

**NATIONAL
WELFARE AND
NATIONAL DECAY**

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National welfare and national decay by William McDougall

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WILLIAM MCDOUGALL

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THE PAGAN TRIBES OF BORNEO
(In conjunction with Dr. C. Hase)

THE GROUP MIND

**NATIONAL WELFARE
AND
NATIONAL DECAY**

BY
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FOREWORD TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

THIS little book contains the substance of six lectures given at the Lowell Institute of Boston, in the spring of 1921, and afterwards published under the title "Is America Safe for Democracy?" In preparing an English Edition at the request of Messrs. Methuen, I have slightly altered a few passages to adapt the book for British readers.

The demographic problem of America is more complicated than that of Britain by reason of the existence of the coloured part of the population and the immense flood of immigration which now for many years has threatened to bring about a complete racial substitution of the American stock. But, apart from these complications, the same fundamental danger threatens both nations, as indeed it threatens, in lesser degree perhaps, all other civilized nations, namely, the danger of the deterioration of the innate qualities of the population.

Many excellent books have been published, urging the claims of "eugenics," since Francis Galton first stirred the conscience of Europe and America on the problem of the preservation of

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human qualities. Most of these books have been written from the purely biological standpoint. They give excellent accounts of the principles of natural selection, of heredity, and of the Mendelian laws. It has seemed to me that a presentation of the case for eugenics from a more psychological standpoint and on a broad historical background might usefully supplement these biological treatises. For, important as are the facts and principles of physical heredity, the general reader may have some difficulty in connecting the processes of cell-division, the chromosomes of the fruit-fly, or the coat-colours of piebald guinea-pigs, with the spiritual endowment of mankind. I have therefore brought together in these few lectures the findings of mental anthropology, which are now beginning to be garnered on a large scale ; and I have tried to indicate, in as impartial and scientific a manner as is possible in this still obscure field, their bearing upon the great problems of national welfare and national decay. I have added in footnotes some evidential matter which may be neglected by the cursory reader ; and in appendices I have put forward certain proposals which, if they could be put into practice, would, I think, go far to remedy the present disastrous state of affairs. The last of these appendices is a reprint of an article which appear in *Scribner's Magazine* for October, 1921. I am indebted to the editor of that magazine for permission to reproduce the article in these pages.

I would especially draw the attention of readers

FOREWORD

interested in political, economic, or social science to the evidence cited in this volume, which indicates very strongly, if it does not finally prove, that the social stratification which exists in modern industrial communities is positively correlated with a corresponding stratification of innate moral and intellectual quality, or, in less technical language, that the upper social strata, as compared with the lower, contain a larger proportion of persons of superior natural endowments. This is a proposition which has been stoutly maintained by most of the eugenists from Galton onward. But it has been the greatest weakness of the eugenic propaganda that it is so largely founded upon and assumes the truth of this proposition. For the critics and scorners of eugenics have vehemently denied it, or poured ridicule upon it; and no proof of it was available for their refutation. In a paper read before the Eugenics Education Society in London ("Psychology in the Service of Eugenics," *Eugenics Review*, January, 1914) I pointed out that this great gap in the eugenic argument could only be filled by applying the methods of experimental psychology. Two of my pupils (Mr. C. Burt and Mr. H. B. English) made the first contribution by such methods toward the filling of the gap; and more recently several similar studies with similar positive results have been made in America. They are reported in the following pages.

Harvard College,
Sept., 1921.

W. McD.