

# SCIENCE

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 1888.

THE YELLOW-FEVER IN JACKSONVILLE, although of a mild type and attended by an unusually small mortality, has become epidemic there. The United States Marine Hospital Service, under the authority given it by the new quarantine law and previous acts of Congress, has undertaken to prevent the spread of the disease from the infected points in Florida to other cities of the country. It is certain that every person, and every article of clothing, baggage, or of any other description, that comes out of Jacksonville, is in danger of conveying the infection to points which it otherwise might not reach. This is Surgeon-General Hamilton's justification for his order forbidding any person, baggage, or mail-matter to pass the quarantine station at Waycross, Ga., which is so situated as to intercept all railway-passengers from Florida, if from an infected district, without a quarantine of ten days for persons and a thorough disinfection of all clothing, baggage, and mail-matter. This, of course, causes very great inconvenience to those people of Jacksonville who desire to leave the city for healthful points in the North; but Dr. Hamilton has provided a refugee-camp, where any person may spend the period of quarantine free of expense, and in as much comfort as it is possible to give under the circumstances. These are the precautions that have been taken to protect the sixty millions of the people of the United States from sickness and death. It is unfortunate for the comparative few who have to suffer by detention in Jacksonville and other infected points in Florida; but the fact that more than a month has passed since the disease first appeared in Jacksonville, Tampa, and other points in Florida, and that not an authentic case has yet been reported as having occurred this side of the government quarantine station, is more than an ample justification for every thing Surgeon-General Hamilton has done. It may be that the yellow-fever will yet be carried to points outside of Florida. The most careful precautions are necessarily imperfect: they may sometimes be evaded, in spite of the most vigilant watchfulness. But every day that the contagious disease is confined within its present limits shortens the time that its ravages can continue elsewhere before the autumn frosts cut it short in its destructive career, and saves precious lives that else might have been sacrificed. If Surgeon-General Hamilton should succeed in preventing the spread of the yellow-fever beyond Florida, he will have rendered a service to the country that can never be measured in money. He deserves the most cordial support, which he is receiving, not only from the government, but also from the public press and enlightened public sentiment throughout the country.

IN A RECENT NUMBER of *The Medical News* appeared a note from a correspondent whose professional eminence is an unqualified indorsement of the accuracy of his observation, in which he writes, "I have recently seen in the medical journals that Dugald Stewart was once asked what was the earliest thing he could remember. He said it was being left alone by his nurse in the cradle, and resolving to tell of her as soon as he could speak. This may have been copied as a joke; but it brings to my mind the following statement that I have made from time to time for many years, which has always been received with derision, but which is a perfectly distinct remembrance in my mind: I remember being jolted over the crossings in a baby-wagon by a nurse, and resolving to tell of her as soon as I could speak." In reading the above, it occurred to us that it would not be amiss to ask the

writer how he knew that there was such a thing as speech, and that he would ever be able to exercise that faculty.

THE ATTENTION OF OUR READERS has already been called to the passage by the Legislature of New York of an act substituting death by electricity for that by hanging as a punishment for crime. It will be remembered that Dr. William A. Hammond regarded the change as an unwise one, and presented a paper to the Society of Medical Jurisprudence on the 'Superiority of Hanging as a Method of Execution.' The society concurred in the views therein expressed, and protested against the passage of the law. In the *Asclepiad*, Dr. B. W. Richardson agrees in the main with Dr. Hammond. He believes that death by hanging is painless, and that the "process of hanging looks brutal without actually being so." He is especially severe on those who advocate the change. He says, "In disgust at the foolish barbarism of the time which keeps up the crime of capital murder, the humanitarian fraternity, afraid to support the sound and logical policy of abolition of the extreme offence, tries to dally with reason and conscience by the attempt to divest execution of all pain and all terrors. Euthanasia for the worst of criminals, by the side of so-called natural but often most cruel death for the rest of mankind, is practically the proposition, — a proposition which carries with it its own condemnation." In regard to the practicability of the new law, he expresses a great deal of doubt. In some experiments on the application of the electric discharge for the painless extinction of the lives of animals to be used as food, this mode of death was found to be any thing but certain. Sheep stricken apparently into instant and irrevocable death by electricity, after a few minutes showed signs of life, and were despatched in the ordinary way by the knife; and a large dog perfectly unconscious, and to all appearance dead, from the stroke of a powerful battery, was submitted to a surgical operation during unconsciousness, and afterwards made a sound and easy recovery. In most cases the electric shock will kill at one discharge, but exceptionally it will simply stun, and may induce the semblance of death instead of the real event. Dr. Richardson thinks that it will be real humanity, therefore, for the authorities of New York to supplement death by electricity by a post-mortem examination of the victims, so that the execution may not be crowned by burying the victims alive.

## ON THE ALLEGED MONGOLIAN AFFINITIES OF THE AMERICAN RACE.<sup>1</sup>

WERE the question I am about to discuss one of merely theoretical bearings, I should not approach it; but the widespread belief that the American tribes are genealogically connected with the Mongolians is constantly directing and coloring the studies of many Americanists, very much as did at one time the belief that the red men are the present representatives of the ten lost tribes of Israel. It is practically worth while, therefore, to examine the grounds on which the American race is classed by these anthropologists as a branch of the Mongolian, and to inquire whether the ancient culture of America betrayed any positive signs of Mongolian influence.

You will permit me to avoid the discussion as to what constitutes races in anthropology. To me they are zoölogical sub-species, marked by fixed and correlated characteristics, impressed so firmly that they have suffered no appreciable alteration within the historic period either through time or environment. In this sense, Blumen-

<sup>1</sup> Paper read by Daniel G. Brinton, M.D., before the American Association for the Advancement of Science, at its meeting in Cleveland, O., Aug. 15-22, 1888.