

HEREDITARY GENIUS IN AMERICA.

PART I.—THE UNITED STATES.

AMONG the instances of transmitted mental capacity given in his valuable work on "Hereditary Genius," Mr. Francis Galton includes only three or four American families. For this scanty use of distinguished cis-Atlantic names we were, however, prepared by certain remarks in his preface. "I have taken little notice," he says, "in this little book of modern men of eminence who are not English or, at least, well known to Englishmen." Then, after explaining his omission of foreigners by the fear of inaccuracy in stating their relationships, he goes on to say that he "should have especially liked to investigate the biographies of Italians and Jews, both of whom appear to be rich in families of high intellectual breed," and adds that "Germany and America are also full of interest." It is somewhat strange that no American should have availed himself of Mr. Galton's hint to supply the illustrations of which American genealogy is so bountiful. One of the cases to which Mr. Galton refers, that of the Adams family, is so remarkable that no person who undertook to deal with the subject could fail to take notice of it. That father and son should both, in a republic so great as the United States, have attained the same high seat of rulership, is exceptional in the annals of nations. Nor did the services and honours of the family end with the second generation. Charles Francis Adams, son of John Quincy and grandson of John, though he did not reach the supreme place of power which they successively occupied, was, like each of them, his country's chosen representative with the Court and Government of Great Britain. He had also, in a fuller measure than either ancestor, the literary gift, and to him the world is indebted for the biographies of the two presidents of his name. Nor were these three illustrious men the only persons who conferred distinction on that name. It would be an ungrateful country that would forget such patriotism as that of Samuel Adams, while Hannah Adams, not without reason termed the historian, has a niche all her own in America's temple of fame.

The other American instances given in Mr. Galton's book are Franklin, Copley and Irving. Of Franklin he mentions, in proof of his theory, the grandson who edited Franklin's works, and the great-grandsons, Franklin and Alexander Dallas Bache. Of these two brothers, the former graduated with honors at West Point, became Professor of Natural Philosophy in the University of Pennsylvania, and Superintendent of the United States Coast Survey, in which capacity his services were of great value. He also wrote a report of the European system of education, published a number of scientific essays, was chosen a regent of the Smithsonian Institution, and bequeathed \$42,000 to the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia. His brother Franklin was a Professor of Chemistry and the author of several medical works. It is worthy of note that Benjamin Franklin's mother was a daughter of Peter Folger, the Quaker poet of Nantucket. To this source may be attributed Franklin's early taste for poetry. Some of his ballads, it may be remembered, were printed by his brother and sold on the streets. It was only when his father discouraged him by telling him that poets were generally beggars that he desisted from verse-making. All the members of the family who achieved distinction seem to have been devoted to physical science, as the Adamses were to statesmanship and diplomacy.

In the Copleys we have the more illustrious son of a talented father seeking advancement by an entirely new path of endeavour. The son of an eminent painter studies law, meets with success at the Bar, rises to be Lord Chancellor, and closes a prosperous career as a peer of Great Britain. The fame of Washington Irving has so far overshadowed the merits of his talented brothers that it is only in reading his biography that we are reminded of their close connection with his early career. Yet to them "Geoffrey Crayon" was in no slight degree indebted for his mental training and his first literary successes. Both Peter and William, as well as James K. Paulding, were his associates in editing "Salmagundi," and the former had previously established the *Morning Chronicle*.

These are, I believe, the only Americans cited by Mr. Galton as instances of hereditary genius. A brief inquiry has, however, convinced me that they are by no means isolated cases, but that, on the contrary, this continent is as fertile in family groups of various ability as are any of the nations of Europe. It is, indeed, an *embarras de richesses* from which we have to choose. It matters not whether we turn to the biography of literature, or to that of science or of art, of diplomacy or politics, of jurisprudence, of warfare, or of any domain of public service in which men benefit their fellows and win the reputation of greatness, we meet with no lack of illustrious names of kindred stock.

In making my selection, I will follow no particular plan or order, my object being rather to indicate a fruitful path of research than to classify discovered facts. Three of the instances adduced by Mr. Galton take us back to the years before the Revolution. During that stormy period a large portion of what may be called the nobility of America laid its foundation. But some of the houses that came in with the Conqueror, so to speak, had attained a position in the country long before. The first American author, Ann Dudley, who became the wife of Governor Bradstreet, has a fair title to head the list. A woman of exceptional ability, she belonged to a family of mark, being connected, through her father, with the Dudleys and the Sidneys of Penshurst. Governor Dudley must, from his daughter's evidence, have been a man of more than ordinary devotion to books. "A magazine of history," she terms him. Like his more famous child, he was also addicted to the worship of the Muses, and, when he died at the advanced age of eighty-seven, a copy of verses was found, it is said, in his pocket. He was, moreover, a man of strong character, firm, courageous

and endowed to a high degree with the fortitude, patience and manifold resource which his responsible position demanded. Ann, while inheriting his strength of mind, bore through life the burden of a weakly frame. But her intellectual and spiritual force and charm conquered all physical shortcomings. As she was the daughter, so she was destined to be the wife, of a governor. Neither before nor since the Revolution has America borne or fostered many sons more able, active, or faithful in their country's service than Simon Bradstreet. It was altogether in the nature of things that from such a stock, allied with that of the Dudleys, should be descended some of the most eminent poets, orators, soldiers and divines that have conferred lustre on New England. It is surely not without significance, from the standpoint of heredity, that such men as Channing and Buckminster, Holmes and Dana, should have the blood of Ann Bradstreet in their veins. But great as they were in their day, and good service as they did to their generation, those were by no means the only groups of striking individualities among the founders of the nation whose blood and spirit have been transmitted to the present. If we take the forty-one Pilgrims, or any other body of rulers and workers from among those who planted the seeds of civilization, freedom and religion along the Atlantic sea-board in that birth-time of Aryan America, assuredly eminent examples shall not be wanting. If a man rises to leadership, we find his name recurring in the second, the third, or even the fourth generation in the pages of history; and, then, when it might seem as if the race had decayed or sunk back exhausted into obscurity, a little research enables us to discover that the family pre-eminence has been perpetuated in the female line and that a Dudley, a Winthrop, or a Mather is masquerading under another cognomen. More than a quarter of a century ago, one of the most learned and delightful of American authors, a man of science, a *prosateur* and a poet, himself a salient instance of the heredity of genius, said, in describing the Brahmin caste of New England: "Their names are always on some college calendar or other. They break out every generation or two in some learned labour which calls them up after they seem to have died out. At last, some newer name takes their place, it may be; but you inquire a little and you find it is the blood of the Edwardses or the Chaunceys or the Ellerys or some old historic scholars, disguised under the altered name of some female descendant." Again and again, even in the summary investigation undertaken in preparing this essay, has the same welcome fact unfolded itself.

A short time ago I had a word to say of the three generations of Adamses. In the seventeenth century their fortunes were foreshadowed by the Winthrops—a name of which the representatives still hold their places in America's roll of honour. John the elder, John the younger and Fitz-John, had each his turn in the office of Colonial Governor—the first of Massachusetts Bay, the two last of Connecticut. Nor was this their only claim to recognition. The Suffolk lawyer and squire was of the stuff of which the Pym, the Hampdens and the Cromwells of that age of conflict were composed. In ordinary times he would have been a good citizen, a just magistrate, a sturdy advocate of the weak and oppressed against the tyrant of the village. But with the opportunity his virtues expanded, and in the work of colonial organization at "Tremountain" they found stimulus and scope. He was not only an administrator, but had some skill as an historian, and, like so many laymen of his time and creed, was a moralist and a theologian. To his journal the great historians have been not a little indebted. His son, John, was a soldier as well as a diplomatist, and gave his leisure to scientific pursuits. This last tendency grew into fruitful life in the next generation, for Fitz-John Winthrop was one of the earliest members of the Royal Society.

The American genealogy of another early gubernatorial family begins with romance. Longfellow has told, as he only could tell, the story of the first maiden bride of New England, the fair Priscilla, who broke the law of nations by taking captive an ambassador, though, as it proved, he was a willing captive. The second successful colonial suitor was a widower and his lady-love a widow. William White, a passenger on the *Mayflower*, died of epidemic fever about the same time that Edward Winslow, another of the Pilgrims, lost his young wife. The fitness of things ordained that these two should comfort each other in their bereavement. So Mrs. White became Mrs. Winslow and a "mother in Israel." Though Governor three successive terms, her husband ended his days in England, where he found a powerful and helpful friend in Cromwell. His son, Josiah, was the first native-born Governor of Plymouth Colony. A commander of ability, his taste for the military life was transmitted to his children, and among his descendants both in colonial and in later times, there have been several who made themselves reputations as soldiers.

Analogous to the alliance of the Dudleys and Bradstreets—which was destined to give America so many distinguished sons and daughters—was the marriage of Richard Mather's son and John Cotton's daughter. Giving up, for conscience' sake, the charge of St. Botolph's Church in St. Botolph's town (Boston, in Lincolnshire), the Rev. John Cotton conferred on the little nucleus of the great republic that was to be the benefit of his wisdom and his learning. Not only did his works and his memory live after him, but he also, through his daughter, became the ancestor of some of the most illustrious men that this continent has produced. Among the scholars and thinkers whose society did much to efface any lingering regrets for his English home was Richard Mather, who, like himself, had sacrificed position and prospects to his love of religious freedom. He had, in their fulness, the virtues and the faults of the fellowship for which he had abandoned the Church of England. Learned, eloquent, pious, he was a living example of the moral precepts that he preached. But, "alas! for the rarity of Christian charity under the sun," he, like many another champion of liberty, though he would not bend his will to alien control, was a hard taskmaster to his own disciples, and proved that ecclesiastical tyranny was not confined to the wearers of surplices. His son, Increase, was still more learned and still