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GENETICS AND ANTHROPOLOGY¹

By Professor C. H. DANFORTH

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WHILE all scientific activity might well be regarded as a single enterprise, human limitations are such that individually we can reach the boundaries of knowledge in but few places. This handicap is offset in some measure by the fact that acquisitions laboriously achieved in one domain may be taken over in whole or in part by workers in other fields. Anthropology has profited much in this way, having drawn heavily on the physical sciences and mathematics as well as on biological specialties and the humanities. Through borrowing and mutual interchanges the forefront of scientific progress is kept from becoming ragged.

A survey of journals issued during the last few years shows that one of the important recent anthropological contacts has been with the field of genetics,

¹ Address of the vice-president and chairman of Section H—Anthropology, American Association for the Advancement of Science, Boston, December 29, 1933.

which to anthropologists as a group is no longer quite *terra incognita*. Especially is this true with some of our European colleagues, among whom human genetics is coming to be regarded as a natural part of anthropology. In our own journals during the past ten or fifteen years there has occasionally appeared an article with a distinctly genetic background, and in several important monographs genetic aspects have received able consideration. Conversely, an easy-going assumption of a direct and immediate effect of climate or custom on the human germ-plasm has become less frequent. So it could hardly be said to-day, as with some justice it might have been only a few years ago, that the platitudes of genetics are the heresies of anthropology. But in place of the violent revolution in anthropological thought which some great exponent of the genetic point of view might have stimulated, we are witnessing a slow and

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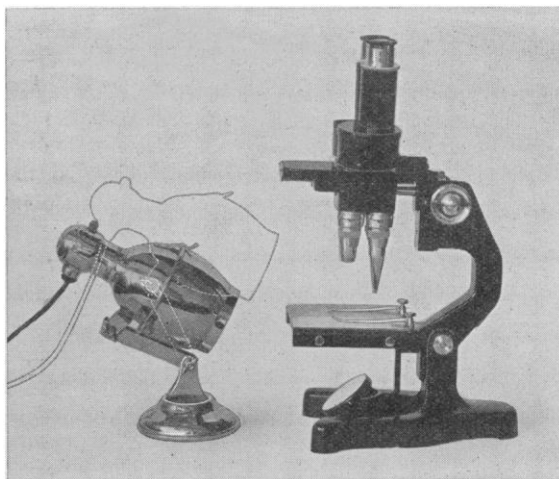
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