

our race we may and can exercise a beneficial determinant action on generations yet to be, eliminating disease, stimulating and clarifying mental processes, strengthening and purifying moral qualities.

But, enormous and far reaching as we believe the power to be of the laws of heredity, we must not allow them to dominate us. They are not the forces of a blind, inexorable Fate. These laws are well ordered in all things. When, in view of the depressing influences of the researches of Lombroso and his school, we feel that we are all smitten, when each scans anxiously his brother's face for stigmata, or fancies himself the bearer of a hall mark of some degeneration, let us remember that not only can we, to some extent at least, control the working of the laws of heredity, but so far as we ourselves are concerned, can bid them defiance.

We may—if we will, say, “Evil, be thou my good,” and turn our backs upon our good angel who points us to an honourable ancestry and bids us follow in their path. But, when the Angel of the Pit, with mocking leer, that “Man of Hell who calls himself Despayre,” bids us throw up our hands, tells us we are the captives of circumstances bound in millennial chains, tempts us to give up the hopeless struggle, we may—if we will, say, “stand thou on that side, for on this am I.” We must not forget that divine part of us, that mysterious, undefinable, undeniable power for good or evil—the human will.

Thirty years ago a young man lay in the Royal Infirmary in Edinburgh. Fortune had not smiled upon him, and now, maimed and crippled for life, that life seemed doomed “to dumb forgetfulness a prey.” But not to Despair. The “star of the unconquered will” rose and stood over the lonely bed of William Ernest Henley and inspired these lines, the finest assertion of the Free Will I have ever seen:

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud,
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find me, unafraid.