it would require one as deeply versed in biology as Professor Huxley himself to criticise the lectures from that point of view; but we all may, and must, consider the serious aspect of certain questions raised in this pronouncement. These lectures are especially valuable as showing to the more thoughtful members of our profession where we stand to-day—according to the teaching of present-day biology, to which we are invited to listen, and to which we give a respectful hearing on account of its elaborate and laborious research. The especial value to which I refer, however, arises from the conclusions which are now, after thirty-five years of the doctrines of Darwinism, put before us as medical men, and which, it is feared, may go out to the public as final. Is it not true, and somewhat in danger of being forgotten, that the “law of evolution” with its different branches remains, after an unparalleled amount of enthusiastic study, an *unproved theory*? This was emphatically brought before the scientific world by Professor Virchow a few years ago. If this be so, it seems premature to advance such deductions as are drawn in these lectures, unless it be to anticipate the fall of evolution from its throne by a *reductio ad absurdum* applied to a very large branch of that law.

We are told that there is reason to believe that, on account of improved external conditions, and notably the sanitary advances due to the efforts of preventive medicine, the race is deteriorating in general constitutional robustness, and that this deterioration is due largely to the removal of certain selective agencies. These propositions, if established, go very near to a complete disproof of the theory of progress by natural selection as applied to the races of mankind. We are now urged to take the progress of the human race, by our own act, out of the influence of natural selection, which has become unequal to the task. We should have thought that civilisation and the advance of sanitary science would be looked upon as integral parts of evolution and race-progress rather than as tending to a process of race-destruction. It is asked, Why should the microbe select? Why not public humanity and public reason, since selection there must be? This notion reminds one of the proceedings of an intelligent gardener operating upon non-intelligent organisms and puts the State, guided by medical opinion, into the honoured position occupied hitherto by the microbe *et hoc genus omne*. It is now artificial, not natural, selection which is to prevail. “Preventive medicine is trying a unique experiment, and the result is already discernible—race decay”; so that now in 1894 the experiment has gone far enough and must be modified. The individual has been largely benefited, but the experiment is inimical to race progress. One may remark in passing that in all this teaching we seem to be preparing to go back to the crude doctrines of Plato as to the duty of the State to eliminate the weakly and useless members of the community, ignoring the very genius of the Christian religion, which separates it from others, by which the lowest, vilest, and outcast members of the community are deemed worthy of being rescued and improved. This principle of raising the fallen, of helping the helpless, runs throughout all the beneficent work of the medical profession, and our warfare, and that of philanthropists and ministers of religion, is dead against all the selective agencies spoken of as friends of the human race. But perhaps for centuries the more enlightened men and women have been mistaken as to what progress means; for certainly hitherto general constitutional robustness has been considered as only one of the important factors of progress. If the conclusions of these lectures be true, and our minds dwell for a moment on the army of earnest workers engaged in the study of the prevention and cure of such diseases as tubercle, insanity, and alcoholism—and on all that has been done to improve prisons, remove gaol-fever, and keep prisoners alive; to establish reformatories and orphan homes; to change lunatic asylums from criminal prisons into hospitals for the cure of the insane; to diminish intemperance; to bring, if possible, public opinion to bear upon the horrors of Siberian prisons; and to avert the “selective influence” of the battle-field—we may well stand appalled in thinking of the amount of evil in hindering race-progress which the workers in these fields have wrought. We have indeed been glorying in our shame. The introduction of a higher standard of comfort into the community is looked upon as one of the foes to race progress, and yet, if any prophecy be safe, it is clear that socialism, more or less, must prevail in civilised countries, however we may deplore many of its tendencies; but socialism is gaining ground in the masses in all civilised nations, and with the masses the chief power will surely rest. One of the cardinal doctrines of socialism is the raising of

the standard of the comforts of life in the commonwealth, which involves the diminution of the need for self-help, and thus, we are told, race decay. So that we see that the immense and growing movement of socialism and the general trend of human benevolent desires and efforts are in many ways adverse to race progress if the teaching of these lectures be true. The important questions must be asked, Is continuous progress the destiny of the human race? and are we racially “as everlasting as life itself”? The failure of natural selection admitted in these lectures would answer, “No!” But surely there are other tribunals besides that of biology before which these questions may be brought?

I am, Sirs, yours truly,

March 13th, 1894.

WALTER KIDD, M.D. Lond.

AN ALLEGED ANTIDOTE TO MORPHIA.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Three or four weeks ago a sensational article appeared in the *New York Herald* stating that Dr. Moon had discovered a means of making morphia harmless by the administration of permanganate of potash. He had been experimenting for some time on himself, and, finally, sure of his result, he offered to swallow three grains of morphia before a medical society. The members refused to be a party to his suicide, and even the chemist would not consent to weigh out the three grains. Dr. Moon persisted in his demonstration, when a number of medical men left the room; but after the morphia and antidote had been swallowed he was none the worse, and the news of the discovery of an antidote for morphia poisoning and chronic morphine habit was telegraphed to the world. To anyone acquainted with the question it was obvious that a man who had been experimenting upon himself with morphia for some time might easily have acquired a tolerance to the extent of three grains for the drug, and as regards the morphia habit it is impossible to see in what way what practically comes (if it is true) to the neutralisation of the drug can be any advance upon simply suppressing it. On March 1st the *Herald* printed another article, to which I replied in a letter which was inserted on the 5th. No doubt Dr. Moon is of good faith, and when he sees his fallacy, should there be one, he will acknowledge it, but in the meantime it is not unlikely that speculators whose interest is to follow up any plausible new treatment—and we have had too many cases within the last few years—will entice the public to a method which has not a shadow of possible success.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,

Avenue Kleber, Paris, March 13th, 1894.

OSCAR JENNINGS.

CHICKEN-POX IN ADULTS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—The recognition of the fact that chicken-pox does occasionally attack adults is just now of importance. Twice during the past two years I have been called in consultation where small-pox was suspected and in which the disease proved to be chicken-pox. The patients in each case were young adults. The vesicular eruption was well marked, and the umbilicated appearance of some of the vesicles led to the suspicion of small-pox.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,

March 13th, 1894.

JOHN C. THRESH.

METHOD IN CLINICAL EXAMINATION.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—It seems that at the clinical examinations in medicine held by the London Conjoint Board a great deal of importance is attached to the *method* of examining the patient, and less to the correct diagnosis of the case. Method certainly is essential; but all candidates cannot be aware of the particular one required by the examiners, and most of them, unless possibly forewarned by clinical teaching in London, attempt to make diagnosis as quickly as possible, and believe that it is an advantage to do so. Probably the examiners expect an examinee to go beside the patient with a mind wholly without bias, and then to work in a formal, mechanical