

GENIUS AND EUGENICS

BY
EDWARD EARLE PURINTON

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Genius and Eugenics*

By EDWARD EARLE PURINTON

Author of

"Efficient Living," "The Triumph of the Man Who Acts," "Daily Guide to Efficiency," "How to Be Happy," "Lords of Ourselves," "Philosophy of Fasting," "Efficiency for Drugless Doctors," etc.

The wealth of a nation lies in the work of its men of genius. By their work the wealth is produced.

Five men control the money power of the United States. Each of these men has a giant intellect, by which he runs giant industries, and reaps giant rewards. If we had a hundred men of the genius of these five, we could in a generation control the money power of the world.

Money power is man power, and every great fortune was built on the

*This paper was delivered as an address before the American Association for the Advancement of Science, at the annual convention recently held in Columbus, Ohio, under the auspices of the Ohio State University. The Editor believes that our readers will be gratified at this recognition of the value of Mr. Purinton's work, given by the scientific society generally regarded as the highest tribunal in the United States.
—The Editor.

pattern of a great mind. Hence the financial problem of the United States is how to create a sufficient number of great minds focused on the production, distribution, and conservation of wealth.

We plan, very properly, to develop and protect our national resources. What are they? **Men.** Farms and cities and railroads and factories and bonds and credits—all these are the brain and sinew, blood and heart of men.

If we plan a water supply for a city, do we merely sound the pipes and measure the faucets? Do we not first prove the quality and quantity of the water, the size and safety of the reservoir? The daily thought of the American worker is the blood-stream of American industry; and the American home is the reservoir where the stream begins to flow. Clean, vital, copious, rapid, original thought is the great fructifier of human progress. To improve and increase a nation's thought-supply is to freshen all the arteries of trade, finance, invention, science, and education. Only about three people in a hundred ever do original thinking; upon these three people depends the future of the world.

One great man is worth to his country a thousand miles of coast line. For, if he be great enough, he can evolve a plan to render it unassailable in times

of war, and another plan to double its fruitfulness in times of peace. We know that scientific management has frequently doubled the output and halved the cost of industrial operations. We know that intensive farming has brought leisure, comfort and resource to many a rural family. Why should such inventions as scientific management and intensive farming be confined to individual enterprise, when the nation's productivity needs them so much more? Why should not the **type of genius that invents these things** be studied, classified, nurtured and reproduced? This, to me, is the real problem of the science of tomorrow; and the sooner we face it, the more we shall do for prosperity.

Suppose we had in this country a hundred men of the mental fibre and efficiency of Edison, Maxim, Bell, Burbank, Steinmetz, Hammond, Wright. Then suppose we could employ them for a year, jointly or separately, on the problem of national defense. They could, we may assume, by their wits, fortify the coast line of this country to such a degree that no foreign nation would dare attack us merely by its weapons. The wars to come will be fought by wits, not by weapons; and the nation will conquer that supplies the most brains, not the most bullets. Now is the time for us to begin to mould the brains; while other nations,

in the folly of medieval blindness, are still moulding bullets.

Here is a concrete example of what we might have done. The submarine was invented, authorities declare, by an American. If, a generation ago, we had put into effect a national system of locating, measuring and evolving genius, we could have owned the secret of the submarine, produced by this time an undersea fleet the strongest in the world, and prevented the loss of thousands of lives and millions of dollars in the sinking of the **Lusitania** and scores of other ships. But we allowed the American-made submarine to boom German-made warfare. Now also it promotes English-made sovereignty, and Heaven only knows how many other nations will profit by the invention of American brains. We have brains, but we have not brains enough to use them.

Not, however, is the production of war-machines, but rather is the elimination of them, to be achieved by men who have learned how to think. A fighter is universally stupid. Lacking wisdom, he rushes for a weapon. The soldier is a mental defective, he belongs in a kindergarten for abnormal children. The war in Europe came because there were a hundred trained fighters to one trained thinker, and the rule of each nation at war had been given to the fighters, instead of to the

thinkers. America has heart peace because she has a headpiece, that headpiece being Woodrow Wilson. The test of the soldier of tomorrow will be not how straight and how far he can shoot, but how straight and how far he can **think**. By this test, the commander-in-chief of the armies of the world would be the man we now call President of the United States.

Let us quote from the President. He said, in his message to Congress of December, 1915: "The real strength of the nation comes not from armaments and mere safeguards of written law. It comes from her people, their energy, their success in their undertakings, their free opportunity to use natural resources." Now the energy, the success, the ability and opportunity of a man or nation can be increased from 50 to 500 per cent, by a scientific application of recent discoveries in psychology, physiology, paidology, and efficiency work. Why should not the creation and cultivation of the exceptional mind, commonly termed the genius, be the real aim of eugenics?

I hesitate here. I approach that word "eugenics" with all the trepidation I should feel in handling a premature egg-shell dipped in tar. The subject is delicate as an egg-shell, it has come forth prematurely, and is now enveloped in the tar of popular misunderstanding. The present-day apostles

of so-called eugenics are mostly divided between psychiatry and sentimentality—both divisions being abnormal. We have on the one side a materialistic group of doctors, surgeons, chemists, biologists and gynecologists, who see only the crude physical aspects of marriage, birth and child-culture. We have on the other side a poetic, phantasmic, unreliable group of sex reformers, who would violate the laws of physics in straining after the dreams of metaphysics. Between the two, I prefer the latter—but only because they are harmless. Neither group is scientific.

Let me illustrate. A prominent agitator in this field has published a lengthy treatise, which he calls "Practical Eugenics." He divides the subject into four chapters, describing four measures that he urges us to adopt. These are (1) Control and limitation of offspring; (2) Marriage license based on physician's certificate; (3) Sterilization of the feeble-minded, degenerate and criminal; (4) Venereal prophylaxis. Not a word of the mental, emotional and spiritual factors of eugenics; and the utmost in the **physical** realm that this reformer knows, a mere table of pathological injunctions! Yet he is a noted professor and president of a medical society—a dangerous man to be at large, because of his position.

At the other extreme is the vague

metaphysician, who announces that a prospective mother can make of her child whatever she will, merely by thinking in a certain way! To follow either of these paranoiacs is to run the risk of ruining your marriage. The "eugenic" marriage of today is a happy combination of the ideality of a stockyard with the practicality of a humming bird. No wonder the newspapers have chronicled the failure of many of these blind unions! The premature exploitation of any reform is likely to be worse than the evil which the reform aims to cure.

It must be years, perhaps decades, before eugenics will assume the reality and authority of a science. But the development of supernormal intellects may begin at once. And I am more concerned with present action than with future speculation. In almost every classroom, certainly in every school of America today, will be found one or more supernormal children. What is being done with them, for them, by means of them? Nothing. Special classes have been formed, unique methods devised, exceptional teachers employed, for the benefit of abnormal children, and subnormal children. But the supernormal child, the flower and hope of the race, is left alone and forgotten, often abused, always misunderstood, the most neglected child—and the most needy and worthy

of sympathy, care, training. There are probably 1,000 pupils in our schools and colleges who, if given the proper understanding and education, would become intellectual and moral giants ten or twenty years from now. Why let so huge a national asset go to waste? Why devote hundreds of thousands of dollars to the mere housing and safeguarding of the delinquents and degenerates—but not a penny to the location, protection and direction of the born genius? Have we “natural resources” more worthy of conservation than the master minds among us?

We can learn here a lesson from organized baseball. The managers of the national leagues have on their payroll a number of trained “scouts,” who regularly tour the ball-grounds and athletic fields of the country, for the purpose of discovering and trying out the young fellows with superior talents for baseball. Should the genius in athletics be more highly esteemed, more vigorously sought, more carefully developed, than the genius in commerce, finance, music, art, science, literature? A corps of trained **psychological** scouts might well be employed by the United States Government, for the purpose of locating, analyzing and educating the boys and girls of marked abilities and unusual proclivities. Years would perhaps be required for the training of this corps of practical psychologists and

character analysts. Meanwhile a system of blank forms could be worked out for the different grades from kindergarten to college, a supply of these papers mailed to every teacher in the country, and by means thereof each pupil be graded as to mental possibilities. For the exceptional child or youth, classes or courses of special training might be instituted, or some prize tuition be offered on a plan resembling that of the Rhodes scholarships at Oxford. To allow the exceptional child to be taught by the average teacher is unfair to both child and teacher. A better way must be found.

We would suggest the appointment or election of a National Eugenics Commission, by the Government or by a group of learned societies. The Commission should be formed not of special pleaders or wild fanatics but of normal men and women who by supernormal effort have reached a supernormal plane of skill and power in their respective fields. We take the liberty of mentioning a few names of desirable members of such a board: Dr. Lyman Abbott, Miss Jane Addams, Prof. Felix Adler, Dr. S. Josephine Baker, Mrs. O. H. P. Belmont, Luther Burbank, Dr. Alexis Carrel, Ex-President Charles W. Elliot, Bishop Samuel Fallows, Henry Ford, Judge Elbert H. Gary, Prof. Elmer Gates, Mrs. George Gould, Dr. Luther H. Gulick, John Hays Ham-

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What would be the work of the National Eugenics Commission? To offer counsel and direction for a series of undertakings like these.

1. The collection into a single library of all the published books, reports and essays bearing on eugenics and allied themes.

2. The investigation of all worthy methods now being pursued by doctors, chemists, biologists, teachers, ministers and parents in all parts of the world, looking toward the production of a higher grade of humanity.

3. The examination of the master minds of the country, and of the causes of their supernormal growth, whether from heredity, prenatality, birth, environment, association, education, or other moulding influences.

4. The classification of the factors and constituents of genius, and of the

practical methods of creating and promoting it.

5. The compilation, by a standard author, of the results of all this work, in a single volume adapted to the use of the average teacher, preacher, parent; and the distribution of this book throughout the length and breadth of the United States.

We have in this country at least fifty men whose intellects are of the genius fibre. And we have probably a thousand men whose brains have reached a supernormal stage of development. Are not these 1,050 men worthy of study, of classification, of emulation, of reproduction?

We know how to grow prize cattle—horses, hogs and sheep. Is there any objection to growing a few prize men and women? Do we consider the long-haired cat or the long-nosed dog more valuable to society than the long-headed man? We act as though we did. I protest.

We can learn to build fine brains as surely as fine bodies. The champion athlete is never born a champion—he is made a champion by systematic, hygienic, rules and habits. The muscles of the prize runner have been strengthened and hardened through long years of painstaking effort. Why do we overlook the **mental and moral** muscles that would make every boy and girl a prize runner in the race for success? Among

the first essentials in the character of any man who reaches a high and worthy goal are the **psychic sinews** of concentration, imagination, will, faith, persistence, tact, enthusiasm, industry, regularity, foresight, insight, loyalty, honesty, courage, skill. To develop these would appear the first aim and duty of a rational school system. When shall we make our schools rational?

A man from Missouri may inquire "But can these traits, faculties and perceptions be supernormally cultivated in a normal child?" They can be. They have been. Professor Boris Sidis of Harvard University made his twelve year old boy a philosophical and mathematical prodigy, able to expound the fourth dimension and put to confusion the wise Harvard pedagogues. Mrs. Winifred Sackville Stoner of Pittsburgh trained her little daughter to be a linguist, logician, housekeeper, athlete, author and teacher, at an age when most girls are still playing with dolls. Other modern parents have shown that a supernormal brain can be developed in a normal child, through scientific methods of home education. And one supernormal brain is worth more to the State than five hundred normal ones.

Let us now, finally and briefly, suggest the apparent line of sequence in the evolution of a man of genius. We may note seven principal stages of his

development as follows: Discarnation, contemplation, creation, association, education, privation, co-operation. Each of these periods rightly deserves a volume in itself, but here we can only mention a few points.

1. **Discarnation.** The form, place, character and habit of the human ego prior to its birth should be studied by all young married people. Out of hundreds of thousands of discarnate spirits probably now sojourning in space, only a few are great and fine enough to express genius in their next earth life. How shall prospective parents draw to themselves an ego powerful enough to accomplish noble and notable deeds in its form as their child? Here is the first problem of parenthood—and not one set of parents in a thousand ever give it a moment's thought.

2. **Contemplation.** It is likely that the disembodied soul awaiting birth **chooses** parents for this function, and gropes or gravitates to them by a law of spiritual attraction. The normal sweetness, power and purity of the emotions and affections of young lovers probably offer the best channel of birth to the soul desiring it, and flitting here and there in search of parents. Hence, the genius in a family is apt to be the first child. The intensity of a woman's love for her mate largely determines the force of mental concentra-

tion in the child born of such a union. Therefore a vital question is how a husband shall retain his wife's love—not, as many people suppose, how a wife shall retain her husband's love. The habitual feeling, thought, purpose, and desire of bride and groom, and even of unmarried sweethearts, concerning marriage, procreation and parenthood exerts, we believe, a direct influence on the character and future of the unborn child.

3. **Creation.** This period is three-fold, extending over conception, gestation, birth. The health of both parents should be conserved and heightened through daily employment of the right foods, baths, exercise, habits of work and play and study. After conception, the close marriage relationship should cease till birth has been accomplished. A period of at least two years between births results in children of a larger growth, biologists tell us; a cessation of the creative function between births may go to prove that their **mental** stature is increased quite as well by such a rest period for the mother. Various methods of pre-natal care should be considered, from those of the ancient Greeks to those of the modern physical culturists; the clothing, diet, sleep, exercise, work, thought, ideals of the prospective mother all have their influence.

4. **Association.** The moulding of a

child's brain is largely a matter of environment and example. Here the home is responsible and no system of education at school can remedy the faults, or supply the omissions, almost universal in the American home. The head is led by the heart; and where the heart goes wrong, the head follows. We are not writing a library, hence we cannot here portray the defects of the American home.

5. Education. When a boy is suspected of being a genius, forthwith should he be treated as though he were not a genius. Put him through a hard course of manual training, military training, hygienic training, industrial training, vocational training, commercial training. Make him first an efficient human being! If you don't he may be forced to marry a kitchen-minded lady, who will shear him of his long locks, long cravats, long words, long moods—and leave him as Delilah left Samson.

6. Privation. It is the religious duty of every father of a specially gifted child to see that he goes through a period of enforced hardship. The way to kill genius is to coddle it. As parents, teachers and preachers, we have forgotten how to be Spartans. We carry our children on beds of ease and luxury—while their mental muscles wither and their moral spine decays. The essence of all genius is a heroic

spirit. Leave this out, and the genius is a husk. The nurturing home of genius is not a palace, but a cheerless hall bedroom with not enough fire, not enough food, and nobody near to love and help you when your heart breaks. You parent with a bright boy, see that he gets bruised!

7. Co-operation. To offset the hardship, gloom, loneliness and weariness that every man with a message has to suffer, he must be re-inforced by the watchcare of one who loves him better than life. Let him have his pain, but do not let him die of it. Many a poet, musician, reformer, teacher, inventor, **has** died of his pain. The height of genius is gauged by the alertness, fineness and delicacy of the nervous system. Too much grief, poverty, failure, disappointment, is even worse than too little; and the nerves of the man of mettle must be kept strong. Moreover, the very talented youth is likely to seem very impractical during his early years. Parents and teachers must unite, in helping him to harness, guide and control his mental and spiritual forces. I would have a Pupils' Advisory Board instituted for every school and college in America. This would be composed of the professional and industrial leaders of the city in which, or near which, the school was located. Where problems of life arose that neither teacher nor parents could solve, I would have

the boy or girl sent for counsel to a member of this Board—some great, fine, sympathetic man or woman who had been through the mill—and survived. We should thus meet an overwhelming need in the hearts and minds of the children most gifted, and most misunderstood.

The greatest and best resources of a nation are the mental powers and moral possibilities of its long-neglected wards, the exceptional children. How shall we plan to conserve and develop these resources? When shall we begin?



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