

**NATIONAL LIFE FROM  
THE STANDPOINT OF  
SCIENCE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649741595

National Life from the Standpoint of Science by Karl Pearson

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**KARL PEARSON**

**NATIONAL LIFE FROM  
THE STANDPOINT OF  
SCIENCE**



*BY THE SAME AUTHOR.*

**THE GRAMMAR OF SCIENCE**

New and Enlarged Edition

Demy 8vo., cloth, price 7s. 6d. net.

**THE ETHIC OF FREETHOUGHT  
AND OTHER ADDRESSES AND ESSAYS**

Second Edition, revised

Demy 8vo., cloth, price 7s. 6d. net.

NATIONAL LIFE  
FROM THE STANDPOINT OF  
SCIENCE

BY

KARL PEARSON, F.R.S.

PROFESSOR OF APPLIED MATHEMATICS, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, LONDON

*SECOND EDITION*

LONDON  
ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK  
1905

To

W. F. R. WELDON, F.R.S.,

*Linacre Professor of Comparative Anatomy*

*in the University of Oxford.*

A SLIGHT TOKEN OF GRATITUDE FOR ALL THAT  
I HAVE LEARNT FROM HIM DURING THE  
YEARS OF OUR FRIENDSHIP.

381772

## PREFATORY NOTE

THIS lecture was delivered in Newcastle on November 19, 1900, to the members of the Literary and Philosophical Society. At the time of writing and delivering it the South African War and its lessons were far more omnipresent in thought and feeling than, perhaps unfortunately, they are to-day. The wave of emotion which for a time roused the nation to self-consciousness has passed, scouring out very little of our stagnant backwaters in the process. It is possibly with a nation as with an individual—both feel only intensely and are only capable of vigorous self-reform in moments of unwonted stress, or of novel spiritual experience. Still, in



quieter moments it is worth while endeavouring to bring home to the thoughtful that no community of men can trust blindly to heredity to preserve their racial characters. Every nation is an agglomeration of good and bad elements, and each new generation is born from but a relatively small portion of the whole. The greatness of a nation depends on the dominant fertility of its fitter stocks, and fluctuates with the extent of this dominance. Love of ease, a mistaken sense of duty, insidious new social habits, may tamper with the preponderating fertility of the fitter and more capable racial constituents before we have realized their effects. Some only of these things can be touched by the legislator; in the aggregate they are subject alone to social feeling and to an enlightened national pride. Is it possible to arouse a consciousness in the folk that the parentage of the next generation is not a personal but a national problem?—that a nation which has

ceased to insure that its better elements have a dominant fertility has destroyed itself far more effectually than its foes could ever hope to destroy it in the battlefield ?

If the reprint of this lecture, of which the first edition has been for some time exhausted, should in the least help to quicken public opinion on this all-important point, then its purpose will have been amply fulfilled. The topic is a complex and weighty one, and my address was only a hasty talk, and not a treatise providing elaborate investigation and statistical proof of its statements. Still, most of its unproved assertions are based on results which the author has elsewhere published, or for which he has unpublished statistical warranty. But he would ask his readers to take nothing on faith; he would beg them solely to realize that there is a problem of the most urgent national importance involved in the mere possibility that while modern social conditions are re-

moving the crude physical checks which the unrestrained struggle for existence places on the over-fertility of the unfit, they may at the same time be leading to a lessened relative fertility in those physically and mentally fitter stocks, from which the bulk of our leaders in all fields of activity have hitherto been drawn.

To the lecture is added an Appendix containing two recent letters to the *Times* dealing with the problem of National Deterioration. I have to acknowledge the ready consent of the *Times* management to their republication.

K. P.