CHAPTER V.

LINEAGE OF TALENT AND GENIUS.

Let us now praise famous men, and our fathers that begat us.—*Ecclesiasticus.*

Happy is the man who can trace his lineage, ancestor by ancestor, and cover hoary time with a green mantle of youth.—JEAN PAUL RICHTER.

The sentiment of ancestry is not only inherent in human nature, and especially visible in the higher races of the world, but contributes in no small degree to the stability of kingdoms in the worst periods, as, assuredly, it is always found to be peculiarly vivid in the best.—JAMES HANNAY.

Noble sons do not always spring from noble fathers, nor evil from evil; but there is no trusting to anything mortal.—SOPHOCLES.

Nobles and heralds, by your leave,
Here lies what once was Matthew Prior;
The son of Adam and Eve,
Can Bourbon or Nassau go higher?

PRIOR'S *Epitaph on himself.*

As races of men produce their like, so do individual men and women. Races continue to preserve their bodily form and constitution, their features, their general character, from one generation to another; and so do individuals. The natives of China, Japan, India, and the East, are the same now as they were thousands of years ago. The Bedouin Arabs of the Abrahamic days are the Bedouin Arabs of the nineteenth century. So, too, in Europe, notwithstanding the intermingling of races. The picture of the Germans, as drawn by Tacitus, might stand for the picture of the Germans now; with this difference, that the modern Germans wear cloth instead of skins, and are

armed with needle guns instead of bows and spears. Julius Cæsar, in his *Commentaries*, describes the Gauls as we still find them; as Giraldus Cambrensis, in his works, has described the Irishmen and Welshmen.

In the same way, families propagate their like. Sons and daughters resemble their fathers and mothers, and inherit their constitution, their features, their temperaments, and their character. Through intermarriages they are no doubt liable to change. The male progeny usually partake more largely of the character of the father, and the female children of that of the mother. Certain peculiarities disappear, while others come into prominence; yet though the qualities of their progenitors may become dispersed, society collectively retains them, and the character of the race remains indelible.

Even special features and characteristics are preserved in families through many generations. Sometimes they disappear in a son or daughter, to reappear in a grandson or great grand-daughter. Through a *mésalliance* of about one hundred and forty years ago, Indian blood became infused in a certain noble family; and from time to time the dark visage reappears, though the rest of the family remains fair. Any one who passes along the picture-gallery of an old family mansion will observe the same cast of features reproduced again and again, though the subjects of them lived hundreds of years apart.

Sometimes the likeness to an ancestor does not appear until death approaches, and sometimes not until after death. Sir Thomas Browne, in his letter to a friend, describes a dying man, who "maintained not his proper countenance, but looked like his uncle, the lines of whose face lay deep and invisible in his healthful visage before." The poet-laureate has recognized the same fact in his *In Memoriam:*

" As sometimes in a dead man's face,
To those that watch it more and more,
A likeness hardly seen before
Comes out to some one of his race." *

In a recent temporary exhibition of National Portraits, the hereditariness of family features appeared very remarkable in the configuration of the head, the form of the nose, the color and expression of the eye, the shade of the hair, the shape of the hands, and the carriage of the person.† Dr. Darwin mentions several illustrative cases which are as curious of their kind as his illustrations of the transmitted habits of the tumbler pigeon.‡ There are special features which belong to different families. There are also moral features; some families are talkative and histrionic, while others are silent and shy.

The Carlisle Howards exhibit the family full under-lip; the Shaftesburys, the long narrow face; the Dalrymples of Stair, the sharp uptilted nose, which has run through the family for many generations. William Pitt got his

* Southey says: " Did you ever remark how remarkably old age brings out family likenesses,—which, having been kept, as it were, in abeyance while the passions and the business of the world engrossed the parties, come forth again in age, (as in infancy), the features setting into their primary character—before dissolution? I have seen some affecting instances of this,—a brother and sister, —than whom no two persons in middle life could have been more unlike in countenance and character, becoming like twins at last. I now see my father's lineaments in the looking-glass, where they never used to appear."

† Sir Walter Scott applied the transmission of a family feature in his novel of *Redgauntlet*, where the mark of an inverted horse-shoe in the midst of the brows was transmitted from father to son.

‡ Dr. Darwin, in his *Origin of Species*, says: " No doubt it is a very surprising fact that characters should reappear after having been lost for many, perhaps for hundreds of generations. . . . When a character that has been lost in a breed, reappears after a great number of generations, the most probable hypothesis is, not that the offspring suddenly takes after an ancestor some hundred generations distant, but that in each successive generation there has been a tendency to reproduce the character in question, which at last, under unknown favorable conditions, gains an ascendency."

nose from his mother, who was a woman of strong individual character. The Granville face is from the Duke of Bridgewater's mother. A peculiar thickness of the lip has been hereditary in the house of Hapsburg for centuries; as a fulness of the lowerand lateral parts of the face has characterized our own Royal Family from George I. to Queen Victoria. The present Prince of Wales exactly resembles his great grandfather, George III., when about the same age.

But the characteristic features of the Royal Family go much further back than George I. They reach back to the Stuarts, through Elizabeth, daughter of James I. The full cheek and under-jaw of James I. disappeared in his son Charles I., but reappeared in his grandsons, Charles II. and James II., and afterwards in the Pretender and his son, Charles Edward Stuart, between whose portrait and that of Queen Victoria a striking likeness is observable. The same form of countenance has been preserved in the ducal families of Grafton and St. Alban's, descended from Charles II. The likeness between the late Lord Frederick Beauclerk (drowned at Scarborough) and that monarch, is said to have been almost startling.*

The Bourbons retained through many ages their physical and moral qualities. They have been throughout perverse, intractable, and unteachable. From Louis XIV. to Charles X. they have distinguished themselves by their narrowness, blindness, and incapacity to govern justly. Napoleon Buonaparte spoke of them as "the hereditary asses." They were banished from nearly all the thrones they oc-

* A Seymour, in *Notes and Queries*, 9th January 1869, said: " There is another feature in our Royal Family which is rather remarkable, and that is the recollection of faces which they preserve from year to year, as well as their recognition of personal attachment. This has distinguished them for many generations." Sir Arthur Helps specially referred to this fact in the first Queen's *Journal* which he edited.

cupied—from France, from Spain, from Naples. The Austrian branch survives, the monarch being now constitutional in his tendencies. The thickness of the underlip, which has characterized this branch for several hundred years, is said to have been brought into the family by the Polish princess, Jagellon, and has never been lost.*

The same peculiarities of personal features and character have, to a great extent, been hereditary in the Prussian Monarchy. Mr. Rossetti observed, in the collection of portraits of the house of Brandenburg, the striking likeness which prevailed amongst its members for centuries. He particularizes those of the Elector Frederick I. (1420), Frederick II. (1440), John Cicero (1486), and Joachim I. (1499), as showing a striking resemblance to the physiognomy of the late kings, Frederick William IV. and William I., as well as to that of the present Emperor of Germany.†

Hereditary character is transmitted in the noble families of the same country. Take for instance the case of Bismarck. The present count belongs to a race which has in all times been known for its virility, its tenacity, and even its obstinacy. The first distinguished member of the family defied his bishop in the year 1338 with such obstinacy—though it was merely in a matter of local politics

* Burton, in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, written in the early part of the seventeenth century, says : "The Austrian lip and the Indians flat noses are propagated."

† *Notes and Queries* 28th November 1868, p. 514. The *Edinburgh Review* for October 1866, thus refers to the hereditary moral character of the princes of the Hohenzollern family : "The royal race of Prussia, by far the most gifted in point of abilities of old European sovereign families, have always displayed a full share both of the power and weaknesses of the North German character. Generation after generation, the house of Hohenzollern has produced its men of strong and practical intellect, and also of dreamers, —men of intellectual capacity likewise, but in whom the tendency, so eminently national, towards the 'schäwrmerisch,' enthusiastic, and nebulous, largely predominated."

—that he was excommunicated, and died unrepentant, without receiving the last sacrament.*

Features are also reproduced. Lodge's portraits show a strong family likeness running through six generations of the ducal family of Manchester. Bruce, the African traveller, proud of his descent from the Norman Robert Bruce, who so gallantly won and held the throne of Scotland, was, like his heroic ancestor, of gigantic size and strength, being six feet four in stature. The Clackmannanshire Bruces, who are in the direct descent, also exhibit, like him, that strongly-marked form of the cheekbone and jaws which appears on the coins of Robert the Bruce, and which was confirmed by the actual bones of the monarch, when his body was disinterred at Dunfermline some fifty years ago. The Wallaces of Craigie are also said strongly to resemble the portrait of Sir William Wallace, their great ancestor.

Moral and intellectual qualities are transmissible, though circumstances may not occur to bring them into development in successive generations. But there are many old families in which we observe the old type of character reappearing from time to time. We have but to name the Percies, the Douglasses, the Stanleys, the Grahams, the Nevilles, the Howards, whose doughty deeds run through English and Scottish history. The energetic quality of the Normans, like the Norsemen from whom they sprung, illumines all European history, elevating them to dukedoms and thrones in Normandy, England, Scotland, Sicily, and Jerusalem, and penetrating even to Constantinople itself.

Nor have the scions of the same race been undistinguished in legislation, in patriotism, in science, or in letters. The names of Sydney and Russell, of Shaftesbury

* Professor Riedel, "Märkische Forskhemgen."

and Bolingbroke, of Boyle and Cavendish, of Fox and Pitt, of Lovelace, Herbert, Hyde, and Byron, will always be remembered. Henry Beyle, speaking of Byron, whom he met in Italy, says in one of his letters: "The Italians were all struck with astonishment at this great poet thinking more of himself as a descendant of the Norman Byrons than as the author of *Parisina* and *Lara*." *

Scott was equally proud of his ancient lineage, and valued his descent from the Scotts of Harden, and his kinship with the "bold Buccleuch," more than his fame as a poet and novelist. "Blood," says Mr. Hannay, "shows itself a great deal more than people who know nothing of the subject would probably admit. . . . Philosophers like Bacon, Hume, and Berkeley; poets like Spenser, Cowper, Shelley, Scott; novelists like Fielding and Smollett; historians like Gibbon; seamen like Collingwood, Howe, and Jervis; Vanes, St. Johns, Raleighs, Herberts, and many more men of the ancient gentry, amply vindicate the pretensions of old families to the honor of producing the best men that England has ever seen." † Even Jeremy Bentheam, the democratic philosopher, at one time contemplated the purchase of the property of the Counts of Bentheim in Hanover, from whom he was descended. Fielding, too, was of the younger branch of the Earls of Denbigh, who derived their origin from the Counts of Hapsburg.

When a local historian of Somersetshire called upon Sydney Smith, while living at Combe Floray, to ask him for his coat-of-arms, the answer of the learned rector was: "The Smiths never had any arms, but have invariably sealed their letters with their thumbs!" The motto the witty divine afterwards adopted for his carriage was, "*Faber*

* De Stendhal (Henry Beyle), *Correspondance Inédite.* Paris, 1857.

† Hannay, *Essays from the Quarterly.* London, 1861.

meæ fortunæ." Yet even Sydney Smith was proud of his lineage; for his grandfather was a man of singular natural gifts, and his mother was the daughter of a French Huguenot, from whom he is said to have inherited all the finer qualities of his mind, as well as much of his constitutional gayety of temperament. Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Winchester, was one of the many instances of the transmission of eminence from father to son. Like the first Pitt, the first Fox, the first Grenville, the first Gray, the first Canning, the celebrated first Wilberforce left a son who sustained for a second generation the distinction of his name.

On the other hand, many of the greatest men have been unheralded by any reputation whatever on the part of their ancestors. When some of the old noblesse of France were boasting of their line of ancestry, Marshal Junot exclaimed, "*Ah! ma foi!* I have nothing of that sort; I am *my own ancestor.* It has been the same with many great men; they have been their own ancestors. Napoleon said of his generals, that he raised them out of mud. Napoleon himself was the son of a Corsican advocate, of ancient lineage, but otherwise undistinguished. Warriors, statesmen, poets, engineers, and others, have been their own ancestors. The light of genius flashes out suddenly, in the midst of a line of generations of the unknown. A man is born whose name rings through the world, and lives through all time; but he is alone amongst his race; and when he dies his family sinks again into obscurity.

Talent is transmissible, but genius very rarely. Talent is a common family trait; while genius belongs to the individual only.* We see a family, low in intellect, throw

* Buffon said that genius was patience, but he said also that it required the electric spirit to rouse it into power. The following are his words: "L'invention depend de la patience: il faut voir, regarder long temps son sujet; alors il se déroule et se développe peu à peu; vous sentez *un ... coup d'électricité* qui vous frappe à la

out some great men of genius. Talent takes the mark of its generation, but genius stamps time with its impression. Shakespeare stood alone in his race. There was nothing before him in his generation, and nothing after. Only his poems and dramas live; his heraldry is extinct. So with Newton, the freeholder's son of Woolsthorpe; there was no Newton before him, and no Newton after. The greatest of the poets stood alone in their generation—Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Burns,* Byron, Shelley, Keats, and many more.

Great men are indeed of no rank or class, but are of all ranks and classes. They may have been born in hovels and cottages, as often as in mansions and palaces; and though many great men have come of noble lineage, many more men have been of humble rank and lowly origin. Take the following list of illustrious names in proof that talent and genius are of no exclusive rank or class:—

Nobles and Squires.	Middle Class.	Working Class.
Tycho Brahe.	Newton.	Columbus.
Galileo.	Cuvier.	Copernicus.
Descartes.	Wollaston.	Luther.
Bacon.	Young.	Dollond.
Boyle.	Kepler.	Franklin.
Cavendish.	Dalton.	Faraday.
Dante.	Herschell.	Laplace.
Alfieri.	Shakespeare.	Ben Jonson.
Cowper.	Milton.	Bunyan.
Scott.	Petrarch.	Burns.
Byron.	Dryden.	Beranger.
Shelley.	Schiller.	Jasmin.
Burleigh.	Goethe.	Brindley.
Sully.	Molière.	Stephenson.

tête et en même temps vous saisit le cœur: *voilà le moment du génie.*"

* "Read Burns to-day. What would he have been, if a patrician? We should have had more polish—less force—just as much verse, but no immortality—a divorce and a duel or two, the which had he survived, as his potations must have been less spirituous, he might have lived as long as Sheridan, and outlived as much as poor Brinsley. What a wreck is that man! and all from bad pilotage."—*Life of Byron*, 8vo. edition, p. 200.

Nobles and Squires.	Middle Class.	Working Class.
Bolingbroke.	Wordsworth.	Arkwright.
Mirabeau.	Keats.	Telford.
Montaigne.	De Foe.	Livingstone.
Smollett.	Adam Smith.	Inigo Jones.
Fielding.	James Watt.	Canova.
Hume.	John Hunter.	Captain Cook.
Bulwer Lytton.	Carlyle.	George Fox.
Condé.	Jeremy Taylor.	Turner.
Count Tilly.	Drake.	Sir John Hawkswood.
Wallenstein.	Cromwell.	Sir Cloudesley Shovel.
Marshal Saxe.	Washington.	Ney.
Marlborough.	Napoleon.	Hoche.
Wellington.	Nelson.	Soult.

It is difficult to draw the line that separates the middle from the aristocratic class. Some families claim that their ancestors came "in with the Conquest"; some that their ancestors were here long before the Conquest took place; and others that they are descended from the Celts and Kymry, who lived in Great Britain long before either Jutes, Saxons, Danes, Norsemen, or Normans, had settled in the country.

Cromwell, though a brewer and grazing farmer, is said to have been descended from the Cromwells, knights of Hinchinbrook, as well as from Cromwell, Earl of Essex; and by his mother's side from the Stewarts, or royal Stuarts of Scotland.* Yet the original Cromwell was but a Putney blacksmith; so here we have the royal, aristocratic, and working classes united in one family.† John Knox

* The Queen, in the *Journal of our Life in the Highlands*, when describing her voyage up the Firth or Forth, says: "We also saw Dundas Castle, belonging to Dundas of Dundas, and further on beyond Hopetoun, Blackness Castle, famous in history. On the opposite side you see a square tower close to the water, called Rosyth, where Oliver Cromwell's mother was said to have been born." This, however, must be a mistake, as Oliver Cromwell's mother was never in Scotland. Her name was Elizabeth Steward; she was daughter of William Steward, Esquire, in Ely, hereditary farmer of the Cathedral tithes and Church lands round that city. The Stewards, who had long been settled in England, are not known to have possessed any property in Scotland. They were said to be descended from the Stuarts of Rosyth, a branch of the royal family of Scotland. This, however, is denied by Professor Gairdner and Mr. Walter Rye. See Rye's *History of Norfolk*, pp. 87-91.

† Carlyle's *Cromwell.*

too, though born in a humble condition, is said to have claimed descent from the ancient house of Ranfurly in Renfrewshire.* The family of Descartes considered it a blot on their escutcheon that he should have been born a gentleman and a degraded into a philosopher. But only the philosopher's name has been remembered, while the rest of his aristocratic family have sunk into oblivion.

Dryden's father was incumbent of Oldwinkle, All-Saints, in Northamptonshire, but he was descended from Sir Erasmus Driden, high-sheriff of that county in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Sir Walter Scott's father was grandson to a younger son of Scott of Raeburn, a branch of the ancient baronial house of Harden, and his mother was granddaughter to Sir John Swinton of Swinton, in Berwickshire, —both distinguished families.

Cowper's father was rector of Great Berkhamstead, but his grandfather was one of the judges of the Common Pleas, and brother to the celebrated Lord Chancellor Cowper; while his mother was Anne Donne, who traced her descent, by four distinct lines from Henry III., King of England. In a letter to Mrs. Bodham, his cousin by his mother's side, Cowper says: "There is in me, I believe, more of the Donne than the Cowper; and although I love all of both names, and have a thousand reasons to love those of my own name, yet I feel the bond of nature draw me vehemently to your side. I was thought, in the days of my childhood, much to resemble my mother; and in my natural temper, of which at the age of fifty-eight I must be supposed to be a competent judge, can trace both her and my late uncle your father." Every one will remember Cowper's tender lines, written after regarding his mother's portrait, beginning—

* Robert Chambers's *Lives of Illustrious and Distinguished Scotsmen.*

"Oh that those lips had language! Life has passed
With me but roughly since I saw thee last."

Though Colbert was the son of a cloth and wine merchant ("n gociant en draps et en vin"), he treated his descent from an old Scotch family, the Cuthberts of Castle Hill; while Maximilian de Bethune, Duke of Sully, traced his descent from the Beatons or Bethunes in the county of Fife.

The greatest warriors have, for the most part, sprung from the governing class,—kings, earls, and members of the aristocratic order,—such as Alfred and Charlemagne, Edward III. of England and Charles V. of Spain, Henry IV. of France, Gustavus Adolphus and Charles XII. of Sweden, Frederick the Great of Prussia, and Peter the Great of Russia. Among the aristocratic class, we also find Turenne, Condé, Wallenstein, Marlborough, Marshal Saxe, Wellington and the Napiers. This system continued until the American and French Revolutions, when merit and valor alone were considered, and generals were, almost for the first time in history, raised from the ranks.

Of poets, the middle ranks have produced the greatest—Shakespeare, Milton, Goethe, Schiller, and Wordsworth, while in general literature, the honors are pretty equally divided between men of the aristocratic and middle class. But in practical science, invention, and mechanics, as might be expected, the greatest names are found in the middle and working classes. "The majority of the distinguished chemists of Great Britain," says Dr. G. Wilson, "have sprung from the middle or lower ranks."*

It was not until the reign of Elizabeth that the middle class began to exist as a power in the State. Until then, learning and statesmanship had been almost entirely confined to the clergy and aristocracy. The extension of

**Life of Cavendish.*

commerce and increase of wealth, the invention of printing and the reformation of religion, tended amongst other things to bring the middle classes into existence. From that time we find not only great statesmen, such as Burleigh Bacon, Walsingham, and Mildmay; but great seamen, such as Hawkins, Raleigh, Drake, and Blake; and great poets, such as Spenser, Shakespeare, Jonson, Milton, and a host of others, mostly sprung from the middle class.

Of the great statesmen who then began to appear, Macaulay says: "They were not members of the aristocracy. They inherited no titles, no large domains, no armies of retainers, no fortified castles. Yet they were not low men, such as those whom princes, jealous of the power of the nobility, have sometimes raised from forges and cobblers, stalls to the highest situations. They were all gentlemen by birth; they had all received a liberal education; and it is a remarkable fact that they were all members of the same university. Cambridge had the honor of educating those celebrated Protestant bishops whom Oxford had the honor of burning; and at Cambridge were formed the minds of all those statesmen to whom chiefly is to be attributed the secure establishment of the reformed religion in the north of Europe." *

Many of the most distinguished statesmen of the same rank—the class of country gentlemen—have been celebrated during the last two centuries—such as Fox, Pitt, and others; though, in recent times, some of the most illustrious have come from the ranks of commerce. After the death of Richard Cobden, Mr. Disraeli eulogized him as the only man of the pure middle class who had in modern times achieved distinction as a statesman, yet it must be remembered that Burke, Canning, Peel, Macaulay, Wilberforce, and Gladstone came from precisely the same class;

* *Macaulay's Essays* (edition 1851), p. 344.

and these are statesmen whose names will not readily be forgotten.

But many of the greatest men have been of altogether ignoble lineage, and scarcely able to trace their origins back to their grandfathers. With the exception of Beaumont and Fletcher, the Elizabethan dramatists were all sons of the people. Though poor they were educated, yet their poverty contrasted strongly with their attainments. Ben Jonson was the son of a bricklayer, and a bricklayer himself. Marlowe was the son of a shoemaker, and Shakespeare of a butcher and woolstapler; while Massinger was the son of a nobleman's servant. They lived as they best could; wrote for bread, and went on the stage. Most of them lived hard, and some of them died like dogs.

Luther was a miner's son; Pizarro, when a boy, tended pigs; Hauy, the mineralogist, was the son of a weaver, and Hauteville of a baker. Hans Sachs was a shoemaker; Allan Ramsay a periwig-maker; Samuel Pepys—a man of a gossipy and tailorly turn of mind—was appropriately the son of a tailor; Keats was the son of a livery-stable keeper; Franklin was a printer; Burns a ploughman; Tannahill a weaver; Telford a stone-mason; Stephenson a plugman; and others were of the humblest possible origin. Voltaire, when speaking of himself and his origin, passes over his father altogether, and describes himself as the "petit-fils de son grand-père." Beranger also says the same thing of himself. He mentions his grandfather the old tailor, but his father not at all. He sang in his well-known song, "I am low-born, low-born very." Jasmin, the Gascon poet and barber, was about the first of his family who did not die in the parish workhouse.

We have seen that the tendencies of constitution and temperment in men and women are hereditary. Size, features, formation, strength and energy, short and long life, are hereditary. Darwin says that longevity runs in