

the removal of the small cards might thus be reversed. The elimination of the unfit, however beneficial in itself, might not alone prevent a deterioration in the breed from taking place.

In fact, the greatest danger to the race in the future is likely to result from what is taking place amongst the mass of the people. It is the large families now so often produced by the less useful citizens, and the small families produced by so many of those on whom our prosperity depends, that constitute the danger signal. It is even more important to look to the inferior than to the unfit.

But who are the inferior? Taken literally, this term is a very vague one. If we imagine a steady improvement in our race going on for long ages—and this, I have no doubt, is at all events a possibility—we see that the superior of one generation would in these circumstances be like the inferior of the succeeding generations. We may, therefore, hope that as time goes on a higher and higher standard will be set when considering what kind of persons ought not to become parents. For the present the line to be drawn separating desirable from undesirable parenthood must be decided by purely practical considerations; that is, by considering what is and what is not possible.

When considering whether it is possible to make any move, other than by mere persuasion, in the direction of lessening the fertility of the inferior, there are two classes of persons to whom it is especially desirable that attention should be directed. The first class comprises those who are living an uncivilized life in our midst. The second class includes all those who have for a long time been in receipt of help of various kinds from the State; that is, of public assistance, as it may be called. Let us begin by considering this second class, who may be conveniently grouped together under the title of dependents, thus separating them off from all truly independent citizens.

A few words must, however, first be said in regard to certain general questions. What is the effect of public assistance on the size of the families of those thus assisted?

CHAPTER XIV

Eugenics in the Future

ALL of us are being greatly damaged by the presence of the unfit and the inferior in the ranks of the nation. If those included in these classes have large families, this injury to our country will be slowly increased as the generations succeed each other. And in all probability, from this cause, racial deterioration is now actually taking place very slowly but very steadily. All this we have seen, and the question is, What can be done to safeguard the nation against this treacherous disease?

In the first place, how are the individuals to be selected who ought to have either small families or no children? This question has already been answered as regards the insane, mental defectives, criminals, and the diseased. If parenthood were to be entirely prohibited amongst all these classes, not only would all these particular troubles be slowly lessened in the future, but in all probability something would thus be done which would tend to produce a much more widespread improvement. But the possibility that other causes might be at work which would more than counterbalance these beneficial effects must be held in view. To use the analogy of the cards once again, if hands containing, for example, many twos and threes—these representing the germs of certain evil qualities—were to be thrown aside and not dealt out again, the remainder of the packs as a whole would thus be made proportionately richer in good cards. But if, at the same time, many of the somewhat higher cards were also being thrown out in a similar manner—these higher cards represented the germs of those qualities possessed by the men of real use to the nation—it is evident that the effects produced by

There are no doubt some individuals who act like the lower animals, being quite uninfluenced in regard to parenthood by any thoughts of future consequences. Such as these would not be affected in regard to the size of their families by public assistance one way or the other. The majority of these animal-like creatures are, however, feeble in mind, and on that account parenthood ought anyhow to be prohibited in their case.

Again, it has been said that some persons are made so miserable by their surroundings that they take no thought whatever of the future and act only on the spur of the moment. All such as these, so it is argued, would be made less reckless by adequate State aid, and would consequently have smaller families. This may be true; but, as I have never come across any such person, I gather that they cannot be numerous.

The great mass of our population are certainly neither purely animal nor utterly reckless; and it is to the mass we should mainly look when framing a social policy. If it were known that the appearance of each additional child would certainly result in the receipt of additional public assistance, the effect on all ordinary citizens would certainly be to make parenthood appear less onerous beforehand. We may conclude, therefore, that any State aid dependent on the number of children would generally tend to increase the size of families. Outdoor relief of the poor other than the aged, unemployment doles if not truly part of an insurance system, and free feeding and clothing of children would certainly tend to encourage fertility.

On the other hand, the effect of the giving of State aid must in all circumstances be to increase the taxation levied on all independent citizens; and increasing taxation tends for long to produce a reduction in the size of the families thus affected.

The foregoing ~~facts~~ indicate that all assistance which eases the strain of family life tends proportionately to increase the number of the dependents in the coming generations. All such assistance may be described as philanthropic,

whether coming from public or private funds. And we thus see that philanthropy is constantly helping to defeat its own aims. No check must, however, be placed on these noble efforts to lessen human suffering. What we have to seek for is some way of counteracting those consequences of philanthropy which are harmful.

Another general question which has to be considered is whether any couple has the right in all circumstances to bring offspring into the world. Here we have first to ask, What is the meaning of the word "right"? If a man says he has a right to live to the age of eighty, such a statement is meaningless; because all men cannot be made to live to that age. If a man says he has a right to vote at a certain election, he means that the Government ought to see to it that he can record his vote on that occasion. The right of one person always implies an obligation on some other person or persons. And it is only by considering the obligation side of these questions that light can be thrown on them.

As to an unlimited right to parenthood, this would imply an obligation on the part of the State to see to it that all couples could always produce as many children as they liked. But the State does not do this in the case of persons confined in prisons or other institutions. And surely the State ought not to facilitate the appearance of such offspring as would be likely to produce an injurious effect on all future generations. The right to parenthood cannot be unlimited.

There are, however, other rights which must be held in view. It is generally held that all men have a right to live. If so, every child must, to say the least, be kept alive, if necessary by public assistance. If nothing else were done, this assistance would, as we have seen, tend to encourage the inferior to produce more children. For this reason the State may justly accompany public assistance with certain conditions as to the further production of children.

Returning to the limitation of the size of the families of those we have called dependents, we have seen that they

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have no unlimited right to parenthood. The State may, therefore, rightly prevent the continued injury which would result from the production of large families by this class of persons. But how? It would be both undesirable and impossible to prevent parenthood amongst so large a class by any form of compulsion. It would not be difficult, however, to warn all those who had for a long time been in receipt of public assistance that no more children ought to be born. Such a warning would, of course, be useless when parenthood had become impossible. When any of those warned did neglect the warning, and when more children appeared, the public assistance given might be reduced in quantity or given only in institutions, where parenthood would be impossible. This would tend to deter others from neglecting these warnings. Until eugenic problems are more widely understood, it will continue to be useless to discuss in detail any such scheme as this, for it will remain without the necessary backing of public opinion.

The other class of persons needing early attention from the eugenic point of view comprises those living uncivilized lives in civilized countries. Many of them have for long been, no doubt, in receipt of State aid, and such as these should be dealt with as dependents. It is the treatment of those living uncivilized though independent lives in our midst which constitutes a most difficult problem. Many of them are living in overcrowded dwellings, or not sending their children to school. In either case, they could be warned that no more children should be born. And they might be told that, if such warnings were neglected, the laws as to overcrowding and education, often a dead letter in such cases, would be rigidly enforced.

Thus we see that there are methods by means of which it would be possible to diminish the size of the families of the inferior, and thus to promote racial progress. The state of public opinion probably now makes all the steps here suggested quite impracticable. If it ever comes to be widely recognised that the fate of the coming generations demands our immediate attention, then something in this direction

will become possible. If no such move is ever made, my firm belief is that a very slow decline in the natural qualities of our nation will continue to take place. In these circumstances our civilization would begin to show signs of decay, either immediately or possibly not until after several centuries had elapsed. And these signs would probably be rebellion and chaos within and invasion from without.