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THE AMERICAN NEGRO¹

UNDER the comprehensive title chosen, it is my intention to discuss a single problem fundamental to studies of the colored population of the United States: the physical constitution of the American negro.

Students of the negro are aware of the lack of knowledge concerning this problem. Careful determination of the racial elements of the individual or group has been carried out in exceptional cases by relatively few investigators. A number of researches, economic, social, medical, have been completed or are now in progress, the results of which may be directly influenced by the factor of racial constitution, and this factor is generally unknown. The literature of the American negro abounds in contradictory claims concerning his native ability, his endurance of city life, resistance to disease, etc. Throughout the literature the environmental factors are usually recognized, the constitutional element commonly neglected, and to this circumstance some of the opposing results may be attributed.

The colored hybrids and pure-blood negroes are generally dealt with as a biological unit, when in fact the negroid population of the United States is composed of many different types. The hybrid is distinguished biologically from the white and from the negro, but society tries to make him a negro; and as a negro he enters into various records which are used as sources for study. Under such circumstances the conclusions of a research not only fail to convince but often add further complications to the question. Negro problems of importance in their relation to all elements of the population are undertaken without consideration of the racial mixtures of the groups used in the study.

Attempts to differentiate pure negroes and hybrids present many difficulties and it is recognized that the criteria used are inadequate. Further separation of the hybrids into the subgroups resulting from successive intermixtures with whites or blacks offers greater difficulties and permits less definite conclusions.

¹ Address by the retiring vice-president for Section H, American Association for the Advancement of Science, at a joint session with the American Anthropological Association, New York, December 29, 1928.

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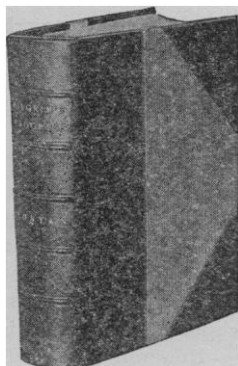
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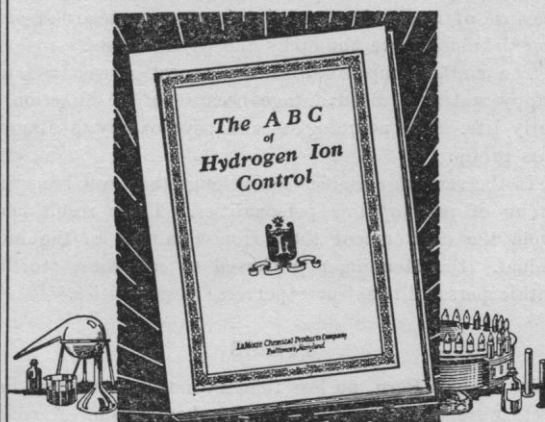
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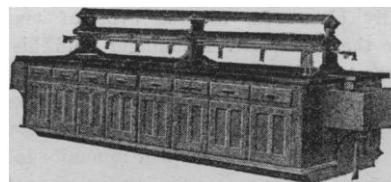
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