THE OPPOSITION TO EUGENICS

By Professor S. J. HOLMES
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

The sanguine eugenist looks upon the improvement of the inborn qualities of the race as an end so obviously worthy that he has difficulty in understanding how any intelligent and normally constituted person can fail to share his own enthusiasm for this cause. Even the man in the street must be aware that it is one of the greatest misfortunes to be ill-born, especially if this should cause one to be hopelessly deformed, blind, idiotic or insane, and that, on the other hand, it is one of the greatest blessings to be well born, to inherit a fine endowment of physical, intellectual and emotional characteristics.

Obviously, people differ in a large number of hereditary traits that profoundly affect their happiness and their value as members of society. It follows inevitably that the race would be much better off if we could eliminate the inherited factors that contribute to fill our asylums with morons and lunatics, and if the race were propagated by those of its members who are above the average in physical vigor, intelligence and emotional traits that make for sound character and a normal happy existence. Here is this race of ours carrying its burden of hereditary defects so numerous that a mere inventory of them would not be possible in the time allotted to this address. In this race of ours are also the genetic factors that afford the physical basis for the development of outstanding personalities whose achievements may be of incalculable service to their fellowmen. How, then, can any one fail to be in fundamental accord with the chief aims of practical eugenics, however great may be the differences of opinion as to how these aims may best be brought about? It seems, therefore, very simple and obvious to the enthusiastic eugenist that racial improvement is

---

1 Presidential address before the American Eugenics Society, New York, November 30, 1938.
Editor's Summary

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only.

**Article Tools** Visit the online version of this article to access the personalization and article tools:
http://science.sciencemag.org/content/89/2312.citation

**Permissions** Obtain information about reproducing this article:
http://www.sciencemag.org/about/permissions.dtl