

Hence it is easy to believe that the effects of dissipation, or other transgressions of the laws of health, on an ordinarily good constitution, will descend, as they undoubtedly do, to the offspring.

There are but few individuals, comparatively, looking at the masses of the people, who are physically well proportioned—in whom every organ bears a proper or relative proportion, in size and in strength, to every other organ. One has a narrow contracted chest with perhaps a large head; and another a small head or a small heart with full well developed digestive organs. These are largely the results of heredity, of causes operating through successive generations.

It would be impossible to estimate the evil—large though it evidently is—the loss of stamina, of physical and intellectual vigor, the sickness, the suffering, the number of deaths, caused by hereditary influences. Dr. Bowditch, of Massachusetts, has endeavored to make an approximate estimate of the number of deaths so caused, and has arrived at the conclusion that there are 200,000 human beings annually slaughtered by hereditary diseases.

Besides the chronic diseases above named, scrofula, consumption, gout, syphilis, and insanity, which are regarded as hereditary, various others, such as asthma, heart disease, blindness and deafness, a tendency to hæmorrhages (bleedings), and apoplexy, are often transmitted, especially in predisposition, and hence these also are hereditary diseases.

LAWS OF HEREDITY.—The following may be cited as in accordance with the best received opinions of leading biologists in reference to the influences and laws of heredity:—

1. The influence of both parents on the physical constitution of the offspring is manifested in general personal resemblance, as in stature, feature, gesture, and color of eyes and hair. Some of the children bear a greater resemblance to the father, others to the mother. It is rare to meet with instances in which distinctive characteristics of both parents cannot be traced.

2. The influence of other near progenitors—grand-parents, uncles—on the physical constitution of progeny is manifested by the resemblances which make up what is known as atavism, and which may be explained as follows: A man inherits certain characteristics from either his father or his mother, but only a portion of these characteristics are developed or manifested in him, while others remain latent, but are perhaps developed in a brother or a sister. His son,