



THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21, 1920.

Editorial and Publishing Offices:

MACMILLAN & CO., LTD.,
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON, W.C.2.

Advertisements and business letters should be
addressed to the Publishers.

Editorial communications to the Editor.

Telegraphic Address: PHUSIS, LONDON.
Telephone Number: GERRARD 8830.

Methods and Aims of Anthropology.

PROF. KARL PEARSON'S presidential address to the Anthropological Section of the British Association at the recent Cardiff meeting sounded a note of challenge which it is not usual to hear from the chair. Yet perhaps few of his audience were inclined to agree with him in this case that "a Daniel had no right to issue judgment from the high seat of the feast." In science, perhaps even more than in other departments of human affairs, criticism is the breath of life, and perfection, if it were attainable, might prove perilously akin to stagnation.

Although Prof. Pearson disclaimed any intention of speaking in a controversial spirit, his address was in fact a severe indictment of the traditional subject-matter and methods of anthropology. "Why is it," he asked, "that we are Section H and not Section A?" Anthropology should be the "Queen of the Sciences," the crowning study of the curriculum. If, in fact, it does not occupy this position, whose is the responsibility and what is the reason? His address was at once an answer to these questions and an attempt to suggest a remedy for what he feels to be the present unsatisfactory position of the science.

Anthropologists will cordially endorse Prof. Pearson's contention that the claims of anthropology as a leading science have not received full recognition, either from the State or the universities: they are unlikely, as a body, to agree with him as to the cause. For in his view the responsibility lies with the tradition of the orthodox school, in respect both of subject-matter and of method. Anthropology, and in particular anthropometry, he

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maintains, has produced no results of utility to the State, and its methods are not of such a kind as to afford either the training of the mind or the doorway to a career which would attract young men entering the universities. His chief criticism was directed against the subject-matter of anthropometry, the multitudinous observations on "height-setting," and the censuses of hair and eye colour, "things dead almost from the day of their record." But further, he went on to say, the bulk of the recorders were untrained, and the associated factors, without which the records were valueless, were usually omitted. The anthropologist, seizing the superficial and easy to observe, had let slip the more subtle and elusive qualities on which progress depends. It was the psycho-physical and the psycho-physiological characters, and not the superficial measurements of a man's body, which carry the greater weight in the struggle of nations. On this ground Prof. Pearson refused to admit the plea of the supporters of "science for its own sake," who argue that researches not immediately "utile" will be useful some day, as has happened in the case of the study of hyperspace. Anthropometric studies, he holds, must turn to more certain appreciations of bodily health and mental aptitude if they are to be useful to the State.

It is perhaps worth while to note that the two points to which Prof. Pearson directs attention are not entirely in the same category. One is a question of the subject-matter of the science, the other of method. In the case of the latter it is true that anthropometric records have sometimes been vitiated by lack of training in the observer; and it is equally true that associated factors have not always been recorded. But both these are remediable defects which will tend to disappear with increased facilities for training and increasing knowledge of essential relations in the facts to be observed. Neither, unless shown to be inherent in the subject-matter or unavoidable, can permanently affect the position of the science.

But Prof. Pearson went further. He was not prepared to allow that the material furnished by the present methods of anthropometrics was even indirectly of value as an indication of a close association between physical characters and soundness both of body and of mind. His grounds for this view were twofold. In the first place, he maintained, purity of race is merely a relative term; but even granting the hypothesis of pure races, it is known by mass observation that (as a result of interbreeding) elements belonging to one race are found in association in the same individual

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with those belonging to others. A tall but brachycephalic individual will combine Alpine mentality with blue eyes. Prof. Pearson also referred to the case of Charles Darwin, whom he took as a typical English individual, purely English in mentality, and showed that his ancestry contained elements from every race in Europe. Even if at any time there had been association of physical and mental characters, it would break down by intermingling, except in cases specially isolated by natural or social conditions, as, for instance, in the non-intermarrying caste groups of India.

Having demonstrated the failure of the orthodox school of anthropologists, Prof. Pearson put forward three propositions as a basis of reform. "Anthropologists must not cease," he said:

"(1) To insist that our recorded material shall be such that it is at present, or likely in the near future to be, utile to the State.

"(2) To insist that there shall be institutes of anthropology . . . devoted to the teaching of and research in anthropology, ethnology, and prehistory.

"(3) To insist that our technique shall not consist in the mere statement of opinion on the facts observed, but shall follow, if possible with greater insight, the methods which are coming into use in epidemiology and psychology."

Anthropologists will agree, it may be assumed, as to the desirability of the object set out in the second of these propositions; they may even be prepared to give to the third a qualified support. But to confine scientific research to aims immediately recognisable as utilitarian, as Prof. Pearson's first proposition would seem to suggest, is a limitation which very few scientific workers, anthropologists or others, would, and none should, accept. Nor in this case is it necessary. The study of ethnological problems on the lines at present pursued by physical anthropology does not necessarily exclude the study of what Prof. Pearson calls *vigoriometry* and *psychometry*—the science of man is wide enough to embrace them both. Is it not a little premature to condemn anthropometrics? The study is not of great age; it is still at the stage of gathering evidence, and as this accumulates the problems change in character; methods are being tested and varied, and data are re-examined continuously. Finally, anthropologists themselves are convinced that the problems they hope ultimately to solve are worth while.

On the other hand, anthropologists deplore the fact that the State does not make greater use of their results. The claims of the science as a basis

of legislation and as an essential preliminary in the training of those who have to administer the affairs of, at any rate, our subject races, have repeatedly been urged upon the Government. There is, however, justice in Prof. Pearson's criticism that the anthropologist too often has omitted to show that his problems have a very close relation to those of the statesman and reformer. On this ground alone Prof. Pearson deserves well of the science if, as a result of his strictures, he should succeed in inducing anthropologists to state from time to time the broad issues involved in their research. In support of his views, Prof. Pearson states that the Governments of Europe have had no highly trained anthropologists at their command, and, as a consequence, the Treaty of Versailles is ethnologically unsound. Is this in accordance with the facts? It was surely the case that when the terms of that treaty were under consideration each country interested in the settlement of international boundaries produced masses of facts based upon the researches of skilled ethnologists. Unfortunately, the facts were selected or distorted to suit the ends of the parties interested. Where impartial conclusions were available, as in the case of the Balkans, they had to be set aside on political grounds. The defects of the Treaty of Versailles are defects of the politician, and do not lie by default at the door of the man of science.

The extensive political propaganda based upon a distorted ethnology which followed the Armistice illustrates one aspect of a flagrant misuse of scientific data. Prof. Pearson refers with approval to the manifesto of the German anthropologists, in which is sketched a programme of study in ethnology and folk-psychology of savage and civilised peoples, by which they hope to aid their country to recover its lost position in the world. Science is made subservient to a purely political end. Prof. Pearson himself speaks of speeding up evolution as an outcome of anthropological studies, and of breeding out the troglodyte mentality in man. But by whom and on what grounds is the direction of the evolutionary process to be determined? The end of science is truth, and its function is the investigation of facts and their relations, and not the formulation of ideals. The past history of anthropology teaches us that it has not been to its advantage that it has meddled in politics or in humanitarianism. To say that this or that type is desirable, that this or that mentality should be cultivated, is not the work of the anthropologist, but of the social reformer.