Genius and Eugenics

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GENIUS AND EUGENICS.

William N. Gemmill

In discussing social problems as they relate to the future, we are met by two propositions:

First: The earth is becoming over-populated, and the time is rapidly approaching when mankind will not be able to produce enough from the soil to properly feed and clothe the multitude.

Second: The race is degenerating to such an alarming degree that unless radical measures are taken we will soon disintegrate, as did the ancient dynasties.

Those who raise the first alarm, point to an increase of population in every European nation, in most of Asia, and in all the countries of the Western Hemisphere. At the same time they point to a decrease in production, in proportion to the population, which means a higher cost of living. The alarmists of the second class urge upon our consideration the growing pauperism throughout the world, the increase of criminals, of the insane, of the feeble-minded, the idiotic, and all other forms of defective and delinquent humanity. In response to this cry the Eugenist is demanding all kinds of remedies for evils that are both real and fancied. The most frequent one proposed is some sort of limitation upon the power of reproduction. To justify this, they urge not only the increase of crime, but assert that most of our criminals are such, because they have either inherited a tendency toward crime, or are so physically and mentally deficient as not to be responsible for their criminal acts. In the same manner, it is urged that the insane, the feeble-minded, the epileptic, the blind, deaf and dumb are such, because they have inherited a blood infused with an evil virus which has brought about these conditions.

It is not intended in this paper to discuss at length the question as to whether or not crime is increasing in the world at large, or, if so, what are the causes of it. It is sufficient here to say that from all the records obtainable, both in Europe and the United States, a

1 Judge of the Municipal Court of Chicago.
marked decline has taken place in the last few years in almost all kinds of crimes. In the last fifty years in England, crimes have decreased from 286 per hundred thousand population in 1860, to 172 per hundred thousand in 1911. From 1910 to 1911, the latest years for which we have accurate figures, there was a decrease of eight per cent in the total number of crimes in England and Wales. Almost equally satisfactory are the figures from Germany, Austria, Holland, Belgium and France. In the United States from 1890 to 1904 there was a total decrease in our prisons from 131.5 per hundred thousand of our population to 100.6 per hundred thousand. In the first quarter of the nineteenth century nearly five per cent of the entire population of the United States was arrested annually, charged either with debt or with some offense against the law, while last year in Chicago less than one-half of one per cent of the population was arrested upon any charge. In the last ten years there has been a decrease of thirty-five per cent in the number of prisoners at Joliet over any ten-year period since 1868, and a decrease of fifty per cent in the number of prisoners in the reformatory at Pontiac. In the last six years there has been a decrease in Chicago in the number of persons arrested for robbery of thirty-nine per cent, and in the number arrested for burglary of thirty-four per cent. There has been a corresponding increase in the number of persons arrested for forgery, fraud and the confidence games.

What is true in reference to criminals is true, in a less degree, with the insane, the feeble-minded, the blind, the epileptic, and the deaf and dumb. An eternal war is always waging between the world’s natural and its social forces. The survival of the fittest was decreed from the foundation of the earth, and the best and noblest efforts of civilized society have always been put forth to guard, protect and conserve the weak, the helpless, and the unfit. The great oak of the forest is such because it was stronger than the others about its base, and they, being overshadowed, shrivelled and died. The lion is the king of the forest because only the strongest of its cubs can survive the eternal struggle that must be waged against every other beast of the jungle.

The ancients despised weakness, and deified strength and great power. Their children who were not strong enough to endure hardships were exposed upon the mountains, or hurled to death in their rivers. Every great natural force in the Universe is directed against the weak, and to that extent favors the strong. The world’s greatest plagues and famines that swept continents, leaving death and desolation, left the people of those continents stronger than before, for
everywhere the weak were the first to perish. Every great storm
and earthquake left in the trail of its dead more of the weak than of
the strong. Against these destructive forces of nature, civilization
has everywhere been erecting its barriers. Every decade has brought
us a higher conception of life, until we have come to appreciate, as
never before, what was meant by the Savior of Mankind, when He
said: "If ye do it unto the least of these, ye do it unto Me."

Our lives and times are immeasurably broader and richer and
fuller than ever before. Instead of destroying the weak, the help-
less and the infirm, we are building countless hospitals, asylums and
homes. The best medical and surgical skill is at their command, that
we may prolong their lives and increase their pleasure.

If we, therefore, count only the institutions devoted to the care
of our unfortunates, or the number of inmates in them, we may well
stand aghast. But no one has yet been able to demonstrate that either
in Europe or the United States, the number of those who are physically
and mentally defective has increased during the last fifty years in
proportion to the increase in population. Nor is it true that the vast
majority of the insane, the feeble-minded, the blind, deaf and dumb,
are such because of a defective ancestry. The writer has been making
diligent effort to obtain reliable figures upon this subject. In but
few of our state institutions are dependable statistics preserved. We
keep complete data concerning the number of tons of coal con-
sumed in an institution, and the age and nationality of the inmates,
but nothing is scientifically kept as to the causes which lay at the
foundation of our social troubles. The Peoria State Hospital for the
Insane, whose statistics seem to be based upon scientific investigation,
reports that only twenty per cent of the patients in that institution
had a previous history of insanity, while in sixty per cent of them
there is a history of chronic alcoholism. In a very late English
report, a still larger per cent of the blind, the epileptic, and the
insane,-were chargeable directly to alcoholism, to syphilis or to the
drug habit. In a recent report from the Illinois School for the Deaf
at Jacksonville, it is stated that in most cases the deafness of the chil-
dren in that institution was caused by children's diseases—scarlet
fever, whooping cough, measles, mumps, spinal meningitis and kin-
derd diseases. In a similar report from the Illinois School for the
Blind, it is stated that the largest percentage of the blindness of the
inmates there was caused by injury or disease.

Among the most frequent remedies proposed for the evils beset-
ting us are:

(1) Greater restrictions upon marriage.
(2) Limiting the number of divorces.

(3) Sterilization of all criminals and defectives.

So much has recently been said about the divorce evil that the public has been led to think that it is the greatest evil that threatens our social life. We hear much about the thousands of orphans cast upon the world, through the legal separation of their parents. Divorce is an institution of the Christian church. It was the demand for such an institution in England that gave the first great impulse to the Reformation. Just in the degree to which women have emerged from a state of complete subjugation to one of equality, has divorce been recognized, and just as the home has been recognized as the center of civilization, have the grounds for divorce been broadened so as to give relief from an intolerable marriage alliance. In no other country are the husband and wife as nearly equal, under the law, as in the United States, and nowhere else do the women receive that high courtesy and social recognition that they do in our own land, and yet more divorces are granted annually in the United States than in all Europe combined. The average number of divorces annually in the United States for the last twenty years was 47,281. The total average of all the European countries annually during that period was 30,796. Among the nations furnishing the most of these are Germany, England, France, Switzerland, Holland and Belgium. If you would contrast these with the nations where divorce is unknown, you must turn to Spain, Portugal, Turkey, Argentine, Brazil, Mexico, Cuba and Italy. To our shame South Carolina must be added to this list, for a divorce has not been granted in the state since the Revolutionary War. Some years ago a gallant citizen of South Carolina installed his mistress in his home. She was permitted to eat at the same table and ride in the same carriage with his wife. The wife rebelled and sued for divorce, but her suit was denied. A chivalrous Southern gentleman of that state may daily beat his wife, desert and starve her and her children, yet she must endure it to the end. Against these figures on divorce must be placed some that are more startling. When you have added the list of orphans made so by divorce, you must place beside the number the much longer list of fatherless children who bear upon their foreheads a curse, which marks them for the world’s hatred. From whence do these unfortunate children come? A brief examination of the available statistics will show that the number of divorces in a country bears a direct relationship to the number of illegitimate children. In the countries named in Table No. 1 following no divorces are allowed; divorces are much opposed in those named in Table No. 2; and they are more
freely granted in the countries named in Table No. 3. The percentages represent the number of illegitimate children born during a period of ten years:

**TABLE I.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE II.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bavaria</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE III.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>104,994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>101,994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>74,994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>78,994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>77,994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>76,994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>88,994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>89,994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>90,994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>91,994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>92,994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>93,994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>94,994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>95,994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>96,994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>97,994</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The total number of divorces in the United States from 1887 to 1906 inclusive was 945,625. The total number granted in the whole of Europe during that time was 586,871.

**TABLE IV.**

The number of divorces and legal separations granted in the following countries in 1900 was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>8,680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prussia</td>
<td>5,291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>8,664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saxony</td>
<td>1,209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England and Wales</td>
<td>568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>2,130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>1,053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>55,502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>98,949</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is significant that while more divorces are granted in the United States than elsewhere, the number of marriages solemnized is also much greater.
The population of the United States in 1906 was about 75,000,000. The population of Europe was about 262,000,000.

The number of marriages in the United States in 1906 was 853,290. The number in all of Europe for the same year was 1,634,231.

The population of the United States is less than one-third, its marriages over one-half that of Europe.

The causes for the 945,625 divorces in the United States, as shown by the record of those cases, are interesting:

**TABLE V.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adultery</td>
<td>153,759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruelty</td>
<td>206,225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desertion</td>
<td>367,502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intemperance, as direct or indirect cause</td>
<td>184,568</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the divorces granted for adultery, 90,890, or 59.15 per cent, were obtained by the husband because of the wife’s infidelity, and 62,869, or 41 per cent, were granted to the wife because of the husband’s infidelity. 38.9 per cent of all these divorces were granted because of desertion.

It is generally supposed that more divorces are obtained by people living in cities than by those living in the country. This is an error. The states where divorces are the most frequent, in proportion to population, rank in the following order:

**TABLE VI.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is because of the fact that European cities and countries have for many years kept detailed statistics upon all subjects affecting their social conditions that we are able to get approximately correct data concerning them. Unfortunately no serious effort has ever been made in the United States to collect and preserve reliable data upon many of the most vital questions affecting our social life. The figures here given of illegitimacy in the United States are only approximately correct, for only a few states keep reliable figures upon the subject. It is impossible to make an exact comparison between conditions in European cities and in our principal American cities. About 60,000 children were born in Chicago during the year 1913. No official record is kept as to the parenthood of these children, but based upon
fairly reliable information obtained through the Court of Domestic Relations, where the writer tried 442 cases last year involving illegitimacy, and through other agencies dealing with this problem, it is certain that the number of illegitimate children born in Chicago for the year would not exceed four per cent of the total births.

Several of the states have recently passed laws making it an offense for anyone to marry who is afflicted with a venereal disease, and including in the grounds for divorce the communication of such a disease from one to the other. The English Parliament recently enacted a law, which became effective on January 1, 1913, making it a misdemeanor for anyone to marry a defective. Much discussion is now rife in that country as to the proper interpretation to be put upon the law. Its strongest advocates insist that it includes within its provision habitual drunkards, idiots and all feeble-minded persons. There can be no doubt that greater care must be exercised in the issuance of marriage licenses, both from the standpoint of the public and of the contracting parties. In most cases involving the communication of the disease, the offending party deliberately conceals from the other before marriage the knowledge of this condition. This was true in over 400 cases tried by the writer last year in the Court of Domestic Relations. Thus, while the offender is committing a crime against society, he is committing a much graver crime against the one to whom his life has been joined. Nor will the remedy of sterilization, so frequently urged by medical men, correct the evil. In Indiana, where this law has been in force for many years, no one has been found wise enough to select the persons to whom the law should be applied; in consequence the law is a dead letter. All laws must be general. If criminals are to be sterilized, then the law must be applied to all persons who have committed the same crimes. In Illinois, during the last fifteen years, many bankers were sent to the penitentiary on the charge of embezzlement. In nearly all these cases the men so sent had families. Prior to the commission of the particular offense for which they were sentenced they had occupied high social position in the community and were among our best citizens. Their offenses consisted generally of receiving deposits at a time when their banks were insolvent. After their sentences expired, practically all of these men returned to the community they left, and became honest, law-abiding citizens. Who would suggest that in addition to the penalty inflicted upon them for their wrongdoing, their bodies should have been mutilated and the spirit of their manhood forever destroyed? What is true of these is equally true of the thousands of young men now serving sentences for larceny and embezzlement, who,
in their moments of weakness, misappropriated the funds of their employers, but who, in nearly every instance, did so without any intent of ultimately keeping the fund, but with the purpose of restoring it, at some time. If the law cannot be applied to men of this character, then it cannot be applied to others who have committed crimes, but who have neither financial or social standing in the community. Besides, this form of state brutality in no way prevents the spread of disease.

We are very prone today to lay our social troubles to an unoffending ancestry. No doubt there flows through the veins of the present generation much blood that is tainted, but every natural force in the universe is at war against this taint, and were it not for the contribution which this generation, and the next, will make to it, nature itself would destroy the last drop of it, and restore the virility of the race within two generations.

Nothing more clearly demonstrates the Divine Wisdom than the power of regeneration implanted in every living thing. If society would rid itself of its greatest evils, it must wage a deadly warfare against them, wherever they are entrenched. This means to remove the awful pall of poverty that rests upon our great cities, and to protect the weaker men and women of our race from all forms of intemperance which, more than all other evils combined, fills the world with distress and poverty and crime. It means to redouble the battle against disease and vice, and to create a healthier environment into which the children, who come after us, may be born.

It is interesting to study the influences that were the most potential in determining the lives of the men of genius, and it is just as interesting to consider how the present-day remedies would have affected our civilization had they been applied to the great men of the past. In the long role of statesmen, orators, philosophers, poets, artists and musicians, there are few indeed who, measured by our present-day standards, were not physical, mental or moral defectives. Their transcendent genius was not due to these defects, but they ascended to great heights in spite of them. An intimate study of their lives will nearly always reveal the influences which spurred them on to great achievement, or which led them to commit the follies and crimes which so often marred their lives. Many of them were blind, many deaf, many insane, many were afflicted with incurable diseases, many were drunken, dissolute vagabonds. Most of them committed crimes just as grave as those of the men who are now serving sentences in our penitentiaries, and yet these are the men who have given to the world its laws, its philosophies, its literature, its poetry, its art and its music. If their ancestry was responsible for
these defects, then it was equally responsible for their great genius. An intimate study of their lives will reveal the fact that their courses were largely determined by the conditions which surrounded their childhood, and by the social, political and religious influences which ruled and dominated the times and places in which they lived.

Lord Byron’s father was a drunken vagabond, who cruelly beat his wife, then deserted her. His mother often tried to kill him. His uncle, from whom he obtained his title, was known as the wicked lord. The young poet was lame from birth. At 25 so excessive had been his drinking and so continual his carousals that his wife thought him insane and had him examined for his sanity. When the physician pronounced him sane she left him. His only child, neglected by him, died of convulsions. So despised was he in England that he was hooted in the streets, and at 28 fled in distress from his native land. In Italy his life was a continual debauch. He enlisted for the War of Independence in Greece, but got drunk, lay out of doors all night and died of exposure at 36. But in Childe Harold he aroused the world to behold its injustice, and in the Prisoner of Chillon he touched a chord whose vibrations opened many cruel dungeons.

Lord Bacon came of a proud ancestry, yet he had no sooner been elevated to the woolsack, than he began systematically to debauch with bribes all who sustained official relations with him. For this he was stripped of all dignities and sentenced to a long imprisonment in the Tower, and finally died in poverty amid the scorn of all good people. Yet he was the greatest of all writers of English prose. And truly has it been said of him:

“A knave on the woolsack, a god with his pen, the greatest, the wisest, the meanest of men.”

Oliver Goldsmith’s father was a rector. His mother was blind and sickly. At the age of six he was terribly afflicted with smallpox, from which he never entirely recovered. At 18 he was publicly flogged for rioting. At 19 he was arrested at Trinity College for instituting a riot. At 23 he fled to America to escape arrest. At 25 he was imprisoned in France on the charge of treason. At 44 he died from melancholia induced by excessive drinking.

The father of John Bunyan was a lazy, dissolute and despised tinker. His mother was a religious fanatic. As a young man, John but imitated his father, when he became the vilest and most profane of all the young men of his time, and later a gypsy, wandering from place to place, then a beggar, and desert, passing his time in riotous living, cursing everything and everybody. Yet it was this same out-
cast that wrote the noblest allegory in any language, and is the
greatest evangelist the world has yet produced.

The father of Ben Jonson was insane. Ben was born with one
eye and a crooked leg. Scurvy had marked his features and made
them hideous. At 17 he committed murder and was sentenced to the
gallows; at 18 he fought a duel; at 20 his physician told him he was
becoming insane. At 35 he was a beggar, wandering up and down
over Europe. He was always so cowardly that he was afraid to be
left alone in the dark. Yet in his veins there flowed the blood which
made him the greatest thinker and poet of his time, and caused to be
inscribed upon his tomb the words: "Oh, Rare Ben Jonson."

Alexander Pope came from a respectable family of peasants. He
was but four feet in height, had curvature of the spine and was a
hunchback. He was always so weak physically that he was laced in
stays and was never able to dress or undress himself. His temper
was so violent that he was often whipped at school, and arrested out
of school. Yet no more sublime spirit was ever breathed forth in
verse than found in his universal prayer:

"Father of all, in every age, in every clime, adored by savage
and by sage, Jehovah, Jove, our Lord.

"What conscience dictates to be done, or warns me not to do,
this teach me more than Hell to shun, that more than Heaven
pursue."

The father of poor Keats was a liveryman. His mother died of
tuberculosis at 25, and he at 26 of the same disease. So unfamiliar
with the world was he that he laughed when he should have cried,
and cried when he should have laughed. Yet at 16 this strange
genius had written Endymion. He is ranked with Shakespeare as the
poet of flowers.

Charlotte Bronte’s mother was a consumptive. Her three
brothers and two sisters died of the white plague, and it was with the
consciousness that the same disease was creeping over her that she
tooled unceasingly to write her own heart and the heart of the whole
world in Jane Eyre.

Charles Lamb’s father was a law clerk. His mother was pale
and sickly. His sister Mary, while insane, killed the mother, and
then Charles and Mary, each insane, by turn, devoted their lives to the
service of the other. Yet with all his sorrow, Charles Lamb was the
sweetest and gentlest spirit of a turbulent age.

The grandfather of Jonathan Swift was insane. His uncle died
in an insane asylum. At 18 Jonathan was dismissed from Dublin
University for dullness and inefficiency. At middle age he was epileptic, and shortly thereafter was entirely deaf, and almost blind and dumb. During his later days he became a maniac, then an idiot. During much of his life he practiced grave deceptions, and cruelly betrayed several young women to whom he was attached. In his will he directed that his property be used to found an asylum for idiots and madmen. Although two hundred years have passed since his death, his “Gulliver’s Travels” have been translated in nearly every language and are found in every library to charm the old and young alike.

Robert Burns came from an humble but respectable family. He was round shouldered and always melancholy. He was never without a headache and a feeling of suffocation when he attempted to sleep. At 16 he began to drink to excess; at 18 his excesses drove him in exile to Jamaica. At 19 he was arrested for smuggling. From 20 to 25 he was often arrested for drunkenness and rioting. He was so fickle that he promised to marry every good looking girl he met, and broke the promises with the same ease. Much of the time he was a common beggar, and died at 37 because of exposure one night while in a drunken stupor. Yet all the world loves Burns and the world would not seem the same without “Tam O’Shanter,” “The Cotter’s Saturday Night,” or “The Mountain Daisy.”

The great Samuel Johnson was of good parentage. Yet all his life he was scrofulous and melancholy. His wife, twice his age, hated him, and he hated all the world. He was a glutton, always hungry. He never spoke at the table because he said it interrupted his eating. He ate so fast that the perspiration stood out all over his face, and yet this man wrote the first great dictionary of the English language.

Shelley was of honest, respectable parentage. Yet at twelve he had committed almost all the crimes known to the English law. At 14 he was called “Mad Shelley” because he never ceased to curse his father and the king. At 18 he eloped with a girl whom he deserted at 21, in order to elope with another. At 19 he was exiled from Oxford. At 20 he was a fugitive in Wales, charged with treason. At 29 he committed suicide while insane.

The father of William Cowper was a rector. At 3 William was almost blind. At 9 he was a nervous wreck. At 23 he was periodically insane. At 29 he attempted suicide by taking laudanum. At 30 he tried to drown himself in the Seine. At 31 he hanged himself with a garter, but it broke. At 32 he was confined in a madhouse and died at 69, a raving maniac. Yet, this was the greatest poet of the home England ever produced.
Southey’s father was an unlucky linen draper. His mother was a creature of gentleness and refinement. At 8 he had composed a drama. At 14 he was convicted of a crime and expelled from Westminster. At 20 he was exiled from England. His first wife was driven insane because of his cruelty and his attentions to another woman. At 65 he became an imbecile and died insane at 69.

Coleridge had curvature of the spine. He was a wife deserter and an inveterate opium eater. He died insane.

Voltaire’s mother died when he was an infant. His father, a lawyer, permitted the boy to be brought up by his godfather, who taught him always to scoff at religion and the church. From scoffing at the church he became a scandal-monger, and was twice sentenced to the Bastille for defamation of character. He was arrested for defaming the character of Joan of Arc. He got rich by promoting a government lottery, and by grafting on army contracts. He led an immoral life and left an illegitimate child.

If John Milton inherited his blindness from his weak-eyed Puritan mother, he also inherited from her that transcendent genius which sounded the very depths of human woe and soared to the greatest heights to which human souls may aspire.

Gibbons, whose “Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire” made him the greatest of English historians, was so weak in childhood that his parents despaired of rearing him. At school he was idle and profligate. During his eight years of service in Parliament he was never able to arise to his feet and speak upon any question, because of his fear and embarrassment.

Sir Isaac Newton, although he came from a strong parentage, weighed but two pounds at birth. He neglected school and was encouraged by his teachers to spend his time out of doors, where he was engaged most of the time flying kites. It was while at play that he conceived the great principles which he afterwards demonstrated as governing all the natural forces of the Universe.

Daniel Defoe so despised his ancestry, because of their vocation as butchers, that he changed his name. While still a young man he was frequently arrested for debt. At 44 he was condemned to hang for treason. At 46 his ears were cut off and he was imprisoned in a dungeon where he remained for six years. His wife and child were supported by public charity. He died a pauper at 70. Yet his Robinson Crusoe is in every land and in almost every tongue.

Cardinal Wolsey defied kings and confounded the diplomats of the world. Yet he was the cowardly tool of Henry VIII., and there was no crime too desperate for him to commit. He was convicted of
crime, confined in the stocks, then exiled, where he died, despised by the whole world, including his two children, who changed their names to conceal their identity.

Steele was arrested many times. Much of his life he was a professional gambler and was nearly always intoxicated.

Much of the charm of George Eliot is lost when we read her biography and observe with what contempt she viewed the ordinary rules of decent conduct, by linking her life with the wife deserter, her guilty paramour Lewes.

Richard Wagner was charged with treason for engaging in a revolution, and fled to France, deserting his wife, who was thereafter supported by private charity. He was highly sensitive and always nervous. He said of himself: “My nervous system is like a pianoforte, very much out of tune.” While in exile in Paris he caused Tannhäuser to be produced. This aroused such hostile demonstration against him that he was threatened with mob violence. Because of this, sympathy was aroused for him at home, and he was permitted to return to his native soil.

Mozart composed at 4, wrote a concerto at 6; at 8 played in concerts, and at 10 performed before nearly all the crowned heads of Europe. His father was a great music master, his mother a sweet singer. From early childhood the boy was trained for a career as a singer. He soon became one of the greatest musicians of his age. Yet, so profligate and shiftless was he that he begged upon the streets and died a pauper at 37.

The father of Beethoven was a drunken profligate. The son composed at 5. At 27 he was totally deaf and never afterwards was able to hear himself play his own compositions. His life was a continual struggle against poverty and he died a pauper at 57.

Chopin came from a great family of Polish musicians. He was always sad. He was always afflicted with tuberculosis. He early formed an immoral alliance with George Sands, which he continued for ten years. He died at 31. He was a wife deserter and so crazy, that in his will he directed he be buried in a white robe, white hat and small shoes, with short trousers.

Handel’s father was a great surgeon. At 8 the boy played before nearly all the royalty of Europe. At 19 he had composed his first oratorio. At 20 he was one of the most renowned composers of his time. At 45 he fought a duel with a rival composer. He was often insane. His arm was paralyzed and he was blind for the last seven years of his life.
Hayden, one of the sweetest singers of his day, was a wife deserter, and a violator of nearly all the laws of his time.

Schubert at 10 was the greatest singer in Austria. He wrote more operas and symphonies in the same length of time than any other man who ever lived. He seemed almost inspired and yet he was always sickly. At 29 he was insane and died a pauper at 31.

At 14 Bach was the greatest soprano singer in Europe. He came from a long line of fifty distinguished musicians. Had two wives and twenty children. At 60 he was stone blind and died at 65.

Mendelssohn was a Jew who became a Christian. His father was a great philosopher. At 8 the boy was a composer, and played in concerts in Berlin at 10. He was nearly always ill and depressed in spirit.

Alexander Dumas was an illegitimate child, brought up in the atmosphere of Paris. His grandmother was a negress of Haiti. His father was a madcap and scapegrace. The whole atmosphere of his childhood and manhood was one of loose morals.

Dante's father was a clergyman, very austere, who painted for his son dark, lurid pictures of the hereafter. At 37 the son was banished from Italy. He was three times sentenced to be burned alive if caught. He was twenty years in exile. He had always before his eyes visions of burnings in hell, received from his early training. He died at 56.

William Prescott, the historian, was a lawyer and a grandson of the Prescott of revolutionary fame. He entered Harvard at 15, and graduated at 18. While at Harvard one eye was gouged out and the other was sympathetically affected. During his latter years, he was totally blind. The most of the data for his history of Ferdinand and Isabella was obtained through readings to him by his secretary.

Ole Bull was a native of Norway and came from a family of peasants. In his early years he led a dissolute life. Later he became a speculator and founded a colony in Pennsylvania, where he fraudulently induced many of his friends and acquaintances to invest their savings, but to lose them.

Schiller was brought up amid pious surroundings, both his father and mother devoting much time to religion. He was always poor and sickly.

Schumann's father was a great musician in Saxony. From childhood the young man had been inspired to become greater than his father. At 16 he was a composer. At 32 he was insane and remained so for a period of two years. When not in an asylum he
spent much of his time studying sleight of hand, and other tricks to amuse his associates. He was nearly always despondent, and often tried to commit suicide. He died at 46 in an insane asylum.

The father of Shakespeare was a respectable farmer and there was no indication in the great poet's ancestry of the genius which has so charmed the world. This genius, however, was not transmitted to his descendants. He had three children—a son who died at 11 with convulsions; two daughters, one married a saloon-keeper, the other could neither read nor write.

Thomas Chatterton seemed never to have had a day of sunshine. He had fits from his childhood. Yet at 6 he wrote fluently, and at 10 composed some of the finest English poetry. At 17 he hid himself in a miserable garret in London, where he starved for weeks, then committed suicide.

Edgar Allan Poe indulged in all the wildest revelries of his time. Was expelled from the university and the army. Much of his time he was violently drunk and died at 40 from exposure after a night of debauch. Yet, his pen, inspired by his own wretched soul, touched the great sympathetic heart of the world.

Cervantes was a soldier of fortune in Spain. He was always brave, but often foolish. He came from a long line of Castilian nobles. While upon a doubtful expedition he was captured by Algerian pirates and confined in a dungeon in Algiers for five years. Twice the rope was placed about his neck to hang him. Upon his return home he was granted a position of trust under the government and was later tried and convicted upon a charge of embezzlement and sent to prison.

While Don Quixote was stalking up and down over Spain in quest of ridiculous adventures with windmills, Cervantes was languishing in a miserable dungeon.

The Duke of Wellington became so unpopular in London before his death, because of his expressed contempt for the poorer classes, that he was hooted in the streets of London on the anniversary of Waterloo, and was compelled to put iron shutters on his windows to keep the populace from breaking into his house.

Carl Linne, the great botanist, was a constant victim of gout. Often he could not tell his own name and died insane.

Cardinal Richelieu was insane many times and often threatened to follow the example of his brother and commit suicide. His sister was insane.

The great Galileo was blind much of his life.
Mohammed was an epileptic. His father and mother died when he was an infant. His father was a poor merchant. His mother had little affection for the child and gave him to a Bedouin woman to take to the desert, but because of his epilepsy he was soon returned. The Prophet had two sons, both of whom died in childhood.

Michael Angelo had a fit of epilepsy while painting the Last Judgment, and fell from his chair. He was not only a great painter but a soldier, brave and cowardly by turns. When he heard of the approach of the enemy in great numbers he deserted the army and fled for his life.

Charles V’s grandfather was insane. His mother was both insane and deformed, and he had epilepsy.

Raphael came from a long line of painters and from early childhood was trained for the great work to which his life was devoted.

Herschel became a great astronomer by accident. One day when twenty-one years of age, at a public fair, he was permitted to look through a telescope. So charmed was he with what he saw, that he immediately set about to build a telescope that would see farther than human eyes had ever done before.

Cicero, the greatest orator of Rome, saved that city by exposing the conspiracy of Catiline. So great was the charm of his oratory that the Senate was moved by it, to put the Catiline conspirators to death. This was a violation of the Roman law, which provided that no one could be put to death except upon a vote of the assembled people. The people thereupon assembled and instead of approving the work of Cicero, condemned him as a murderer and voted to banish him forever from Rome. Later, returning to Rome, he was proscribed and put to death because of his original offense.

Pericles, the greatest of Greek statesmen, was tried for larceny, found guilty, and punished.

Thucydides was tried on the charge of being a traitor to Athens. Was found guilty, condemned and banished for twenty years.

Demosthenes was the greatest lawyer and orator of Athens. His greatness, however, did not prevent him from being accused of stealing an enormous sum of money. He was tried, convicted and driven into exile, there pursued, captured and forced to commit suicide.

Xenophon, the great historian, was accused of assault with attempt to commit murder, tried by an army of ten thousand soldiers and acquitted. He was later banished from Athens on a charge of being a traitor.

Seneca, the greatest lawyer of Rome, was charged with having
made an unlawful alliance with the queen, found guilty and banished to Corsica. Later, returning, he greatly enriched himself by plunder. Was accused of conspiracy, tried and condemned to death. He was permitted to choose his manner of death, whereupon he opened his own veins.

The great Tacitus, whose father was a senator in Rome, was both blind and insane.

Oliver Cromwell came from a noble ancestry, but during his life he was subject to hallucinations. At 10 years of age he was regularly treated for hypochromidia.

Rousseau was so ill-tempered and disagreeable he could live with no one. He deserted his wife and allowed her to become a public charge.

Cato, who founded the School of Stoics, was always sour and ill-tempered. Although preaching insensibility to fear, he was so cowardly that rather than face the enemy threatening him, he committed suicide.

Tasso was insane.

Plato committed suicide while insane.

Peter the Great ascended the throne of Russia at 10. He found a small principality and made it a world power. Yet he was always afflicted with epilepsy. He had two sons, one died of epilepsy, the other of convulsions.

Alexander the Great died of delirium tremens at 31.

The problem of eugenics is more than one of breeding. Men are not measured by their height or the length of their belts, but by the spirit which moves them to good or ill. The North American Indian was a more perfect specimen of physical manhood than any of his paleface conquerors. The principles underlying the breeding of horses and cattle and swine can have but little force in solving the problems of a better human race. The purpose in breeding a horse is to produce the strongest beast. In developing the finest Percherons we have sacrificed brains for flesh. In doing this we have bred nearly all the sense out of the animals. The wild horse of Arabia and the little Shetland pony, born way up on the rocky slopes of the Shetland Islands, are more intelligent, and can be trained to do more things, than the most highly bred animal of the prize ring. The best bred hog can only grunt and snooze and die. The prairie rooter of a half century ago had more wit than all the Chester Whites and Poland Chinas of our day.

Man is great, not because of his likeness to the horse or hog, but
because of his unlikeness to them. The world's greatest triumphs were not won by brute force, but by the mind and spirit of man working through religion, education, science, art and music toward a nobler estate. You cannot measure Alexander Pope by his physical deformities, but you must measure him by his Universal Prayer. You cannot measure Robert Burns by his drunkenness, but you must measure him by the joy he has given the world in Tam O'Shanter and the Mountain Daisy. You cannot measure Milton and Handel and Bach by their blindness, but you must measure them by the millions of souls they have inspired, to loftier ideals and nobler purposes.