

# Letters to The Times

## The Late Dr. Barbara Burks

Death of the Brilliant Psychologist  
Regretted by Scientists

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

The sudden death last week of Dr. Barbara Stoddard Burks will be keenly felt by her scientific colleagues in psychology and genetics as well as by others who have followed her interesting work in human heredity and the influence of environment.

Dr. Burks was a Californian and her early work was done at the University of California and Stanford University. She collaborated with Professor Lewis M. Terman in his well-known "Genetic Studies of Genius," following up the young people who had shown superior intelligence as children and finding them as young adults still outstanding in ability and achievement. Her study of California foster children, published in 1928, tended to show the great importance in mental development of the child's heredity from his own parents as compared with the environment advantages provided by his foster parents. Controversy arose over this and similar studies, but Dr. Burks, while not at all inclined to deny the importance of environment, was able to defend the importance of heredity with very cogent evidence.

From 1936 on Dr. Burks was Research Associate of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, stationed at Cold Spring Harbor, L. I., and engaged in various studies of human heredity. Just recently, as associate at Columbia University, she was carrying forward her work on foster children in collaboration with the State Charities Aid Association and the Social Science Research Council. Identical twins, especially when they are brought up apart, afford a good opportunity for testing out the influences of heredity and environment. Dr. Burks made the most thorough studies of such twins, which went to show that ability and temperament are pretty largely dependent on heredity under ordinary circumstances, while the individual's social adjustment seems to depend very much on how he is brought up. For continuing this important study of twins Dr. Burks had just been awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship.

Many other problems in genetics and psychology lay within the broad field of Dr. Burks's interest. She was a prominent member of the American Psychological Association; as chairman of one of its committees she labored valiantly for a number of years to find or develop suitable opportunities in America for the displaced European psychologists who came over here. Her buoyant comradeship and warm sympathy for any one who needed help will long be remembered by her many friends throughout the country and abroad.

ROBERT S. WOODWORTH,  
Professor Emeritus of Psychology,  
Columbia University,  
New York, May 28, 1943.