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CONDITIONS OF GENIUS. *

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When I came to think over what I had to say to you, I saw how extremely inadequate it was to the title of the lecture. I am not about to take up any of the interesting questions of hereditary genius, nor to follow the brilliant psychological speculations of Professor James, as to the presence in the human mind of accidental variations which produce expectations, æsthetic, moral, metaphysical, with which the real world offers no correspondence. I have no thought of tracing the degrees of genius, from its germs in the lowest stage of human consciousness marked off from that of the animal by the dim perception of an ideal, an ought to be, in life and art, upwards to the point at which appears the mind for which the ideal is much more real than the actual, and which is urged on by a resistless force to bring the material of existence more into conformity with it. It is rather as to the relation between genius and certain social conditions, that I would like to offer some considerations which force themselves upon our thoughts with a disturbing power, at this present time.

* A lecture delivered before the Delta Sigma Society, McGill University.