

injurious to them. I am sorry to say that most people attempt to hide their weaknesses, and the medical man is often obliged to form a judgment for himself. If, for example a mother be so unfortunate as to have a half-witted child, she feels bound to defend it against the ill-natured criticism of her neighbours, and by so doing she has gained the habit of extolling her child's merits to such a degree that, when in the presence of a strange medical man, she dilates on its remarkable qualities, of which quickness and cleverness constitute the principal features. The doctor is so accustomed to this that when the story is ended he generally concludes that the child is an idiot. The fondness of the mother makes her conduct explicable, but does not render it less foolish, for nothing is really so important in considering the question of health, and the prevention of disease, as the peculiar characteristics of each person, and the class of agents which are likely to affect him injuriously. The predisposition is vastly more important than many think. One of the most striking examples of this is seen in the case of twins. In a very interesting paper by Mr. Galton, he mentions some remarkable instances of twins living in different countries, and exposed therefore to different influences, yet having similar diseases break out upon them at the same moment, and even dying of the same complaint at the same age. And yet these diseases, had it not been for this remarkable coincidence would never have been regarded as having a constitutional origin. Even mental changes and insane delusions occurred exactly at the same period of age. The influence of sex in the transmission of peculiarities is also very important. Medical authors speak of some which descend on boys and others on girls. A case is related by an ophthalmic surgeon where all the children of a family squinted, the boys with the right eye and the girls with the left. Amongst horses, I am told, the fact of hereditary transmission of disease is most marked.

The reason why parents are often blind to the peculiarities of their children is owing to the fact that they themselves partake so much of the characters of their offspring. This is one great cause of evil training, whether it be mental, moral, or physical. A peculiarity or tendency to any remarkable characteristic is apt to be propagated to the offspring, and in them may even be exaggerated. The child not only is inclined to follow its instincts by pursuing a peculiar path, but is assisted on the way by the parent, who also instinctively regards the peculiarity as a merit or a virtue. If what I say is true, it is a fact of the utmost importance in considering the moral and