HEREDITY AND THE HALL OF FAME

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WHAT is there in heredity? Ask the horseman, the dog fancier and the horticulturalist, and you will find that a belief in heredity is the cardinal point of all their work. Among animals and plants nothing is more obvious than the general resemblance of offspring to parents and the stock from which they come. With the highest-priced Jersey, the blue ribbon horse or a prize-winning dog, goes always the pedigree as the essential guarantee of worth.

So in the general bodily features of human beings, no one questions the great force of inheritance or is surprised because those close of kin look very much alike. Similarities in eyes, nose, mouth, complexion, gestures or physique are accepted as a matter of course; and we never stop to wonder at what is in reality one of the greatest of all mysteries, the substantial repetition of the same sort of beings generation after generation. If heredity does so much in moulding the physical form, may it not do as much in determining the shape and quality of the brain, in short, the mental and moral man in his highest manifestation of genius—indeed the ego itself?

Here we find differences of opinion, for man usually thinks of himself as in part at least a spiritual being, free to act according to his own will, unsubject to the laws of matter. In addition there is the fixed belief in so many quarters, that in the development of character and personality surroundings are of the first importance.

Thus heredity, environment and free will may be called the three rival claimants in the causation of mental and moral traits.

The last two have had many supporters, especially among philosophers and theologians. All the great schools of the past have taught that man’s proneness to good and evil was either a fixed principle implanted within him without reference to heredity, or else was something to be modified by an effort of the will or by the influence of surroundings.

The advocates of environment have been, and still are, numerous, especially among the educators and all those who hope to make over the world by drastic reforms, or are interested in improving the condition of the lower classes.

Who then are the advocates of heredity? This view has been largely championed by the scientists and is of comparatively recent de-
velopment. The Darwinian law of the origin and descent of man has undoubtedly indirectly contributed to a growing belief in the force of heredity and has acted as a stimulus to its more exact study. Scientists are assembling facts, and making accurate measurements where once they were content with vague arguments and theories.

The writings of Sir Francis Galton show that among Europeans a large percentage of the most eminent men (about half the entire number) have been closely related to other more or less eminent persons. This, however, leaves the question open how far unequal opportunities, differences of education, and social influence may have favored the close relatives of distinguished men.

In Europe the caste system counts for much, and family patronage may be thought to be at the bottom of many a public recognition of distinction. But it can not be due to anything characteristically European that so many of the great men of the older civilizations of the world are so often connected with others of the same type. For what are we to say when the truth becomes discovered that right here in America under our free and democratic institutions the same facts are to be found?

Galton mentions only three or four Americans, but a careful analysis of our own history speaks no less strongly for the inherited nature of exceptional ability.

The Lees of Virginia, the Livingstons of New York, the Adamses, Quincys and Lowells of Massachusetts, all illustrate the force of hereditary intellect. It is claimed that there are no less than 1,400 superior Americans descended in a direct line from Jonathan Edwards, the great philosopher of Puritan New England, whose blood has run through thirteen college presidents, sixty-five professors, and many principals of important academies.

The Edwards blood has produced more than one hundred lawyers, thirty judges, and some sixty more have attained distinction in authorship, the latest being Mr. Winston Churchill, of New Hampshire. They have been mayors of New Haven, Cleveland and Troy, governors of South Carolina, Connecticut and Ohio, and many diplomats, congressmen, senators and one vice-president of the United States are recorded among their number. Railways, steamship lines and banks have also claimed their talent, but in general Edwards traits have found their outlet in professional life.

The two most notable families in America, considering descent in the male lines alone (the remarkable Edwards showing includes the female lines as well), are the Lees and Adamses, with the Lowells pressing close in third place. Taking into account international as well as local fame, probably Henry Adams, who settled in Braintree, Massachusetts, in 1632, has the honor of being the progenitor of more distin-
guished descendants in various male lines than any other American who has ever lived.

In Jameson's "Dictionary of United States History," and Lippincott's "Biographical Dictionary of the World" are included 13 Lees, 11 Adamses, 10 Lowells, 9 Dworths, 8 Trumbulls, 7 Livingstons, 7 Bayards, 6 Irvings, 6 Sewalls, 6 Prescotts, 5 Channings, 5 Edwardses, 5 Mathers, 5 Randolphs and 5 Winthrops, and over one hundred other families in which from two to four noted Americans can be found closely related to each other. This is without considering consanguinity through mothers and daughters.

When it comes to our greatest men, such, for instance, as are honored by tablets in the Hall of Fame upon the Hudson, more than half show eminent relationships on the above basis. Whether all names properly belonging in this most exclusive temple of the immortals have, or have not, been included, makes little difference in the present argument. No one can fail to pay homage to the names that are there. The 46 celebrities of the Hall of Fame have been selected only from those Americans who have been deceased at least ten years. They have been elected only after careful deliberation, the names of candidates being voted on by a committee of a hundred, made up of citizens well qualified to pass judgment on such matters. College presidents, historians, editors, financiers, scientists and chief justices form the committee. The next election will take place in 1915.

Now if the family history of these 46 preeminent Americans be carefully looked into, they show an extraordinary amount of blood relationships with other men not quite so celebrated it is true, but still men in every sense entitled to the term "eminent," and men whose lives and achievements have added to the luster of their country. Professor Jameson's "Dictionary of United States History" with Lippincott's "Biographical Dictionary of the World" together contain separate sketches for only about 3,500 Americans. There must have lived at least 35,000,000 adult persons from the first settlement of the country to the present generation.

It is very difficult to get any conception of vast numbers of people or of figures in the millions. A considerable stretch of the imagination is necessary. Think of a line of men 35,000,000 feet long. Such a line of 35,000,000 men and women, standing one behind the other in single file, would stretch from the Capitol at Washington to San Francisco, and then bend up to Alaska. In such a line of fame, George Washington, by common consent, as the Father of his Country, stands number one and Abraham Lincoln stands number two. All those within the "3,500 group" would be standing well within one mile of the dome of the Capitol, while the 46 elect of the Hall of Fame would be within the rotunda itself. This means that all those in the "3,500 group" are as one in 10,000 of the entire population.
Suppose the average man or woman to have as many as twenty close relatives—as near as an uncle or a grandson. There can be then only about one person in five hundred who can claim close relationship to an "eminent" man. Those whose names are in the above dictionaries are, on the contrary, related to each other to the extent of about one in five. If the more celebrated among these be alone considered, it will be found that the percentage increases so that about one in three is related to some one within the group. This ratio increases to more than one in two when the families of the forty-six Americans in the Hall of Fame are made the basis of study. If all the eminent relations of those in the Hall of Fame are counted, they average more than one apiece. Therefore, they are from five hundred to a thousand times as much related to distinguished people as the ordinary mortal is.

The following great Americans whose names adorn the Hall of Fame show eminent relationships according to the test.

George Washington was the uncle of Bushrod Washington, justice of the Supreme Court of the United States.

Thomas Jefferson came from plain people on his father's side, but his mother was of the old and distinguished Randolph family. The great orator John Randolph, of Roanoke, was his second cousin, but is too far removed to be counted as a "close" relation. Jefferson's daughter Martha married Thomas M. Randolph, governor of Virginia, and their son, Gen. George Wythe Randolph, counts one "close" relation mentioned in the dictionaries of history.

John Marshall, the greatest American jurist and one of the great jurists of all time, is connected with one of those in the second (or 3,500) group. His nephew, Thomas F. Marshall, reached eminence as a judge and member of Congress. "As a political orator and wit he had great fame."

Abraham Lincoln was the father of Robert T. Lincoln, secretary of war, minister to Great Britain and president of the Pullman Company.

Daniel Webster was the son of Judge Ebenezer Webster, prominent during the Revolution. Daniel's brother "Ezekial acquired a high reputation as a lawyer."

Benjamin Franklin had no great ancestors, but his talents were well transmitted to his descendants. His illegitimate son, William Franklin, became a man of prominence and was the last royal governor of New Jersey. But the more brilliant qualities appeared especially in the Baches of Philadelphia, descendants of Franklin's daughter. Alexander D. Bache was one of the foremost of American scientists.

Alexander Hamilton came of aristocratic lineage on his mother's side; on his father's side, his people were merchants. He married a daughter of General Philip Schuyler, whose mother was a Van Rensselaer. Many of his descendants have become distinguished. John
Church Hamilton and Major-General Schuyler Hamilton satisfy the criterion here imposed.

Few people realize that Washington Irving was one of six Ivings, all distinguished in authorship—three brothers and two nephews of the author of Rip Van Winkle. Washington Irving, therefore, counts five eminent close relations according to the test.

Louis Agassiz, one of the few great Americans of foreign birth, was the father of Alexander Agassiz, who also reached eminence in natural science. Besides conducting many researches of a purely scientific nature, such as deep-sea dredging and archeological explorations, he served the cause of education by princely gifts to the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard; money which he had himself made through developing the now famous Calumet and Hecla copper mines. Alexander Agassiz received the highest honors in the American scientific world, inasmuch as he was president of the National Academy of Sciences and also president of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He was also given the Order of Merit by the German emperor.

Jonathan Edwards, America's greatest metaphysical thinker, was one of a great group of interrelated eminent Americans. He is of the first magnitude in a galaxy of stars. With grandfather, son and grandson, he is surrounded by these luminaries of the second rank.

S. F. B. Morse, inventor of the telegraph, is the center of a small and isolated cluster. His father, Jedediah Morse, D.D., is considered "the father of American geography." A brother, Sidney Edwards Morse, won fame as an inventor.

Henry Clay belonged to the distinguished Virginia Clays. Of his four sons who reached maturity, one son, James B. Clay, enters the 3,500 group. He was a member of Congress and prominent politically. He died in 1864, aged forty-seven.

Peter Cooper, the wealthy New Yorker, who was elected to the Hall of Fame as a representative philanthropist, was the father of Edward Cooper, who was mayor of New York from 1879 to 1881 and 1883, and is remembered in history on account of his activity in the overthrow of the "Tweed ring."

Oliver Wendell Holmes was the son of Rev. Abiel Holmes, pastor of the First Congregational Church, Cambridge, Massachusetts, from 1792 to 1832, who in 1805 published "American Annals," the result of great industry and research. "We consider it," says Professor Sparks, "among the most valuable productions of the American press." The son of Oliver Wendell Holmes, the poet, is Oliver Wendell Holmes, of the Supreme Court of the United States.

Robert E. Lee, as every one knows, belonged to one of the most distinguished families in America. Many of his relatives are the sub-
jects of separate biographical articles, those close of kin being his father, one nephew and one son.

James Kent, the celebrated jurist, was the father of William Kent, judge of the United States Circuit Court of New York, a lawyer who gained a high reputation.

Henry Ward Beecher was a son of the noted Rev. Lyman Beecher and was one of five distinguished brothers and sisters, among others, Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," herself an elect of the Hall of Fame as of first choice of the electors of 1910.

Joseph Story was called "the most extraordinary jurist of his age." His son, William Wetmore Story, gained most of his laurels in a very different channel. He is considered one of the few great American sculptors.

John Adams, second president of the United States, a member of one of the most notable families that America has produced, claims many distinguished relatives, if distant kinsmen be included. Samuel Adams was his second cousin. Dr. Zabdiel Boylston, noted physician, who was the first to introduce inoculation for smallpox in America, was his great-uncle. If only the close of kin be reckoned, then John Adams counts two in son and grandson.

John Quincy Adams, himself in the inner shrine of fame (elected in 1905), tallies as many as five of the "eminent" class. His position on the pedigree is at the center of the Adams group. With mother as well as father internationally famous, with a son, Charles Francis Adams, the bulwark, during our Civil War, of the rights of the United States in England; and with two grandsons reaching distinction in literature, John Quincy Adams rivals Beecher, Edwards and Lowell in the profusion of his lustrous kinships.

James Fenimore Cooper is not particularly affiliated to others of exceptional gifts. Still, his daughter, Susan Fenimore Cooper, became known as an author and philanthropist. She is in the group of 3,500.

James Russell Lowell had eight eminent close relations. His grandfather, Judge John Lowell, was a member of the convention which framed the constitution of Massachusetts, secured the insertion of the clause "all men are born free and equal" in the Massachusetts Bill of Rights. It is indeed rather ironical that this phrase should be coined by a Lowell. The poet's uncle, John Lowell, was an "able lawyer and political writer." Another uncle, Francis Cabot Lowell, was one of the principal founders of the city of Lowell, to which he gave his name. He was a merchant and manufacturer. The father of J. R. Lowell was Rev. Charles Lowell. Rev. Robert T. S. Lowell, brother of the famous poet, is also noticed in Lippincott's "Biographical Dictionary" as an author. Mary Lowell Putnam, "a distinguished polyglot linguist," was his sister. Her son, W. L. Putnam,
“gave promise of extraordinary genius.” He was killed in the battle of Ball’s Bluff, aged twenty-one. Another nephew, Col. Charles Russell Lowell, was killed in the Civil War, aged twenty-nine. “He was a young man of great promise,” and already one of the most distinguished cavalry officers in the Federal service.

The poetical gifts of William Cullen Bryant showed themselves in a lesser degree in his brother, John Howard Bryant.

William Ellery Channing, one of America’s most eloquent preachers, was a grandson of William Ellery, signer of the Declaration of Independence. Two brothers and two nephews of the celebrated divine became eminent in professional life.

General William Tecumseh Sherman counts one “eminent” relative in his brother John Sherman, senator and member of the cabinet.

George Bancroft, the famous historian, counts also one “eminent” relative through his father, Rev. Aaron Bancroft. The father was also noted as an author. Besides a great number of sermons, he published a “Life of Washington” which obtained great popularity.

Thus, 26 of the 46 men in the Hall of Fame show close eminent relationships. In total relationships, they tally 57, which, as already said, is from 500 to 1,000 times what random expectation calls for.

Much might be said concerning the families of others in the Hall of Fame, such as Emerson, Longfellow, Audubon, Eli Whitney, Phillips Brooks and J. Lothrop Motley, but they do not happen to show “eminent” relationships by the method here used.

All the above material has been collected in a systematic way, in order that its value may have a scientific and impartial basis. If the names of more or less distinguished relatives do not have separate articles devoted to them, in the afore-mentioned dictionaries, they have not been utilized in the above list. These two books have been used, not because they are considered infallible guides, but because they are convenient and are good enough for the purpose at hand. The same sort of result would be obtained if any good test were employed.

The proportion is the same the world over, for men of the highest caliber, one in two, or better, show relationship with other distinguished men, and these usually in their own field of activity.

The present writer has investigated the personalities and pedigrees of some 3,000 members of the royal families of Europe—published under the title “Mental and Moral Heredity in Royalty”—and has found that the same principles hold. Nearly all of the great names, or at least more than half, are closely associated by blood with those of similar stamp. About half of all the greatest rulers have been the descendants of comparatively mediocre ancestors; the other half have been the direct and immediate descendants of those as great or nearly as great as themselves. In other words, the vast horde (say ninety-nine
per cent. of the whole) is no more likely to produce a man of genius than is the one per cent. (or less than one per cent.) which, from the standpoint of eugenics, we rightly call the crème de la crème.

Thus we see why men like Lincoln and Franklin, who spring from the great reservoir of the commonalty, do not in the least upset one's belief in heredity, provided they do not occur very frequently. For they are the happy combinations of qualities derived from maternal and paternal sources.

All this does not deny that in some ways environment and, possibly, free will, play a measurable rôle in the determination of human fate, but it does suggest that the reliance which has been so freely bestowed on these social, institutional and metaphysical forces has been an exaggerated one.

The high percentages among illustrious men in this country—as high, in fact, as it is in Europe, is a very suggestive point. Opportunities are supposed to be freer in America, and social lines less strictly drawn. We should certainly expect to find in this country, notable names less often running in families; unless, of course, the eugenist's theory that it is nearly all a matter of heredity be indeed correct. At any rate, our much-vaunted American equality, liberty and opportunity have done nothing to make distinction in this country any less of a "family affair" than in the older civilizations of Europe.