

June 15? 1927

The Orchard,  
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My dear Fisher-

This is blowing off steam, or rather getting rid of you of idle thoughts, when idle at Cambridge, and needs no answer. A remark you made led me to think over again the problem of the effect of family allowances on fertility. In my book I came to the conclusion that the effect naturally to be expected of allowances would be to increase fertility, and that this result would not be obliterated by the mental effect on a minority of making them feel that better things are thus brought within their power. It is a problem in human nature, and I ought to say to myself "what do I know that makes me able to form an opinion on how human nature will work out under various conditions". My answer must be "precious little". When I look around me I find that the few big families I know are mostly amongst the very

well-to-do. A labourer and a gardener I know, both self respecting fairly contented men, who certainly are not actuated by the sentimental-  
hypocritism. I have often asked those who know the slums well, or think they do, whether misery is a marked feature of the lives of slum dwellers, and have got the impression it is not.

But I may be putting my thoughts into their minds, for I imagine that if the inhabitants were very miserable, a large number would cease to be slum dwellers. I have walked down the Mile End Road on a Saturday night, and misery is not the idea, very far from it, that comes into one's mind when looking into the faces of passers by. We certainly must not judge by what we should feel in their circumstances; but if so what are we to judge by? The facts on the whole seem to me to fit in with the notion that, <sup>unfortunately,</sup> rising wages go with higher fertility; though this may be only a slowly

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passing phase. I wish more inquiries were possible. I should like after the next census 500 families picked out with the father aged 40 the wife 30 and with exactly 6 children, there being comparable. Then to see how they are distributed socially, and what impression they give on a visitor as regards mental attitude. With such a report one might make a better judgment. I wonder what Sidhette would say on the point. I don't suppose I shall ever write again - or print again - on this point, hence I like to let fly at you. Now don't answer.

Yours sincerely  
L. Darwin