
Mainsprings of Civilization

Biological inheritance, cultural endowment and physical environment mould civilizations. None of these can be said to be more important than the others, as all are essential. In his fascinating new book, *Mainsprings of Civilization*, Professor Huntington impartially discusses the effects of these factors in the determining the course of civilizations. He introduces the term *kith* to describe a group of people closely knit together by blood and culture. Numerous *kiths* are discussed and compared in some detail. Special attention is given to the New England Puritans, Jews, Quakers, Junkers, the Parsis of India and the nomads of Arabia. He makes an especially interesting comparison of the Newfoundlanders and Icelanders. The latter have a more advanced culture, in spite of greater handicaps of physical environment. He believes the differences must be due largely to biological inheritance.

Numerous aspects of physical environment are discussed. Weather, diet, religion, climatic cycles, environmental cycles and their bearing on civilization are all given careful consideration. An interesting chapter deals with psychological reactions to weather. Discovery of the use of fire, the invention of windows, the better shelter and clothing have resulted in centers of progress moving from regions where optimum temperatures occur in winter to those where summer temperatures are the most favorable. The nutritive values of the diets of various nations are compared, in which respect Rumania and Russia are far below Italy, and even lower than Japan. Unusual topics, such as animal reproductive cycles and their possible relationship to amount of ozone in the atmosphere are given some attention. Climatic cycles and migrations are treated in some detail.

Mainsprings of Civilization is a comprehensive and entertaining presentation of up-to-date information in this immense field. It represents more than twenty years of research by the author and deserves to be widely read.—*D. C. Rife*.

Mainsprings of Civilization, by Ellsworth Huntington. 660 pp. John Wiley and Sons, Inc., New York. 1945. \$4.75.