

THE REASON FOR EUGENICS

Religious Duty of Man to Assist the Course of Evolution and Endeavor to Make it Less Slow and Painful—His Power to do so Shown by the Results of His Half Unconscious Efforts in the Past.

FRANCIS GALTON.¹

OUR ignorance of the goal and purport of human life, and the mistrust we are apt to feel of the guidance of the spiritual sense, on account of its proved readiness to accept illusions as realities, warn us against deductive theories of conduct. Putting these, then, at least for the moment, to one side, we find ourselves face to face with two great and indisputable facts that everywhere force themselves on the attention and compel consideration. The one is that the whole of the living world moves steadily and continuously towards the evolution of races that are progressively more and more adapted to their complicated mutual needs and to their external circumstances. The other is that the process of evolution has been hitherto carried out with, what we should reckon in our ways of carrying out projects, great waste of opportunity and life, and with little if any consideration for individual mischance. Measured by our criterion of intelligence and mercy, which consists in the achievement of result without waste of time or opportunity, without unnecessary pain, and with equitable allowance for pure mistake, the process of evolution on this earth, so far as we can judge, has been carried out neither with intelligence nor ruth, but entirely through the routine of various sequences, commonly called "laws," established or necessitated we know not how.

An incalculable amount of lower life has been certainly passed through before that human organization was attained, of which we and our generation are for the time the holders and

transmitters. This is no mean heritage, and I think it should be considered as a sacred trust, for, together with man, intelligence of a sufficiently high order to produce great results appears, so far as we can infer from the varied records of the prehistoric past, to have first dawned upon the tenantry of the earth. Man has already shown his large power in the modifications he has made on the surface of the globe, and in the distribution of plants and animals. He has cleared such vast regions of forest that his work that way in North America alone, during the past half century, would be visible to an observer as far off as the moon. He has dug and drained; he has exterminated plants and animals that were mischievous to him; he has domesticated those that serve his purpose, and transplanted them to great distances from their native places. Now that this new animal Man finds himself somehow in existence, endowed with a little power and intelligence, he ought, I submit, to awake to a fuller knowledge of his relatively great position, and begin to assume a deliberate part in furthering the great work of evolution. He may infer the course it is bound to pursue from his observation of that which it has already followed, and he might devote his modicum of power, intelligence and kindly feeling to render its future progress less slow and painful. Man has already furthered evolution very considerably, half unconsciously, and for his own personal advantages, but he has not yet risen to the conviction that it his religious duty to do so deliberately and systematically.

¹These words of the founder of the science of eugenics are part of his chapter on "The Observed Order of Events" in *Inquiries into Human Faculty*, first published in 1883. The book is now obtainable at a cost of 35 cents, in "Everyman's Library", and should be in the possession of everyone who has even the slightest interest in eugenics.