

4 IS THE ANGLO-SAXON RACE DEGENERATING?

It may be said that the scope of the subject under review comes more within the range of ethnology and sociology than of psychology, and yet we find every branch of natural science so interdependent that we cannot study it intelligently as a whole without becoming conversant with it in all its branches. To study psychology successfully we must first have an acquaintance with biology, and to understand the sister branches of ethnology and sociology we must first have an acquaintance with both biology and psychology. As students of natural science in the specialty of psychology and as daily practical workers within our several institutions for the treatment of the insane, we are continually in danger of having our minds contracted and our mental vision obscured within the narrow limits of conventional methods for the care and comfort of those committed to our charge. The tendency is ever to get into deep ruts of official routine, to which we become more or less enslaved without taking thought of the great dynamic forces in co-operation around us. We would do well occasionally to cast our horoscope across a wider field of mental activity and take cognizance of the great world movements in operation, which are either making for the upbuilding and betterment of our race, or, it may be, sowing the seed of future national and social dissolution and racial decay. The field is an inviting one for the enterprising student of psychological phenomena to exploit. The great cosmic forces in operation as exhibited in the intense intellectuality of the age, as manifested in the fierce struggle for national supremacy, the competition among great powers in opening up and taking possession of the hitherto waste places of the earth, the subjugation of the weak by the strong, the formation of great corporations and trusts in place of individualism, the intense struggle for wealth and power, the wide diffusion of knowledge among the masses, the wealth of discovery and invention, the wonderful provision for the weak and degenerate classes as evidencing the altruistic spirit of the age—all this, and much more I might mention, symbolize to-day, as it never did before in the world's history, the mighty expansion of brain power. This explosion (if I may so term it) of brain energy during the present century, and especially the latter half of it, has so revolutionized every department of our social, commercial and industrial economy, that we stand appalled and confounded at the magnitude and complexity of its operations. It is not to be wondered at that the great mass of the people were unprepared for such an upheaval of social and industrial energy, and that a large number of the more weakly endowed mentally would fail to adjust themselves to the altered conditions and swell the ranks of the dependent and degenerate classes.