

SCIENCE

VOL. 75

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 1932

No. 1938

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SCIENCE: A Weekly Journal devoted to the Advancement of Science, edited by J. McKEEN CATTELL and published every Friday by

THE SCIENCE PRESS

New York City: Grand Central Terminal .
Lancaster, Pa. Garrison, N. Y.
Annual Subscription, \$6.00. Single Copies, 15 Cts,

SCIENCE is the official organ of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Information regarding membership in the Association may be secured from the office of the permanent secretary, in the Smithsonian Institution Building, Washington, D. C.

THE CHANGING EFFECTS OF RACE COMPETITION¹

By Professor S. J. HOLMES

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THIS evening I shall invite your attention to certain aspects of the contemporary evolution of our own species. In so doing I am sure that I need make no apology, especially since our society, through its traditions, is concerned with the general problems of organic evolution. Most of my hearers will doubtless recall the well-known address delivered by Professor Thomas H. Huxley on "The Struggle for Existence in Human Society." In venturing to discuss some aspects of this same subject I can not hope to emulate the clear and forcible presentation of this master of scientific exposition. Human rivalry takes on different forms as the years go on, and it is chiefly for this reason that I have chosen my present theme.

Man, like all other forms of life, is subject to the

struggle for existence. He is exposed to the action of the various selective agencies which operate elsewhere in the organic world. Although selection acts upon all organisms, the way in which it acts, and whether it causes advancement, degeneration or mere lateral divergence, depends upon the peculiar circumstances under which an organism lives. The study of the influence of the selective agencies operating in the human species involves one in many complex problems. In man evolutionary changes are taking place with extraordinary rapidity. Probably nowhere else in the organic world is there a species which is undergoing such wide-spread and extensive modifications. Man is not only characterized by a degree of hereditary variability scarcely equaled by any other form of life, but he is subject to the operation of selective forces whose incidence varies greatly from place to

¹ Address of the president of the American Society of Naturalists, New Orleans, December 31, 1931.