



**Science and ethics, being a series of six lectures
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W. A. Macdonald

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Book may have numerous typos, missing text, images, or index. Purchasers can download a free scanned copy of the original book (without typos) from the publisher. 1895. Excerpt: ... LECTURE IV. IN my last lecture the subject under examination was limited to the number of inhabitants which a given area of land can sustain. We saw that the solution depended upon the system of dietetics adopted. In this lecture the quality of the population remains to be examined. I here use the word "quality" in the sense of health as briefly defined in my first lecture. It may be considered from two points of view: (a) structural and functional harmony of all the organs in a given organism, and (b) harmony of the organism with the outer world. There is no befitting nomenclature to express these relations from the standpoint of social science or the science of conduct. What we are now concerned with is the study of character and its relation to conduct. It will not do to halt with the explanation of conduct; we must also examine how it can be improved. Both science and ethics, in the popular sense, are alike at fault, as they only attempt to explain. Ethics are said to be concerned with judgment upon conscious conduct, and with the reality of right and duty, or with standards of right and wrong. We have already seen that there is no law or principle from which right or wrong, or duty, can be derived, that all actions, whether derived from cosmic or economic forces, are inevitable sequences in their times and places. As for conduct being conscious--not instinctive-- there can only be an explanation by means of economic forces. In orthodox ethics, breathing, for instance, is not conduct. Why? Because the air is not monopolized; one cannot breathe his neighbour's air. Eating and drinking are only conduct when the consumer's title to the foods and drinks is disputed or denied. There is not so much conduct in taking an umbrella as in taking a horse, because it is believed that the ...

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