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## FIFTH EVENING MEETING.

Thursday, 25th January, 1912.

The fifth evening meeting was held at the Victoria Institute, Worcester on Thursday, the 25th of January, 1912. Mr. Carleton Rea (Vice-President) presided and there were also present:— Messrs. C. J. Houghton, Walter Wood, Alf. Wheeler, W. H. Edwards, J. E. Wall, H. Haywood, and F. T. Spackman (Honorary Secretary). Mr. Carleton Rea at first stated that he had to make a botanic record which was an addition to the Flora of Worcestershire, namely, the occurrence of *Vicia Orobus*. There was a specimen of this plant in the Edinburgh Royal Botanic Garden Herbarium gathered by Lees at Shrawley Wood in July, 1837 and named by him *V. sylvatica*, and that he was indebted for this information to Mr. A. Bennett, A.L.S., of Croydon.

The Vice-President then called upon Mr. F. T. Spackman, F.G.S., to read his paper "ON EUGENICS."

### EUGENICS.

By F. T. Spackman, F.G.S.

In the ordinary course of my official duties I was required some fifteen months ago to attend a Conference at which the problem of dealing with defective children was discussed, and although it has been my lot to assist in the consideration of many problems, I have never taken part in proceedings where the outlook seemed so hopeless, or in which the expenditure of public money had ended in such utter waste. The problem of the defective child has been in recent years very widely considered. The Church Congress, the British Association for the Advancement of Science, the Special Schools Union, have each taken a turn within the last twelve months, the outcome of which seems to be that until further legislation enables the subject to be dealt with on eugenic lines, progress is impossible. The Conference was attended by Medical Officers, Heads of Institutions and other Officials charged with the administration of the Defective and Epileptic Children Act, and the concensus of opinion seemed to be that the permanent improvement of the Feeble-minded was well nigh impossible—that a child born with a defective brain would have a defective brain throughout its career, and while on the one hand the defect could not be eradicated, or the imperfect brain made whole, on the other, it was certain that the defect would be transmitted to the offspring of the sufferer.

An instance was mentioned by a Teacher who had had a child under her care at an Institution up to the age of sixteen. She

had had hopes that the girl might prove a satisfactory domestic servant, and placed her out. She frequently visited the girl, and ascertained from the Mistress that she was in every way satisfactory—obedient, punctual, clean—and so matters went on for some time, until one day the Teacher received a note from the girl's Mistress asking her to fetch the girl away. The girl had put the plug in the bath and turned on the tap full bore, with the result that the water overflowed, and ran down the stairs in a series of cascades. "What did you do it for, Mary?" the Teacher asked. "I wanted to see the water run down the stairs," was the reply. Satisfactory in ninety-nine points, but unreliable in one, the girl was rendered incapable of being permanently trusted except in an environment where going wrong was reduced to an impossibility. I have myself known of an instance where a girl dropped a tray full of tea-things, breaking the lot, and while the Mistress looked on in despair, the Maid could see nothing but the grotesque side of the accident, and stood and laughed immoderately.

Mental defects are hereditary, and to illustrate the power of heredity, the pedigree of a family was shown diagrammatically. A defective married man married a normal woman. They had a defective son and a normal daughter; the daughter married a normal man, but in consequence of the taint she inherited, their family consisted of two defective daughters and a normal son. One daughter married a defective man, and they had as might have been expected, a defective son; the normal son married a normal woman, but in consequence of the hereditary taint, although it had been latent for two generations, their only son was defective. The pedigree showed not only direct inheritance from parent to child, but also the re-appearance of the defect in a grand-child born of two normal parents, and also in a great-grand-child, when both parents and grandparents were free.

It is now urged that such defective persons should be dealt with on Eugenic lines. I have been asked, "What is Eugenics?" and it might be well to define the term before going further. Eugenics, or Race Culture, is the term applied by Sir Francis Galton some thirty years ago to his project of producing a well-bred race—a race good in physique, intellect, and morals. The name of this new Science he derived from the Greek word "eugenes," which means good in stock. Dr. Saleeby has in recent years widened the idea, and we now speak of positive eugenics, the encouragement of parenthood on the part of the worthy; and negative eugenics, the discouragement of parenthood on the part of the unworthy. But why all this solicitude for an improved race? There always have been defectives. Every village has had its "Natural."

Are the conditions worse now than formerly? Unfortunately they are. Statistics show that there is a steady decrease in the

birthrate of the fit, (2) an increase in the birthrate of the unfit, and (3) that injudicious methods of modern philanthropy are perpetuating evils which eugenists desire to see removed.

There is a decreased birthrate among the superior classes of the nation; Sidney Webb has stated that the average number of children born to the married English intellectual is 1.5. Such a rate of reproduction is of course disastrous, for it is from this class that the world recruits its pioneers, the first rate men in all departments of life—legislative, literary, scientific. A class that has so few children does not even maintain its numbers, for to increase we must produce enough children to overcome three contingencies, (1) death before maturity, (2) chances of not marrying, (3) chances of infertility when married. On the other hand the number of children produced by the unfit is about 6 per family. This being the case, what are we to say of the nation's future? Karl Pearson says: "Without high average soundness of body and soundness of mind, a nation can neither be built up nor an empire preserved. Permanence and dominance in the world passes to and from nations even with their rise and fall in mental and bodily fitness. Lost provinces and a generation of hectoring may follow to the conquered nation whose leaders have forgotten the primary essential of national soundness in body and in mind." Or again: "The test of the efficiency or prosperity of any country was not the amount of exports or imports, not the power of its army or navy, not the diffusion or amount of its wealth, not the efficiency of its education, but the kind of men and women it turned out."

The birth-rate among the obviously unfit is large; the researches of the Eugenic Laboratory give it as 7 per marriage among the London mentally defective, and Goring found it 6.6 among criminals. This is bad, but practical results are even worse, for not only do these feeble-minded, insane, &c., have large families, but on account of their irresponsibility and lack of self-control they may easily produce three generations while superior classes are producing two.

Then come our charitable institutions and our "modern human sympathy," aiding and abetting the feeble-minded and criminals by finding them homes (the workhouse, "homes," colonies, asylums, goals, &c.), instead of, as at one time, passively ridding the country of degenerates by allowing them to die because they could not fight the competitive battle of life, and actively ridding it of criminals by extensive capital punishments. The illegitimate babies of the feeble-minded and criminal women are no longer born under the hedge, only to die, but they are fostered by the State in our workhouses, with the result that they grow up and probably return to the same place in a few years, with babies of their own. "Do I therefore call for less human sympathy, for more limited charity, and for sterner treatment of the weak? Not for a moment; we cannot go back a single step in the evolu-

tion of human feeling. But I demand that all sympathy and charity shall be organized and guided into paths where they will promote racial efficiency, and not lead us straight towards national shipwreck. The higher patriotism and the pride of race must come to our aid in stemming deterioration. . . . We see pain and suffering only to relieve it without enquiry as to the morals of the sufferer or as to his national or racial value. And this is right. . . . But here science steps in, crying, "Let the reprieve be accepted, but next remind the social conscience of its duty to the race. No nation can preserve its efficiency unless dominant fertility be associated with the mentally and physically fitter stocks. The reprieve is granted, but let there be no heritage if you would build up and preserve a virile and efficient people." (K. Pearson).

Let us now turn to the third cause of national degeneracy—the question of misapplied charity. Not only does our short-sighted charity encourage the unfit, but these unfit exist to be a millstone round the neck of the fit by compelling the latter to pay (a) the poor rate (chiefly used by the unfit), (b) the education rate (a considerable amount now wasted on special schools for defective children), (c) for the upkeep of "charity organization" (the funds of which are chiefly used by such unfit as the unemployable), (d) for asylums (from which so-called "cured" patients are let free to reproduce themselves), (e) for the administration of justice. Voluntarily, the fit pay towards the upkeep of homes for feeble-minded, epileptics, and alcoholics, where the dominant idea of the management is to return these unfortunates to the world as improved and cured with the result that they at once do their best to supply a new generation upon which the fit may lavish their care and money.

We now keep alive and tend carefully—quite rightly—the physically unfit, such as (a) epileptics, (b) consumptives, (c) the malformed, (d) weaklings, (e) deaf and dumb, (f) alcoholics; but, and this is the point to be realised, we also, quite wrongly, allow them to reproduce. Pearson has found the size of families for tubercular stock to be 5.7, for degenerates 6.1, and alcoholics 5.9. Schuster found the families of deaf and dumb as great as 6.2. We know that misfortunes as well as the sins of the fathers are visited upon the descendants; but why, knowing this, do we encourage this reproduction of the unfit, when they can only become a burden to the parents of the fit? In a recent report to the London County Council by its Asylums Committee, the case of a woman was referred to who had been twenty-six times discharged from lunatic asylums, and was then a patient at Colney Hatch. Commenting on the woman's terrible record the Committee remarked:—"It seems to us a striking illustration of the need for legislation to prevent the increase of the unfit." The woman's history includes the following startling facts:—

Fifteen times admitted to and discharged from the institutions controlled by the London authority.

Eleven times admitted to and discharged from other asylums.

Thirteen children were born to her, of whom five are dead and two show signs of insanity. Two of her sisters were lunatics; one committed suicide, the other died in an asylum. Two of her aunts are now in asylums.

Side by side with this record is the unwelcome report of the Lancashire Asylums Board that one out of every two hundred and twenty-five inhabitants of Liverpool is being treated for insanity. The problem of cases of relapsing lunacy is causing the authorities increasing anxiety, and a member of the L.C.C. Asylums Committee remarked: "In the opinion of some of us the evil is becoming worse than that of consumption." Cases such as that given above were published mainly in the hope that they would educate the popular mind upon the necessity of remedies that do not at present commend themselves to public opinion. At present the authorities have no power to detain a patient who appears to be, and is diagnosed as, sane, although they know that, given certain circumstances, the patient is almost certain to relapse, and again come under their care. Unhappily, in many cases, the patient has in the meantime added to the probable number of lunatics in the community. This demand of the London County Council for a law to check the increase of the unfit might have been supported by an appeal to the economical side of the question. In the United States there has been a careful investigation of the history of the descendants of two degenerate girls by the name of Jukes. These girls and their descendants have during one hundred and fifty years cost the United States £260,000.

It has been argued that the present great effort to improve the environment of the less fortunate of the population will only lead to the deterioration of the race; that while philanthropists remove slums, provide good physical conditions, fresh air, food, cleanliness, clothes, warmth, and education, they are only killing the race with kindness, and that their philanthropy is really misanthropy. Dr. Saleeby on the other hand denies that the provision of a proper environment for the individual entails racial deterioration. He says,—“Cosmic and moral evolution are compatible as, whilst caring for each individual, whether maim, halt, blind, or insane, and whilst admitting the categorical imperative of the law of love which demands our care for him, we continue to obey the indication of Nature, which forbids such an individual to perpetuate his infirmity. Nature has no choice; if she is to avert the coming of the unfit race she must summarily extinguish its potential ancestor, but we can prohibit the reproduction of his infirmity whilst doing all we can for the individual life. This is the ideal course indicated and approved by biology and morality alike.”

No one denies that environment is of great importance, indeed, without a certain share of good environmental conditions we can never attain to maturity and that state of reproduction which

make of us a racial as opposed to a transitory and egoistical unit. Environment cannot change our inborn nature, but it can modify it, and that in two directions—(1) inhibitive, as for example when by putting a thief into a gaol we prevent him from stealing: we know that the thief generally remains a thief (the average number of convictions in our prisons is ten per person), but the environment does keep him, for the time being, an honest man; and (2) environment can act positively, as an encouragement; thus, a feeble-minded boy is set to dig alone, he gazes at the sky and does nothing, but put him with ten others to dig, under supervision, and he digs well and earns his daily bread. In neither case is there change in the nature, the thief is still a thief, the feeble-minded is still feeble, but because of a wise environment both have ceased to be burdens to the community; nevertheless, unless they are prevented from producing they do not cease to be a burden to the race.

The experience of the race teaches that you cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear; figs will not grow upon thistles; like father, like son; that a child is a chip of the old block; geniuses are born and not made; or, in other words, in spite of environmental factors, children remain what they are born. We hear a great deal of talk of the struggle for existence leading to the survival of the fittest, but we must distinguish clearly between a natural or uncivilized environment in which the race is to the swift, the battle to the strong, and where the weakly perish, and a civilization like our own, where the weak are fostered and cared for at the expense of the strong, rendering the struggle no longer man against man, but where the weak man is helped and the strong man is hindered in the battle of life. When considering the quality of a family we must remember that there are two parents, a mother as well as a father, and that to get the best results we must have the best inheritance on both sides. In ways and degrees that are, as yet, obscure, the qualities and faculties of parents are transmitted to the children. This fact has always been recognised in the common tradition of mankind, and modern biology has but confirmed and rendered clearer the ideas of everyday life. Heredity plays some curious tricks, acts in devious and mysterious ways, but the basal fact is clear and indisputable. We must look upon the family descent, not as a straight line, but as a veritable tree, which spreads equally upon the paternal and maternal sides, and to each branch of which we probably owe some of our hereditary qualities. It is not enough for health and virtue and intelligence to be on one side, they must be on both. Our civilization is not to be despised, but we must not wrap ourselves up in a racial self-conceit. The racial struggle for existence is not over, and ours may certainly come to an end as did those of Assyria, Egypt, Greece, Rome, and the Byzantine Empire. How then are the fit to be increased, and the unfit decreased? Dr. Saleeby would work through marriage in some

definite and organized manner, but the danger of legislative interference is great, and would seem to present insuperable difficulties. The artificial assessment of the eugenic value of a marriage is, and probably always will be, an impossibility. The instincts of men and women, and particularly the instincts of women towards men, are to be trusted, and it only remains for eugenicists to map out a great campaign to educate people in a knowledge of the laws of heredity, and to inspire them with the ideal of the race. We all desire to remove idiocy, imbecility, degeneracy. We all desire to see a race of physical beauty, intellectual power and emotional richness, and the object of eugenics is to promote this desirable end. How best that end can be accomplished is the difficult problem Eugenists are now endeavouring to solve.

Proposals are made for segregating the unfit, for establishing labour colonies, and obtaining powers of detention of the lower class of defectives for life. At present mentally defective children are taken at the age of seven, and maintained at great cost in institutions until sixteen. So far, so good. But they are then let loose upon the world, and become once more lost in the crowd of normal people, and free to commit any of those anti-social acts to which their mental defects almost invariably lead them, and to reproduce their kind.

But this paper is intended to deal only with theory and suggestion. The time is not yet ripe for putting into practice any of the sterner measures proposed for stemming the tide of racial deterioration, with the single exception perhaps of the permanent segregation and detention of the lower class of defectives. The Galton Laboratory, established in connection with the University of London, has much work before it in carrying out the project which Sir Francis Galton had so much at heart—the study “of those agencies under social control that may improve or impair the racial faculties of future generations physically and mentally.” Dr. Saleeby “believes that eugenics is going to save the world; that there is no study of such urgent and practical importance as that of heredity; that if we get the right people born and the wrong people not born, forms of government and such questions” would be settled without difficulty.

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In the discussion which followed, Mr. Houghton said that his experience as Headmaster of St. Martin's Boys' School had convinced him of the great truth of heredity. He occupied that position long enough to have two generations of the same families pass through his hands, and he had seen in boys the same characteristics, the same virtues, and the same vices which he had seen in their fathers. With regard to the insane, he believed that the great increase in the numbers now cared for in asylums was due to the fact that patients were now sent to asylums who, in years gone by, would have been cared for by their friends. Mr. H. Haywood said he could see no impossibility in carrying out the



eugenic principle. Diseased people ought not to be allowed to marry. The results of such marriages were disastrous. Mr. Wheeler quoted an instance which had come within his own knowledge. A foundling had been adopted by a clergyman and his wife, and the child received all the care, education, and training which a lady could give. On reaching mature age, however, the girl was found to be suffering from a strange illness somewhat frequently, which a doctor, when called in, pronounced to be intoxication. Subsequently gin bottles and tobacco were found hidden in the girl's room. Evidently the inherited tendency to alcoholism had been too strong for the girl to overcome. The Chairman stated that he belonged to quite another school, namely those who believed in the lethal chamber and the survival of the fittest, whilst the modern school of namby-pamby philanthropists seemed to desire the survival of the degenerates and their offspring.

In reply, Mr. Spackman said that more was being done now for the amelioration of the lot of children, not only generally, but here in Worcester, than had ever been attempted before, and, given good stock, the next generation ought to be much superior in physique, in mental power, and in morals, to the present. Food for those children who would otherwise not get a sufficient supply was being provided by the Municipality, quite apart from the taint of the Poor Law. Medical inspection and medical and surgical treatment were now part of the recognised routine of school work of the artisan classes, so that children were no longer to be allowed to become debilitated and diseased simply because their parents might be too poor or too indifferent to provide the necessaries of life for them. There had been a general uplifting all the way round. Alcoholism was less prevalent than when he was a boy; immorality of the grosser kind was not so apparent; and crime had certainly decreased. The competent man and the exceptional man, would in the next generation have a better chance. The load of poverty they had had to bear—that of others, not their own—ought to be lighter. If the sub-normal classes could be eliminated the race might slowly rise. According to Galton's classification the English of to-day were as far below the ancient Athenians as the Negro was below us, and if the social and economical conditions were such that the exceptional man need not die childless as so many did now, the general quality of the race would soon rise to the level of the ancient Greeks.

Mr. W. H. Kershaw was elected a member of the Club.

Letters were received from the Malvern Field Club, Mrs. Stanley Haynes, and Mrs. Archdale, acknowledging the vote of sympathy passed at the last meeting.

A vote of thanks to Mr. Spackman concluded the business.