development in Wales holds out university privileges to any member of the community provided with a sufficiency of industry and intellectual capacity. As a result of this more open competition we shall find that from those occupations which require the least skill, or which are in their nature unpleasant or injurious to health, the more capable workers constantly pass to other pursuits of a more attractive nature.

The rapidity of selection is greatly retarded at the present time by another factor which must not be overlooked. The unambitious and not very capable man takes to some occupation requiring little skill, and rapidly earns the full current wages of his occupation. He marries in consequence of this, and has in all probability a large family. His more ambitious brother, aspiring to a calling requiring skill or extended knowledge, undergoes a long training; he naturally, and of necessity, marries late in life, and has a small family. While, therefore, we are drawing the more capable together into classes by themselves, we are compelling them to be relatively sterile.

When we turn to the practical outcome of our study, it seems to me that, provided we accept "selection," we are bound to endeavour to apply this remedy as a means for producing race progression. Even if the present physical deterioration be not so great as I am inclined to believe, even if there be no signs of deterioration at all, we have in selective agencies a certain and tried means of improvement. I venture to think that it is not premature to ask the public to consider seriously the question of segregation, and the prevention of the immigration of the incapables of other nations. The transmission of diseased or feeble strains is a real and tangible evil; we all know too well of its existence, and all would be willing to prevent it. Once people have learnt to look farther ahead, and realise how much of the happiness of the future depends upon their present action, I cannot but believe that this will affect their attitude in respect to marriage. Not only will the feeble and diseased realise fully the consequences of hereditary transmission and dread their consequences, but if they marry they will do so in face of public opinion, perhaps public rule.

ON THE USE OF SUBLIMED SULPHUR AS A LOCAL APPLICATION IN DIPHTHERIA.

By CHRISTIAN G. H. BÄUMLER, M.D., F.R.C.P. LOND.,
Professor of Clinical Medicine in the University of Freiburg i. B.

IN No. 1714 of the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL for November 4th, 1893, p. 992, Mr. Robert Fair Frazer recalls the attention of the profession to the local use of sulphur in the treatment of diphtheria. Since first recommended in 1866 by Lagauterie this remedy has repeatedly found supporters in various countries, but has never come into more general use. This may be due to the manner in which, and the circumstances under which, it has occasionally been used, partly perhaps also to the unfavourable opinion pronounced upon it by such men as Jacobi of New York and Oertel of Munich, than whom, it is true, few physicians can claim a more extensive experience with diphtheria. Nevertheless, having for years

¹ *A History of Crime in England*, vol. ii, p. 579 and 580.