

The path of duty is the road to racial progress. Our civilization cannot be maintained if the better stocks have small families. To make the production of families of adequate size widely felt to be a paramount duty of parents of good stock is the call of eugenics. This idea must be incorporated in our moral code and advocated with religious zeal.

CHAPTER XVI

Financial Aids to Parenthood

WE have seen that the inefficient and the poor often have large families. We have also seen that the well-to-do, who ought to have several children, generally have very few. Why not make the rich poorer, and then it would seem that they also would have large families? This desirable result is not, however, as we shall see, to be obtained in this manner.

Let us first consider why the poor have large families. For this fact there are several explanations. The man who depends on the use of his muscles to earn his daily bread can do his best work when young. His wages soon cease to rise, and he can marry with no more imprudence when young than when older. The younger the age at marriage, the larger will be the family as a rule. Hence day labourers have comparatively large families.

It would, of course, be folly to try to make men with good natural abilities rely on their muscles rather than on their brains. This explanation why the poor have large families points to no way of increasing the size of the families where such an increase is to be desired.

Another reason for the big families of the poor is that their children go to work at an early age and soon begin to help to fill the family pot. Such children are regarded as a help and not a hindrance, and parents are thus encouraged to have many. But children who go to work when young must leave off schooling at an early age. We want fewer children to be thus handicapped, not more. If all children in all classes were made to suffer this disadvantage, our high civilization would disappear.

Lastly, many couples have big families because they are

naturally careless and take little thought for the future. And the thoughtlessness of these couples also often makes them poor. We cannot wish any one to be improvident. We must not hope for the appearance of larger families in consequence of parents becoming more careless.

What makes people limit the size of their families is really not being rich, but feeling poor. The rich man wishing to be richer feels poorer than the poor man contented with his poverty. People feel poor in every rank of society. We want the well-to-do to feel less poor, not to be poorer. It is the feeling that they cannot live up to the standard customary in their class that tempts a couple to keep the strain of family life within bounds by having few children. We want every skilled artisan, for example, with four or more children, to feel it easier than at present to live in the same way that he sees other artisans living. This would lessen the fear of producing a family large enough to maintain the breed. How can this result be brought about?

Bachelors and childless couples have more money to spend as they like than have those parents with whom they most often associate. It is the childless, therefore, who take a leading part in setting the pace in unnecessary expenditure. If we could take money away from all having no children, the customary expenditure on luxuries would in consequence be diminished. This would make it easier for parents to live up to the customary standard of their class. It would be made still easier for them to do so if the money taken from the childless were to be put into their pockets. If the strain of family life were thus to be eased, couples would in consequence have more children. Moreover, if these transfers of money from the childless to parents were to be made separately in any one class, no other class would be injured thereby. And all this points to several ways of increasing the size of families when that would be desirable.

The first plan to be considered is that known as family allowances; a system under which many millions of workmen in Europe receive their remuneration. The methods

adopted vary greatly in detail. Sometimes all the employees similarly employed in a district form one association. Out of the common fund of this association, allowances are paid to married couples, the amounts varying with the number of children in the family. Sometimes the fund is replenished by payments being made by the employers alone. Sometimes the employees also contribute. The Government may add a contribution, or may take entire charge, dealing with all alike, and covering the whole cost from the public funds.

The advantages which would result from family allowances are obvious. Without such a system, fathers with many children get the same wage as bachelors. When allowances are given the incomes of families vary more or less in proportion to their needs. Difficult questions about equal pay for men and women would also thus be more easily settled. Above all, the welfare of children in large families would often be greatly increased.

The effects likely to be produced on the nation in the future by family allowances must, however, be considered. The knowledge that such allowances would be forthcoming would make marriage seem less formidable in advance, and when received they would make married couples feel less poor. They would, therefore, increase the number of marriages. They would make marriages take place at an earlier age. They would make family limitation less often practised. They would reduce the number of deaths of little children. And for all these four reasons the rate of multiplication of any group of persons in the receipt of family allowances would thus be increased.

We have seen that to increase the size of families when parents are in distress is not only immediately harmful to the nation, but also injurious to the race. If these evil effects are to be avoided, family allowances, if applied to all, must be accompanied by some really effective check on the size of families. This raises nearly the same grave and difficult questions as those which were discussed in Chapter XIV, when considering the ways of diminishing the numbers

of the inferior. At present perhaps all that can be done is to try to make the public realize the dangers to the race which may accompany any method of easing the strain of family life.

Family allowances do, however, form the best way of increasing the size of the family when that is desirable. A small dole would, it is true, have no effect on the conduct of the well-to-do; and if their birth-rate is to be raised by family allowances, both the sums paid in by individuals and the sums received by parents must be higher where the standard of life is higher. This system of allowances may be regarded as an insurance against the expenses of parenthood, and then it will be seen to be fair that those who pay in most should get most out. Such a plan could easily be adopted in all public services, and to strive to promote reforms in this direction should be our first effort. Later on this system might be adopted voluntarily in many callings, to the great advantage of the nation in the future.

If the allowances were to be handed to the wife, the result might be an increase in the feeling of independence amongst married women. This would make some superior women more ready to marry.

The strain on parents of good stock, as compared with that felt by the childless, could also be eased in other ways. For example, in regard to the income tax paid by parents, the deduction on account of children might be increased. And this could be done without altering the distribution of taxation between rich and poor.

In callings where salaries are fixed in advance for each grade, as in the public services, the scale might be rearranged, the senior men getting less and the juniors more. This would lessen customary expenditure on luxuries and encourage early marriages. The change might be made concurrently with the introduction of family allowances.

Parents have to cover heavy expenditure when any of their children pass from elementary schools to colleges or universities. Scholarships should, therefore, be large enough to cover all this extra expenditure. The cost to

the State of such a system, if widely adopted, would be so great that rigid precautions would have to be taken to ensure that no public expenditure was wasted in an attempt to push young people higher up the educational ladder than they are capable of mounting. Any increase of taxation would, moreover, make the taxpayers feel poorer; and it would, therefore, for an indefinite period, reduce the size of the families of some of the best stocks. Expenditure on education must not be increased without limit. Taxation should always be kept at a moderate level, and should be changed as little as possible.

All these methods of increasing the size of families by lessening the strain on parents, thus making it easier for them to live up to the standard of their class, should as far as possible be made applicable to all well-paid workmen, artisans, professional and business men. This would certainly help to maintain the quality of our nation in the future. But it would only be a help. Unjustifiable social ambition is the main cause of the small families of persons of good stock. Success in the field of eugenics will mainly depend on the moral aspirations and the sense of patriotism of the mass of the people being aroused in the right directions.

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