

THE CANADIAN JOURNAL.

NEW SERIES.

No. XCV.—JULY, 1877.

LEFTHANDEDNESS.

BY DANIEL WILSON, LL.D., F.R.S.E.

Under the title of "Righthandedness," the specialities of this common attribute of man, and the sources and characteristics of the occasional deviation from it, have been discussed in a former paper.* I now propose, under the present title, to supplement it with some additional suggestions and illustrations.

If righthandedness can be referred to any anatomical cause—such as the position of the viscera, their relative weight on the two sides of the body, the development of the subclavian arteries, or the predominance of one of the cerebral hemispheres,—then its general prevalence, or assumed universality, among all races and in all ages, is easily accounted for; and lefthandedness may be traced, with reasonable probability, to a reversal of the normal anatomical conditions of the body. But no theory is of any value which fails to account for the exceptional lefthandedness, no less than for the prevalent righthandedness. The evidence of righthandedness as a predominant habit is obvious; but its source is not yet certainly determined, and acquires a fresh interest in so far as this natural endowment or habit is peculiar to man.

If righthandedness is referable to anatomical causes, some traces of it may be looked for among mammalia generally, and especially

* Canadian Journal, N. S., Vol. xiii, p. 193.