

bougie, No. 19, was passed, meeting with some resistance at each stricture. Electrode No. 20 passed all three strictures in half an hour. October 20th the strictures were defined by bougie à boule 21, 22 passing with slight difficulty. Another operation was begun, but when, in about 15 minutes, electrode No. 25 had become engaged in the first stricture, the patient suddenly became faint, and nothing further was attempted. He has not since been seen.

CASE 4. J. C., twenty-eight years old, began to have symptoms of stricture four years ago, and complete retention two years ago. On examination he was found to have a series of strictures, gradually diminishing in size from 25 at  $1\frac{3}{4}$  inches to 11 at  $3\frac{3}{4}$  inches and at 5 inches. August 23rd electrode No. 15 was passed to the first of the two narrowest strictures (11), but failed to pass in 20 minutes. This operation was followed by no constitutional symptoms, but by increased discharge, difficult and painful micturition, and a great deal of swelling and induration about the seat of the stricture. The size of the stricture was apparently unchanged. It was deemed advisable to discontinue this treatment, and gradual dilatation was substituted. A smaller electrode would probably have been better in this case, but was not at hand.

#### MEDICINE.

##### The Neuropathic Diathesis or the Diathesis of the Degenerate.

Perhaps no subject has either greater interest or broader bearings than that which has been taken as the title of a recent paper in *The Journal of Mental Science*. It has recently been brought into prominence by the brutal act resulting in the death of officer Rutledge doing duty as guard at the Central Prison, Toronto. Neil, the murderer, has suffered death for his crime and society has avenged itself, or perhaps it were better to say has thought that it has performed its duty in protecting itself, by having the extreme penalty of the law carried out as a warning to evil-doers, or rather to those with a tendency to do evil. But the matter has not ended here. While we cannot agree that the theory of non-responsibility can for one moment be accepted as a sufficient reason why executive clemency should have stepped in to commute the sentence of death, yet once more we have the problem thrust upon us, both from the social and medical side, of how these terrible evidences of the existence of

moral evil, conjointly with physical degeneracy, are to be lessened or eradicated from a nation whose official insane have reached the frightful total of 1 in 620 of the population. In an article in our February number we referred to the pleasing statistics indicating the tendency of genius and special gifts to become hereditary, and noted the examples given us by Galton of the *Roscoves*, the *Darwins* and the *Hills*. Dr. Revington, in the paper referred to at the commencement of this article says, "When we view the purpose and the progress of the animal world from the scientific standpoint, we find that life is a cycle, beginning in an ovum and coming round to an ovum again, and the history of the human race, the failure and triumphs of nations, the loves and hates, the baseness and nobility of individuals, often take the mere by-play of ovum-bearing organisms. . . . Moreover, we make man in our own image, after our own likeness, and endow him with the characteristics we have inherited from our ancestors, and with those we have created for good or evil in our life. One of the oldest books teaches us that the sins of the fathers will be visited upon the children to the third and fourth generations, and we might go further and say that physiological sins will penalize the race for many generations, and even lead to its utter extinction, unless counteracted by the strong antidotes of physiological morality, perfect hygienic conditions and judicious marriage with untainted breeds. This great law of Heredity seems to me to be the corollary of the general law that the life of the individual organism is the recapitulation of its ancestral history. As in the hourly changes of early intra-uterine life we reproduce some characteristics of our Piscine, Batrachian or Avian ancestors, so in the more protracted stages of later intra-uterine life and of independent existence we reproduce the physical and mental features of our human progenitors. And the features of the parents produce more effect than those of our grand-parents, and so on in lessening degree till the influence of the primordial parent is lost in the accumulation of the influences of more recent ancestors. And as we endeavor to advance to our higher developments—

Move upward, working out the beast,  
And let the ape and tiger die,

we find that it is the more recent influences of the race which are most difficult to eradicate."