

Cripps's Corner. Forest Row Sussex. March 29. 32.

Dear Fisher.

As I have nothing I need say, I don't know if this letter will be short or long. I have had ^{to}, or did refuse two invitations lately which I was sorry for. One was to take the chair when you discuss Family Allowances, a discourse I should particularly have liked to have heard. For a few days I have been a bit below par, which confirmed the impression that these things are not for me any longer. The moral is not to take up a new subject when about 60 years of age; for there is then not time to do all one would have liked. I only thought about Eugenics before I was 59. Up to 55 I regarded my life as more or less of a future, whatever it has been since.

I forget to say how glad I am that you are on the Committee with Haldane, Hogben, & Co. It will give you some practice in wheeling to get that lot to move in the right direction. I have just finished Hogben's book, without getting much out of it. But all the mathematics I cannot follow, so it may contain gold hidden from me. I wonder if he has come a howler about Table 35 p 104. I don't understand his correlation coefficient 0.81, mentioned on p. 103; but that is my fault no doubt. If the cases reported on in the Table were all inspected, and if the sizes of the families were obtained by hearsay, all the unreported cases of

mental defect in all those families ought to be added; and these added cases would be most often be found amongst the earlier births in the big families. This would upset all his conclusions. I notice that in the myopia table 37, in the families of 7 to 11, the last half of the families do contain more cases than the first halves. But I am sure of my criticism.

P 191 puzzles me. Does he mean that the life of an infant may depend on a different set of genes from the life of an adult? If so adult mortality would ~~depend~~ be independent of infantile mortality. But infantile mortality would still depend in future generations on the selection now at work. Later on I suppose he means that increased medical care in old age may in any case counterbalance the selective effects of increased medical ^{aid} in infancy. But this would imply an increase in the health, which is anyhow objectionable. It seems to me a muddle bit of special pleading.

The general trend of his § 3 p 192 seems to be to try to throw doubts in the harm of the differential birth rate. I have a feeling that the German figures he gives want much scrutiny. How can you take social status of both parents into account in regard to illegitimacy, for example?

I wonder what you feel about his arguments.

He follows you about Darwinian blending inheritance, a subject which I discussed in a letter to you about Pangenesis. I was interested in noticing in Chap II ~~that~~ of Galton's Natural Inheritance that he himself seems to have originated the phrase "particulate inheritance". Again in Chap XII, 3rd para, he writes as follows:—"I need hardly say that the idea, though not the phrase of particulate inheritance, is borrowed from Darwin's provisional theory of Pangenesis,.....". Now if the idea underlying particulate inheritance is the mind of the corner of that phrase ^{was} borrowed from Darwinian theory, it seems hardly historically accurate to use that phrase to imply what is not Darwinian. I suggest that segregating and non-segregating inheritance would be the most useful contrast. My father believed that gemmules could be transferred for innumerable generations unaltered, but I gather that he believed that when once actually married to other gemmules in order to form a cell, some blending took place, and at all events their individuality was lost. He used to point to a scabbie on the back of his little white dog Potty, and point to the brown hairs there as the ancestral gemmules being called into action. But no one, as far as I know, before Mendel even gave the slightest hint that

the hereditary elements could unite in marriage and then separate out quite unaffected. That seems to be the destruction of Mendelism from all previous theories.

Hughes certainly quotes me most unfairly. But Hurley mentioned it in his review of the book; I shall take no notice of it; and I am fully content to leave it at that; and ^I hope my friends will do the same. You will have plenty of chance of saying a word or two about my heretical points where you find you differ from Hughes; and I am convinced that any such quiet hint does more good than all the published controversy in general literature. All that is remembered is that there was a row of some sort. My father's view was only to answer in a book when an answer was worth while. I say this because I own I was much inclined to have a dig at Hughes myself for some weeks after I read what he says of me. And I still should enjoy giving him one in the eye!!

Yours truly

Samuel Dawson.

Don't answer till I if the spirit moves you