

intoxications of the same order. Here what is transmitted is a constitutional state, and that constitutional state may manifest itself in more than one way, but no one will deny that this is truly inheritance of an acquired condition.

We must, therefore, I hold, be prepared to admit the possibility of the transmission in inheritance of certain orders of acquired constitutional conditions—we must see that it is not necessary, with Weismann, to deny strenuously the inheritance of each and every order of acquired defect, and that along the lines of some such theory as that outlined this evening we gain a fuller harmony between theoretical considerations regarding the nature of inheritance and the facts as they present themselves to us day after day.

CONCLUSION.—Within the time at my disposal it has been impossible to touch upon many aspects of inheritance which interest us as medical men—upon spontaneous variations and their transmission, upon inbreeding and marriage of consanguines, upon degeneration as distinct from atavism, upon the particular problems of inheritance of nervous conditions, to mention but a few. It seems to me, however, that this conception of the properties of idioplasm is adequate to bring together and harmonize the facts we possess concerning all of the above-mentioned conditions.

Let me conclude with Weismann's apology: "Hypothesis, even when not absolutely right, may be of value in advancing our knowledge, if only they are relatively right, *i. e.*, when they correspond with the state of existing knowledge. They are like the feelers which the short-sighted snail stretches forth on its darkened path, testing this way and that, and withdrawing them and altering the route so soon as they come across any obstacle." (18).

I must, gentlemen, ask your forgiveness for bringing before you a subject so far outside the line of general medical thought, and for having inflicted on you so much that is theoretical. That was not my intention when I sat down to prepare the paper. I had intended to indulge in the main in a destructive criticism, to point out how Weismann's and allied theories fail to satisfy certain orders of conditions presenting themselves to medical men; but as I proceeded with the task it became obvious that mere destructive criticism was valueless, that it became imperative to present an alternative theory which for many months—I may truly say years—had been simmering within me, unexpressed..