yet said little of the book itself, and we need only cordially recommend it to our readers. The enthusiasm of friendship has never induced the author to transgress the limits of sober fact and positive experience, and his graceful history of what Conolly achieved and of the motives that stimulated him to his work, can hardly be read without exciting in all minds a desire to finish a task that has been so well begun.—*Times.*

THE INFLUENCE OF THE DISEASES OF EARLY LIFE ON THE PRODUCTION OF INSANITY.

The following, taken from the *Scotsman*, is an extract from Dr. A. Mitchell s last Morisonian lecture on "The Causes of Insanity":—In what are called the diseases of childhood we have, I think, the richest of all the causes of idiocy and imbecility. It is a great practical mistake, but one which is often made, to regard these forms of insanity as necessarily congenital, for not more than 30 per cent. of the idiocy of the country has an intra-uterine origin. The extra-uterine causes of idiocy are very numerous, and the foremost of them is found in the diseases of early life. These of themselves produce more of the idiocy among us than all the other causes put together. This is a fact which has never received the attention its importance unquestionably deserves. The diseases to which I refer, in a very large number of instances, inflict injuries on the brain which are at once productive of idiocy or imbecility. This result may be immediately produced, yet may not be immediately manifest, because an impairment of the imperfectly developed infant mind is not so striking as an impairment of mind in a higher state of growth. The fall in fact is not so great, but there is a fall from which there is no rising, and its seriousness becomes every year increasingly evident from the absence of that development which should come with advancing years. But these diseases of childhood are not simply the direct producers of those forms of insanity which we call idiocy and imbecility. They indirectly cause a large amount of the insanity of later life. They injure the whole constitution. They enfeeble the power to resist adverse influences when these occur. They originate predispositions to disease generally, and strengthen inherited predispositions. In an especial manner they are apt to leave injurious effects on the nervous centres, even when they do not at the time so derange them as to cause positive states of disease. An instability of the nervous system is induced, and epileptiform, choreic, hysterical, or neuralgic affections may appear ultimately, as the expression of a mischief which was thus done in early life. So also insanity may eventually present itself as the fruit of the seed then planted. In the remoteness of the effect from the cause the connection may be obscure. But I feel safe in asserting that, if carefully looked for, which it rarely is, a clear connection will oftener be found than is imagined, in a chain of events, the interpretation of which is not difficult. My attention has been directed to this subject for many years, and in some respects my opportunities of investigation have been unusual. What has come under my notice could have led to no other opinion, as to the importance of these causes, than that which I have now expressed, and which it is my desire to make emphatic. Many diseases do harm in this way; but the three which do most harm, I think, are scarlet fever, hooping-cough, and measles. During the twelve years from 1855 to 1866 inclusive, scarlet fever opened the graves of 31,415 children in Scotland; hooping cough brought death to 25,031 more; while 15,260 were born to die of measles. These are large numbers for a little country like ours. The three diseases together were only propitiated by the massacre of 71,706 innocents, or about 6000 annually. But the number of the slain on the field of battle does not limit the measure of the evils of war. Nor is the whole mischief which these three diseases accomplish revealed by the number of those they kill. It would be folly to say that they injure no one who escapes with life. The very reverse is

the fact. They inflict injuries of all degrees of gravity short of death on a far larger number than the number of those who perish. How many children attacked by one of the three diseases 72,000 deaths would mean I cannot positively tell; but we cannot be far wrong if we estimate the number of the gravely and permanently injured as equal at least to the number of the killed. That itself would yield us, in twelve years, a stock of 72,000 subjects, rich in acquired predispositions to diseases generally, and to insanity among others, and certain to contribute liberally, at some time or other, to the roll of the insane. Far from unfrequently this contribution will be instantly paid in the shape of idiocy; at other times we may have to wait, but not long; but most frequently of all, it is not till manhood that, under the influence of adverse circumstances, insanity is arrived at, through the evil done in childhood by these diseases. In addition to all this, there are countless cases in which the mischief never goes beyond a mere enfeeblement of mental power, or lowering of the mental and moral tone. The cerebral nervous centre is easily injured in early life. Death, indeed, often comes through such injuries. But I beg to point out that even temporary congestions or derangements of nutrition in the brain, during the period of its active growth, seem to produce changes in it, from which perfect recovery is less frequent than is generally thought, being not always complete when it seems complete. Whether it is a necessity that these diseases should prevail among us to their present great extent is a question which does not properly fall to be discussed here, yet I cannot avoid allusion to it. The notion that all children should and must have them is perhaps more and worse than popular, and cannot fail to do harm by weakening the desire to check their spread. Surely, if we really wished it, diseases which are communicated as these are could at least be made of less frequent occurrence. The diseases of the young are admittedly in a large proportion preventible diseases. Being to a great extent of the nature of epidemics, they cut off the robust as well as the feeble, while many of the robust whom they do not cut off they render feeble. "It is futile," Dr. Gull says, "if not worse, to speak, as some do, of leaving diseases to work out their own ends, as agents of a moral police. Medicine allows no such prerogative to our judgment. It is enough for us that diseases prevail to stimulate our best efforts for their prevention, without asking a question beyond." To extirpate the three diseases of early life, to which we have here had reference, would be a blessing to mankind beyond all weighing. To do nothing more than diminish their frequency would repay any efforts I can conceive, since it would also diminish, not bodily suffering and disease only, but madness, vice, unproductiveness, poverty, and sorrow.