Psychological Studies of Southern Criminals. Third of the Series of Frances A...
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Psychological Studies of Southern Criminals.

Third of the Series of Frances A. Keller's Investigations.

Testing Steadiness of Nerves.

As a result of the series of articles on criminology, published in "The Tribune" last January, the philosophy and science department of the Woman's club of Chicago decided to send their author, Miss Frances A. Keller of the University of Chicago, on a tour of investigation in the South. The expenses of her trip were shared by the Woman's club, "The Chicago Tribune," and an Eastern magazine. The statistics and other data concerning Southern criminals were lacking and they were essential to a complete presentation of criminological conditions in America. Miss Keller spent several months in making a most thorough study, and for a part of the time lived in the convict camps in Southern States. The result of her investigations will be told in a series of articles, of which the first was printed on Sunday, Oct. 14, and the third follows:

THE preceding articles have been based upon observations in this one the results of accurate measurements and tests are presented. At each institution I remained for a week or ten days. The laboratory was arranged in a quiet part of the institution and the tests made with apparatus carried for the purpose. It was a source of great curiosity to both negroes and whites, but there was less fear and superstition shown than among Northern criminals. There was no difficulty in securing subjects, and many thought themselves delighted unless they were chosen. They cooperated in every way with the work and endeavored to do their best in what was required. This makes the tests more representative of their capacity. The reason for this cooperation probably lies in the more servile nature of the Southern negro and in the fact that they believed the tests would help them in some way.

The series used includes measurements and tests both. The former were made of various portions of the body, and include those usually taken by Lombroso. Tests were taken for the purpose of ascertaining if American facts and for comparing these results with European facts. The only comparisons possible are those between negro and white criminals for the reason no accurate data among negroes has not been measured. The results available from the anthropometric measurements include the following:

In height the negro criminal is inferior to the white criminals measured. But the white immoral classes are distinguished from the criminal classes are inferior to the negroes. In weight the negroes exceed the whites. In addition to height, sitting height is also taken. The average for a number of students measured at Wellesley was found to be 3.7, much greater than one-half. Immoral whites show the difference to be 7.5 inches, and criminal whites 4.6. The negroes average about the same as the criminal whites, and thus approximate more nearly to the normal.

Obtaining Cephalic Indices.

The cephalic index, which is secured by measuring the greatest length and width of the *head and securing the ratio*, is pre-eminently an ethnic characteristic, and has to do more directly with the race than with a social manifestation, such as crime. Indices which are below 75 are designated as dolichocephalic. Those between seventy-five and eighty are mesocephalic or medium, and all above eighty are broadheaded or brachycephalic. The negroes have prominent Jaws and is classified. I secured as pure negro types as possible, and yet my average for ninety criminals shows the index of seventy-six to be above the standard assigned them. The average for white criminals is 80.5. The high average of the negroes may be partly due to the fact that there is a large mixture of Indian blood among the negroes, and it is almost impossible to secure enough subjects to exclude these. The Indians are credited with being of Mongolian descent, and the Mongolian races are broad-headed. The broadest head among the negroes was slightly dive, the longest sixty-nine, which furnishes a wide range. Without a knowledge of racial intermixture this measurement seems valueless.

Told by the Nose.

In the nasal indices, which are secured by measuring the greatest length and width of the nose and securing the ratio, the result is observation predicts. In white criminals the index is 67.5, showing the nose is over one-half longer than it is wide. The negro's index is 81. This will show how much broader the negro's nose is. Not infrequently the nose was as long as it was long, and in two instances the width exceeded the length. In addition to the width, the negro's nose shows a more marked indentation at the root. Rarely is the nose aquiline or arched. These facts are characteristic of the race, as well as of criminals.

The measurements of the ears show some differences in the length. The ears were measured. In the negro's about one-fifth which difference in the length of the two ears: in the white criminals about one-third.

In the measurements of the fingers and thumbs among negroes one-eighth show differences as between left and right, and immoral whites show one-sixth. It may be that manual labor affects the structure of the hand.

As with the nose, in the measurements of the mouth the negroes differ from the whites. In the length of the mouth the differences are not so great. For white criminals it is 47 mm., for negroes 50 mm. The thickness of the lips the white criminals measure only 17 mm., while the negroes are 22 mm. In the negroes, when Indian blood was evident, the tendency is towards thinner lips, as is also the case with the whites, and others having white blood. In these measurements the nose and mouth show the greatest variation from the whites.

The results of measuring the height of forehead were a surprise in view of the general statements. The white criminal's average is 60 mm. while the negro's is 63 mm. I made careful observations of the relative development of the different portions of the head. The narrow, receding forehead is less common than I had anticipated, and among women I was quite surprised to find the marked prominence of the frontal region. The negro is prognathous—has a more projecting jaw; but it did not appear abnormally heavy or masculine, as I had often alleged. The parietal and occipital regions of the head are, as a rule, better developed than the temporal and frontal regions. High cheek bones, another alleged criminal characteristic, and wide distances between the eyes were common, especially in those of Indian mixture. In a comparison of young and old I am led to believe that the race is undergoing a racial modification. This is, no doubt, due in a measure to the gradual whitening of races.

With regard to masculinity of voice and feature, I find the same results as last year. The voice of the negro, as of the white, have many harsh, crude tones and are often loud, and the faces have a hard, dissipated appearance; but these do not constitute masculinity. There were faces possessing distinctly masculine lines, but these were exceptions, and they may be found in any criminal community. One interesting fact is that the feminine class always appear more brutal and display more anomalies because of the lack of dress, absence of all ornaments, and style of hairdressing tend to make them appear so.

To Better Health.

In phlothy the negro criminal is much superior to the white, and forms an exception (due to race), to the statements regarding criminals. In nutrition and physical health they belong to an immoral class, but are much superior to the criminal class in the North. Thus the strength of the handgrasp shows that the immoral whites of the North has an average of 52 lbs for the right and 48 for the left hand. The criminals' average for the right is 59 and 57 for the left. Negroes, right, 71; left, 69; and negroes, right, 73; left, 69. This excellence among the negroes in the South do not appear to be so great in the North, and the sentences there are shorter, which is favorable to their physical health. The strength of these are the most important results from anthropometric data. The general conclusion is that the negro criminals do not possess marked defects, but are more normal anomalies than the white criminals where racial differences can be excluded. Facial anomalies are noticed in the distance of eyes and mouth when compared with the whites. Negroes do not suffer as much by comparison with white students as do the white women in the workhouses.

Important Psychological Tests.

The psychological tests were devised for supplying an obvious defect in the study of the criminal. The function of each individual has never been tested, although this is the vital factor. There are many qualities and emotions which psychology cannot; yet, measure, but there are others be-sides which are worthy. Too much of our data regarding the criminal is based upon observation and conversation. If the criminal class is educated, then can be measured by comparisons in percentages, rather than rely upon the criminal's statement. Tests of reading and writing, memory, reason, imagination, mental capacity, association of ideas, etc., can be given, and then carefully standardized. If the criminals refuse to take them they can be classified with the unknown, and this is never misleading. The measurements of effective memory, limited mental capacity, etc., are not just reason or imagination, but much vanity; if his senses are defective or his nervous organization is poor, there is no sense weak. Iei us determine the degree and see of what value these are in causing crime. This handicapping in regard to heredity determined social forces will throw a light upon causes of crime which anthropometry and casual observations in prisons can never reveal.

The tests in psychology can be grouped under four heads: Those of the senses, those of the mental faculties, combinations and reactions, and emotional qualities. The first class of tests are the most exact, but is as yet incomplete but is being extended to the higher grade of work. The second and methods are the perfected tests, but it is found practicable to add tests for imagination, reasoning, memory and will to those upon those for the senses and mental faculties. The last class is the division of the senses include sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste, and are as follows:

Tests of Color Blindness.

Sight—Color sensations were used in much the same way as in railway tests. The subject is required to match shades of wools from the midst of a large number. Each of the negroes had had but little experience with colors, but none were found to be color blind. In my measurements of over 200 persons I have found no cases of color blindness. There were often errors in the difficult blue and green shades. Often they would say: "This doesn't suit me but it's the best here," which indicated they were conscious of defects. Their attention was often due to the fact that they are untrained to color sensations.

Color preference requires the use of the eye, but was taken also for its social value. Twenty-four squares of wool of various colors were spread out before the subject and she was asked to select the one she preferred. She was given a first and second choice. Among white criminals this test was given in a large number of cases, but produced failures. Out of 18 different colors submitted, the following 5 were the result for the negroes: For first choice, purple leads with 22; heliotrope, 19; dark blue, 12; lavender, 10; yellow, 7. For second choices, purple leads with 18; brown, 10; heliotrope, 6; lavender, 6; yellow, 6; green, 5. Strangely enough, red receives only one vote, and black, orange, and other colors receive small votes. The vote is overwhelmingly in favor of purple and its various shades. Among white criminals blue is the preferred color, pink, red, yellow, purple, black, and purple following in order. The color preferred is not always reflected in the garments of the subject. Economic conditions may be influential. The almost universal colors for white North, red, pink, and yellow are more showy, attract more attention, and are cheaper. In the South the colors chosen make the negro more attractive. Immoral persons use colors quite as much to attract attention as to satisfy their taste. This variation in color preference has a racial as well as economic and social element. Negroes are particularly partial to these colors because they harmonize it enhances their beauty and attractiveness, and they do not need to dress as much to attract attention. Races vary in the colors which are adapted to them.

Comparison of Eyes.

Tests in reading are given to determine defects and in order to compare the two eyes. Printed letters of various sizes are given them to read. One eye is rendered useless by a pair of glasses one side of which is covered with cardboard. The results from all the negro criminals measured show twenty-eight illiterates that they could not read or draw the letters. Twenty-one possessed no defects and three possessed defects which were the same for both eyes. The number of offenders against property the defects at the left eye are greater by one than those at the right, while among offenders against persons the left eye is superior. Among the negroes number of illiterates the results show that 70 per cent possess defects. It is rare that normal individuals possess equal defects in both eyes. Some of the negroes showed large discrepancies between the right and left eyes, but for the most part they were small ones. Where marked defects existed the cause was ascertained as nearly as possible. It was sometimes due to congenital causes and often to social causes, as the subject received during fights, or to diseases contracted.

Hearing—The first series of tests with a small instrument called a Galton whistle. This gives the capacity for discriminating a high pitch. The instrument is so arranged that the amount of-air which escapes when the bulb is pressed is regulated by screws, meters and millimeters. The amount of air makes the whistle sound, and the more air the sound of air. The subject is required to stats when the air changes into a whistle. This is when there is a hissing noise. The test is given by starting at a point where only air is heard and gradually increasing until the subject discerns a whistle. Then it is started at a point where the whistle is clear and gradually decreased until the subject hears only air. The point at which she discerns the change is recorded number—the less the discrimination. The first method is distinguished as up the scale and the second as down the scale. Results show the negroes' average is 3.2 mm. upward and 3.5 downward. The discrimination is not as fine as the white scale—until is, starting with only the sound of air. These are the averages for whites with Northern criminals. Immoral women average 3.5 up and 3.7 down. The average for white students is 2.4 up and 2.1 down.

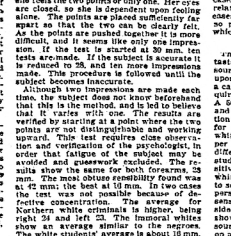
Defects in Hearing.

In addition to this test one for the purpose of obtaining the defects in the hearing of each ear is given. The subject closes her eyes, and the ear is filled with cotton. A watch is then held close to the ear, and where it can be distinctly heard. It is then moved slowly outward, and the subject gives her judgment at short intervals as to whether she hears it. The distance at which the sound disappears is considered the test of her capacity. Then the watch is held at the point where she cannot hear it and moved gradually inward. The point where she first hears it is taken. There is little chance for deception in this test, for a keen observer can vary the position of the watch so as to determine if the judgments are accurate. The white students' judgments are fine, and judgments continued erroneous—in the one case through inability to concentrate, as other tests prove, and in the other because of an excessive vanity to surpass all the other subjects—the latter being evident after repeated efforts to secure trustworthy results. Results show that for offenders against property a watch can be heard at 7.2 feet going outward and 6.9 coming in, for the right ear. For the left ear it is 6.8 and 6.5. Offenders against person there is less range, and the figures are 6.9 and 6.6 for the right and 5.5 in. In most of the tests there are only slight differences between these two classes of offenders, but the criminal's average is rately where influential variations exist.

The negroes' average is greater in hearing than any class previously measured. For white criminals it is less than one foot, or 4 feet, in 3.9 feet; left, out, 3.5 feet; in, 3.2 feet. The hearing of the right ear in 4.2 feet; left, out, 3.8 feet; in, 3.6 feet. Those who could not hear at a greater distance than two feet, while these were the only women among the white criminals. There were few negroes who could not hear at 4 feet, showing the absence of such diseases as catarrh. These were important among the causes of defective hearing in the North.

Sensibility of Skin.

The tests for touch were four in number. The first one given was for determining the sensibility of the skin. The accompanying



instrument was used for this test. The instrument is made so that the two points can be separated by means of a screw, and the rod upon which they are placed registers the number of millimeters. These are placed, with the subject's eyes closed, on the skin, and the subject is required to state whether she feels the two points or only one. Her eyes are closed, so she is dependent upon feeling to form her judgment, and sufficiently far apart so that the two can be clearly felt. As the points are pushed together it is more difficult to form a judgment by the sensation. If the test is started at 30 mm. ten times show the subject's sensibility when it is reduced to 28, and ten more impressions make the number. The procedure followed until the subject becomes inaccurate.

Although two impressions are made each time, the subject does not know beforehand that this is the method, and is led to believe that it is only one. The results are verified by starting at a point where the two points are not felt, and moving inward and moving upward. This test requires close observation and verification of the psychologist, in order that the subject may not lose interest. If the test is started at 30 mm. ten times show that