

a community with customs and fashions, and as subject to social influences, sexual relations, etc.

THE WHOLE SUBJECT OF HEALTH MAY BE CLASSIFIED and considered under the three following heads:—

First, as relates to hereditary influences and diseases, or to the predispositions or tendencies to disease, inherited from parents or grand-parents.

Second, as relates to moral and social influences or causes of disease,—as intemperance, immorality, unsuitable marriages, grief, anger, fear, etc.

Third, as relates to material causes of disease,—to impure air, impure water, unwholesome food, damp soil, general uncleanness, etc.

SECTION III.

HEREDITARY INFLUENCES OR CAUSES OF DISEASE.

MAN'S SURE INHERITANCE.—Man is made up chiefly, physically and morally, of the characteristics and peculiarities of his recent ancestors; more largely of those of his parents than of those of his grand-parents, and less largely still of those of his more remote ancestors. Form, feature, mental capacity, moral sense, are, by the laws of life, man's sure inheritance; subject, to be sure, to the influences of the conditions and circumstances by which he is surrounded. Is it then surprising that constitutional or organic defects may be, as they frequently are, transmitted from parent to offspring? It is well known that many chronic diseases—scrofula, consumption, gout, syphilis, and insanity, or a strong tendency to these, are thus transmissible. Small-pox, syphilis, and tubercles of consumption, and perhaps scarlet fever are the chief diseases which have been found to be directly transmissible, to exist in infants when born. But though benignant nature is thus sparing in the direct transmission of actual disease from parents to offspring, she is not equally sparing in transmitting disease tendencies or predispositions. That children inherit hidden weaknesses and defects of certain organs, by which such organs are prone to take on diseased action, is as well known as that they inherit outward bodily configuration and manifest peculiarities. Acquired accidental defects or the resulting symptoms may be transmitted. And experiments have shown that animals in which artificial epilepsy had been produced (as by cutting certain nerves) frequently gave birth to young that showed symptoms of epilepsy.