

On the Subject of Eugenics

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When a new morning rises from its cradle in the eastern skies and descends the slopes of heaven to greet the earth, the glittering shafts of light fall first upon the mountain tops, and linger there, before the shadows beneath feel their force and fly utterly. And so do the mountain-minds, – those first born children of God whom we call men of genius, feel first the glow of a freshly rising truth, and reflect the same, long before its rays pierce the minds of the masses; to chase away in the light of a better knowledge the falsehoods and absurdities which has housed there in the night of ignorance.

Thousands of years before our subject for to-night had found a name on the lips of men as “Eugenics” Moses had dreamed and planned a eugenic people. For what is eugenics? Quoting Wiggam, one of its greatest exponents, in his definition after Galton, who first used the word in 1883, “Eugenics is the study and guidance of all those agencies, that are within social control, which will improve or impair the unborn qualities of future generations, mentally, morally, and physically.”

And what but eugenic development of the race of Israel, whom, according to the conception of Moses, God had chosen to be a pattern to mankind as a nation consecrated to holiness, is the prime intent beneath every one of the law of Moses? Whether regarded hygienically, morally, or religiously, the whole purport of the Torah, the Law of Moses, is to separate Israel from the rest of mankind as a Chosen People, in order to be a noble people, a well-born race of men for their own superior happiness, as well as, by way of example, to be a blessing to the world.

Well known to the author of the great hygienic laws of purity, of meat pure and impure, of the treatment of skin diseases, of the right blood relationship for marriage, of bathings, house sanitation, quarantine, sex hygiene, and of the other rules of purity and impurity found in the Pentateuch, were the implications of the same as touching the physical life of a nation. How well he understood the great moral and religious principles which, when a nation remains true to them means its life and well-being, and which, when a people betrays them means death and disaster! He beheld very clearly that principle in nature so well known to modern eugenists by which vice and disease purify a race by destroying the vicious and the immoral. Repeatedly he warns Israel of the punishment which will overtake those who break the laws of purity and morality. Such a one, he warns, “shall be cut off from among his people.” Unworthy to have his life continue in the life of the family of Israel, disease shall cut his career short; like a stream that is disconnected from its source, and dries up. “Venichresoh hanefesh hahe meameo;” - “And that soul shall be cut off from among his people,” he warns. Thus he says when he rules that meat kept to the third day must be burnt, as in Leviticus 19:8. It must not be eaten after the second day. A wise hygienic provision this in days when refrigeration was unknown, and beyond the second day unfit in a tropical climate. “Cut off” would such a one be, – by ptomaine poisoning, or what not. And so of him who touches the body of the dead and fails to wash himself thereafter; in days when the laws

of quarantine against the leprous were observed; but typhoid, influenza, and many other deadly germs of infection were as yet unknown.

To improve Israel as a race, and to save his people from the destruction which has overtaken the nations around them who practised “abominations” was the double purpose of his ordinances. “Ye shall keep my statutes, which if a man do he shall live by them,” he is constantly saying. Thus in Leviticus 18 he warns against a number of sexual abominations practised by the nations of his day, and by which they had so defiled their land that their own land “spued them out.” When such immoralities, he promises, are persisted in by the families, the social units of a people, the nation so weakened will be driven out by a stronger nation, and eventually will perish from the earth, by the attacks of enemies and of disease. As actually happened to the ancient nations of the earth, who except Israel, have vanished all.

Much as Kipling, that modern prophet of the Anglo-Saxon race, calls everything that is not English or American as belonging to “those lesser breeds,” so Moses sought to draw Israel away from the practices of “Hagoyim hohem,” – “those nations.” Moses and Kipling are one in their pride of race, that self-respect which properly belongs to a well-born race.

A thousand years after Moses another mountain-mind was struck by the idea of eugenics. Plato advocated the selection of a chosen few by artificial selection for special place in his ideal commonwealth. Only to such, he said, as had triumphantly supported many tests of mind and body, and had for themselves attained to the ideal of happiness of a well-born mind in a well-born body should be intrusted the government of his perfect city and the directorship of mankind. And in his Republic he advocates the improvement of the human race bred by such means.

Three quarters of a century before the scientific study of eugenics by Sir Francis Galton was initiated, another mastermind, one unhappily fated however to be a destroyer of men rather than the breeder of a nobler race, recognized its value. Well-known is the answer Napoleon gave to a lady of his court who one day asked him, “Sire, when should the education of a child begin?” – “Thirty years before his birth, with the mother,” was his reply. Modern eugenists would tell you that he would have been yet closer to the truth had he said “sixty years.” The education of a child, they say, should begin with the infancy of his grandparents.

Since Galton’s time the fact has been abundantly proven that both the noble and the ignoble, geniuses and imbeciles, are mostly grouped together by an intimate blood relationship. **Defectives and degenerates are linked by the same invisible bonds; and so are those of noble inheritance. “Heredity explains nearly 90% of the rough outline of the character and intelligence,” is the startling statement of a eugenist of authority.**

In striking fashion this newest and most interesting of sciences compares the noble kinfolk of our Pilgrim Fathers with the descendants of the criminals who settled in Sidney, Australia. Both had the same chance; a great virgin continent lay before both for conquest and development. Yet while from the Pilgrims came great leaders; from the others came nothing notable; except, as has been pointed out, the greatest slum district in the world, which to this day defiles the city of Sidney.

And so in interesting fashion are the family fortunes of conspicuous successes and conspicuous failures in social history followed out by students of heredity and eugenics. Thus it is found that out of the first 46 names in the Hall of Fame, 26 have from 1 to 3 relatives of national renown. Thus, the Edwards family, one of the Mayflower pioneers, traced in 33 countries, amid all sorts of environments, have 1400 out of 1400 useful citizens, many of high rank. Whereas the Ishmael family, out of 15,000 members, who have been traced, has given nearly 15,000 social scourges, of whom, at this day, hundreds are in the almshouses and jails of Indiana. And so of the other families, both successes and failures, that have been traced.

Highly interesting it is to learn how the characteristics of each state were early determined by the traits of the persons who were attracted to them. Thus "the descendants of the high spirited cavaliers" gave birth in Virginia to statesmen and warriors, - Randolphs, Marshalls, Lees, Washingtons, etc. From the Dutch traders on Manhattan Island has sprung New York City, the greatest commercial center of the Western world. From New England came the children of the idealists who settled there; men who were willing to endure exile for conscience' sake; men of deep convictions and scholarship; and we have the Whitneys, Eliots, Lowells, etc. And it is seen that it is by no accident that the first blood spilled in the American Revolution was in the land of idealism. - Upon the Delaware River Penn settled his men and women of thrift. And to this day Pennsylvania has the largest number of any of the state, of homes owned by their occupants and free from debt.

But all in common had the willingness to break with tradition and exchange the old for new and better. And so the whole country has developed in the spirit of "I will!" the motto of Chicago. For in activity, enterprise, ambition, and energy, the United States surpass the peoples of the Old World, who, in our ancestors, sent us their most restless spirits.

O would that this same spirit of I WILL might be aroused in every American's heart, so that we might use the opportunity which is now ours to will a greater, nobler, better-born America!

For the weaklings, born of bad breeding, - the insane, defectives, degenerates, - form 3% of our population, and of course, are a source of weakness to our nation; a drag and drain to us, physically, morally, and economically.

The American Eugenics Society exists to spread a knowledge of principles of heredity as to-day understood, and to bring before the people an appreciation for improving the blood of the nation; and for making known facts, so that these might become a part of our social idealism, and point the way to useful legislation. For there are not wanting those who, profiting by the lessons of history as concerns the nations who have lived and died, believe that in the comparative decrease of the population of the better classes and the great comparative increase of the worser elements lies a germ of destruction for our country which attention to eugenic breeding only may save us from.

Now should not religious people above all others be interested supporters of eugenic teachings, and the eugenic vision for our country? For throughout the Bible is there not earnestly stressed a close relation between the laws of nature and the laws of God? Holy

Writ teaches that the laws of life, both for individual and the nation, depend upon a right balance being maintained between, what Scripture calls, the outward and the inward man, the physical and the spiritual nature. The very word “holy” in its derivation means “healthy,” “whole,” and “hale,” that is “happy.” That is, a man is not complete, nor can he be happy, unless he is healthy both in body and soul.

And how interestingly this deep psychological truth of our English tongue is borne out by the Hebrew Scriptures! See, for instance, Jeremiah’s strong pronouncement in chapter 31, where he speaks of a “new covenant” which God will make with the house of Israel, when “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and they shall teach no more every man his neighbor saying, “Know the Lord”? It does not mean to merely repeat what is on the tablets of Moses, on pages of the Bible, lying in the pulpits and pews of church and synagog, or on the parlor table for decoration. It means to use the law of God as a law of life, in daily conduct. So when the Bible speaks of “wisdom in the inward parts” (Job 38:36). What else is here meant but spiritual health pervading a man’s very vitals, and psychological functions so that he is healthy, within and without, physically and spiritually, by reason of the good breeding of former generations and his own righteous life. For otherwise there is no meaning to the Scriptural promise of “cutting off” for weakness, and “visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.”

Eugenics thinks in terms of quality not quantity. When we can get our statesmen also to think in terms of quality then men will no more be regarded as “food for cannon,” and civilians as little better than earth fertilizer; then “forty millions died of starvation in the World War,” and “ten million men in the battle,” will become impossible news items in the newspapers of the future. For men, women and children will be regarded as of too great worth to permit of such things.

How can we help? First and all the time by teaching our children to respect their mental and physical inheritance and not to throw it away in unworthy mating. Let us teach them that it is not true patriotism which thinks only of its own satisfactions and not also of the life of the nation.

It was Israel’s greatest strength, the strength by which she survived all that the bitter centuries could bring up against her in persecutors, that the true Israelite was taught to think never in terms of his own little perishable life but in terms of his family and his people. And so he established safety zones in his family life, against indiscriminate interbreeding, for the nurture of his family in health and holiness. Safety zones in health, - health physical and spiritual, - that is what we need to establish everywhere throughout our nation to-day; family safety zones, whose ideas of living and family tradition, shall reach out to health and holiness in the families to which individual members connect themselves. Each man and woman thinking unto his and hers third and fourth generation. True love of country and family dictate this step; which passion, blinding and falsifying, in order to eventually better slay, alone may reject.

In the valley of Shechem across the Jordan stands Israel divided into two groups: six tribes upon Mt. Ebal, and six upon Mt. Gerizim. The six upon Gerizim respond Amen to the blessings which Israel was to receive if she obeyed the laws of life which Moses

presented to her. The six upon Mt. Ebal were compelled to say Amen to the curses which Israel would receive if she disobeyed the laws of life. This scene in the valley of Shechem sets forth dramatically the perpetual challenge to humanity, and to America to-day. For life says to us day by day and every day; "I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse. Therefore chose life that thou mayest live."

No man deliberately chooses a curse. If he chooses a curse it is because it comes to him in the form of a blandishment, a vampire dressed up as a blessing, as a piece of happiness which he has not the heart to deny himself the pleasure of possessing.

Who did not during the World War feel that our people were a chosen people to put down the universal blood horror that had darkened the life of the world? Who has not felt so at other great moments in our life's story as a nation, as when we read in the bible of our history, of Democracy unfurling her Star Banner, and "to the tune of Yankee-doodle-doo, announcing in rifle volleys death-winged that she is born, and whirlwind-like, will envelop the whole world!" Who will not feel that America to-day, with the worlds best energies in her Melting Pot, should, a second chosen people, set firmly her face like the first against impurity, against immorality, against grossnesses and heathenisms of all kinds, that drag down the soul of a nation, and its body too; that lower its life stream to the vanishing point, where Rome's noble blood became contaminated with the hordes, – the lesser breeds, – and lost. Surely America may securely count upon the patriotism of the Am Kodosh, the Holy People, to be earnest advocates of the gospel of Health and Holiness! Amen.