

Oct. 10 23

CRIPPS'S CORNER,
FOREST ROW,
SUSSEX.

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My dear Fisher

I have seen a copy of
the question which you put
to the Research Committee,
and I am fully in accord
with you in thinking that
the plan and aim should be
as far as possible worked
out in advance. I think that
the question that I want to
get answered ~~but~~^{by} such
enquiries is the extent to
which the sterilization of
the pauper class under

(2)

consideration would rid the
next generation of pauperism.
I am now writing about
feble-mindedness, and I find
that Goddard ^{shows} ~~states~~ that
44% of his f.m. are descended
from a f.m. parent. Hence I
argue that 44% of the
f.m. population would not
appear ~~in their present form~~
if all the previous generations
had been sterilized. I think
this is correct, if it be
assumed that the f.m.

populations tend otherwise to (3)
remain stationary in numbers
— but I don't feel quite sure.

No doubt as the mates of
those sterilized might ~~seek~~^{have}
~~also~~ have sought other mates
in their place, and would
probably have had some f.m.
offspring, the rate of diminution
of mental defect will not be
as great as is thus represented.
What I should like to know
is how the Enquiry could
have been conducted so as
to find out the answer to
my question. I do not want
great accuracy as regards
results; for all social policy

must be founded on broad (4)
conclusions. What I do want to
avoid is statistical fallacies
affecting the arguments (A)
involved.

Does Goddard's work show
that assortive mating is at
work? About 15% of his
cases had 2 f.m. parents.
Is it not true that the more
assortive the mating, the
more rapid will be the
elimination of any defect by
prevention of parenthood or
sterilization? I am asking
Mr. Hadson to send me
Journ. Hered., 1917, VIII, p.
464, in which Punnett, I
believe makes out that the

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Extinction of mental defect
would be an extraordinary
slow proceeding if only the
defectives themselves were
sterilized. I wonder if he has
taken assative making into
account. My deduction from
Goddard's figures are that
feeble-mindedness might be
reduced by 50% in less than
2 generations by sterilizing
only the f.m. I wonder if I
am right, or whether Punnett
is.

Dehnbetter's pedigree will be
 very useful to me if they
 give me a broad ground
 for argument, similar to
 what I get from Goddard's
 work.

There is another point on
 which I fear a statistical
 fallacy in my argument.
 If you make a pedigree
 or family tree centered
 round a selected mental
 defecture, I argue that from

(7)
the amount of defects of various kinds in the tree spreading upwards, we can forecast the probable amount of defect in the tree spreading downwards. This, I suppose, assumes that the assortive mating is the same in intensity in the upward and downward trees. But does the fact that I select a fgm. person as the basis of my enquiry vitiate my conclusion or prophecy?

It you see that I am running into danger over any statistical fallacy, a

word of warning would be
gratefully received. I hope
I have made my meaning
tolerably clear.

Yours sincerely

L. Darwin
