

HEREDITY

Institute For Study of Human Heredity Proposed

Better Knowledge of How Physical Traits Are Handed Down Would Help Offset Ills Following Present War

A RESEARCH institute for the study of human heredity can and should be established, declares Prof. Earnest A. Hooton, well-known Harvard anthropologist. Better knowledge of the way physical and physiological traits are handed down from ancestors to offspring would, he feels, do a great deal to offset the ills that will be visited upon the human race as an aftermath of the present war.

Initial staff of such an institution would not need to be very large. Prof. Hooton proposes an animal geneticist, a physical anthropologist, a psychologist, a physiologist, a clinical physician, a biometric statistician "and a couple of realistic sociologists." Quarters for such an institution might be available at any first-rate medical school. All that is lacking is some philanthropist long-headed enough to endow an organization aiming at the long-range prevention of much human misery, instead of the mere relief of preventable disasters after they have arrived.

The institution would operate, as Prof. Hooton envisions it, by "locating the principals to imminent marriages, studying them from all of the scientific angles which are necessary for a full understanding of their organic and sociological capacities, and then extend that study so far as possible, to their parents, brothers and sisters.

"Next, the institute would await the arrival of the probably inevitable offspring of these marriages and would follow these through their periods of growth and maturity. The research staff of the institute would not have to twiddle its thumbs until the infants grow up. Neither births nor marriages are uncommon."

An animal analogue of one phase of such a study has been provided by the important but little-noticed breeding experiments with rabbits, carried on for many years by Dr. Wade H. Brown and his associates at the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research at Princeton, N. J. It might be called an experiment in horrible examples, for Dr. Brown and his staff have mated their rabbits as human beings all too often mate themselves: in such a way as to combine and intensify hereditary constitutional weaknesses. Some of these weaknesses manifest themselves as deformities, others as diseases that "run in the family."

If analogous human hereditary deficiencies could be detected and their bearers discouraged from making the kind of marriages that would pass them on to their luckless offspring, Prof. Hooton feels, the cost of the institute which he proposes would be justified many times over.

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PSYCHIATRY

"Cranks" Visiting Washington Are Mostly Harmless, Quiet

THE "CRANKS" who so regularly appear among the visitors thronging Government offices in Washington, although potentially the most dangerous of all mentally ill patients, are, with few exceptions, harmless, quiet and well behaved.

A study of these psychotic visitors to Washington who have been sent for

treatment to St. Elizabeths Hospital was reported to the American Psychopathological Association meeting in Boston. The study was made by Dr. Jay L. Hoffman, of St. Elizabeths, who was, however, unable to read his report in person because he was reporting for duty with the Army.

Coming to Washington with weird

demands for absurd sums of money, for impossible "rights" or to advise Government officials on how to win the war, these men—and they are nearly all men—seek public officials because of mental illness developing out of loneliness, friendlessness, and hunger for happiness. Their demands and their offers of advice, Dr. Hoffman said, serve to make up for their poor adjustment at home, at work, and in the community.

"These patients are, in general, a pitiful lot," he reported. "They are frequently of foreign birth or extraction, without friends or family, well along in years, wanderers, unemployed, and completely unaware of the abnormality of their ideas and behavior.

"One may search the stories of their lives without finding much cause for happiness or satisfaction."

About half come to Washington in the hope of seeing the President. Others want to see the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of the Navy, officials in the Department of Justice, FBI, or Secret Service, the Supreme Court, Veterans Administration, and the Patent Office or their Congressmen and Senators. Only one in the group studied asked for the Vice-President.

Usually they want to get money, give advice, or obtain relief from imagined persecution.

One woman, a factory worker, demanded \$300,000,000 which she said had been loaned to the English Government by her family and which Queen Mary had brought to this country for her. One man wanted a patent on a flame-thrower which, he claimed, could destroy all the enemies of the United States. Two claimed that they had been elected President of the United States and wanted to be sworn in.

Although the age of the patients ranged all the way from 19 years to 70, most of them were over 35 years and the average age was 44. Only five out of 53 were married. Frequently there were no relatives or friends sufficiently interested in the patient to respond to correspondence from the hospital. A number had been raised in orphan asylums or foster homes. Most of those of foreign birth had no relatives in this country.

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Strawberry juice retains more vitamin C than do preserves or jam made from the berries.

A bacterial *parasite* of the red scale which attacks citrus fruit has been discovered.