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Society Proceedings.

MEDICO-CHIRURGICAL SOCIETY OF MONTREAL.

Stated Meeting, Feb. 25th, 1887.

J. C. CAMERON, M.D., PRESIDENT, IN THE CHAIR.

Heredity.—Dr. W. G. JOHNSTON read a short paper on "Heredity of Acquired Peculiarities," which appeared in full in the April number of this JOURNAL.

Discussion.—Dr. SHEPHERD stated that those anatomical peculiarities which are characteristic of inferior animals are often transmitted for many generations; for instance, he had traced for two generations a well-marked supra-condyloid process. Deformities in the fingers and toes were often transmitted from one generation to another. He cited an instance where he had performed tenotomy for a peculiar formation of the toes in two generations. He knew of a family, each member of which was characterized for three generations by a preternaturally long first toe, possessing prehensile power.

Dr. MILLS said that Darwin did not seem to have been strongly given to speculation, and did not strive after a *final* explanation of his hypothesis. His Pangenesis, as an explanation of the facts of organic evolution, was by many biologists regarded as weak and unworthy of him. Brooks had attempted to show that the male generative element was concerned in *originating* variations, the female in *preserving* the existing form. If this were true, important conclusions followed. Medical men might throw some light on this and

kindred matters. Dr. Hughlings Jackson had applied evolution to the discussion of diseases of the nervous system in his usual masterly manner. Inasmuch as morphological explanations never can be final, it was remarkable that physiological solutions had not been invoked prior to this time. Dr. Mills believed the solution must eventually come through physiology; in fact, quite recently Dr. Romanes had introduced "physiological selection" as supplementary to "natural selection," etc. Certainly at the present time the most thoughtful biologists feel the need of something additional to the Darwinian factors to give a complete explanation of organic evolution, which might now be considered, as Huxley called it, a "demonstration." Dr. Mills thought the time had now come for medical societies to discuss such broad generalizations of science in their bearing on their own science and profession. The question of the heredity or non-heredity of acquired peculiarities was especially within the scope of physicians, and one they could do much towards settling. He hoped to be able to lay before the Society some views of his own on the subject of organic evolution, in some of its aspects, at a future time.

Dr. TRENHOLME, referring to Brooks' theory, stated that he had noticed several cases where the permanence was on the male side. He had in one case traced polydactylism through three generations on the male side, and in another case the male members of a family were for several generations characterized by peculiar teeth.

Dr. HINGSTON referred to the fact that the practice of flatheaded Indians of flattening the frontal bone of their infants for many generations