

The Canadian Journal of Medicine and Surgery

A JOURNAL PUBLISHED MONTHLY IN THE INTEREST OF
MEDICINE AND SURGERY

VOL. III.

TORONTO, APRIL, 1898.

NO. 4.

Original Contributions.

PERVERSION.*

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PERVERSION implies a change of some sort, and usually in a bad or unfortunate sense; evolution, a long series of gradual changes. Any change, however, from that which is authorized and usual and in vogue usually meets with popular suspicion and disfavor. To use the word in the more scientific sense, however, it merely implies a change or a departure.

The term has recently been set aside by writers on mental disease to signify an apparent distortion of the sexual instincts; and the object of the present paper is to discuss how far these changes or perversions are really the result of disease, and how far they may be explained by the law of evolution—to what extent, in fact, they are purely morbid, and to what extent not.

Darwin and the school of writers which has gathered about him show plainly that evolution is a general law which can be very distinctly seen running through the whole history of animal and vegetable life. The law of degeneration and disintegration is equally obvious. The principle of perpetual change is not always, therefore, an unfortunate circumstance, but one of the laws of development.

There are, however, two distinct varieties of change—one peculiar to the processes of evolution, and one peculiar to the processes of disease. The changes which take place in evolutionary development are, so to speak, homogeneous. They are changes in intensity—an exaggeration of a certain function which at first appears to partake of the nature of a deformity, or a decrease of a

*Read before the Toronto Medical Society.