

My dear Fisher.

[July 1921?] JMB

Possibly you do not fully realize the difficulties I have to face - or believe that I have to face. I want a paper of which I can write such an abstract as will be useful for propaganda in the daily press. Then I also want it to be a paper which, without convincing experts, will set them thinking on certain lines. And the point I selected in my mind was the need for widespread eugenic action, which seems to me quite inadequately recognized; or the different way in which the different kinds of qualities need to be treated. This is what I have aimed at; with the result that for speaking I fear I shall have to cut out about 1000 words; and how I can do this without making the rest unintelligible I don't know. If any expert is struck by my paper, he will refer to the printed account, and there he will pursue the references given.

First as to the Frederick affair. How would it be if I put it in as on sheet herewith marked (A)? That is if you would fill in the blanks where I have put a ? . The number ~~who~~^{who} attain the age of 20 in each 1000 per year would give you a sufficiently near approximation to the

number of marriages per annum in the U.S.

Your other point is more difficult. Who but your self has collected this evidence? And you have not yet published. I think you are very wise not to be in a hurry. The origin of Spence's was brewing for 20 years. Lots of people have pointed out the decay of ancient civilizations, to which I allude. Also we have a great deal to show that wealth and infertility are correlated. I cannot allude to you till you have published; for, amongst other things, I must study that evidence before endorsing it. I did read some of it in manuscript, and frankly I felt in some particulars you were a little inclined to jump to conclusions. This feeling may all disappear with your more mature work.

It is very hard to tell where each part of the mosaic of ones opinions comes from. I think I attach more importance to wealth as a factor making for ⁱⁿ fertility than you do. At all events I connect that side of my mind with Heron and Brentano's work, and Storer's. As to the inherited infertility, Galton was first with his

has all necessary reliable facts.

heirs; then came Cobb, and then you. What I feel is that to attempt an imperfect bibliography is harmful rather than useful. And I feel that many factors are at work creating the downward tendency. In fact at the moment I don't see how to meet your point, for which I am sorry. But I have the Atlantic before me! Don't hesitate to write freely, if you don't mind when I stick to my own line.

I have been reading a book reviewed in the last Review, by one Freeman^[*], on racial decay. It is one-sided special pleading to a considerable extent. But you should read it.

An early answer about (A) would oblige -

Yours sincerely & hastily

Leonard Dawkins

Please return (A) I have no copy.

[* Eugenics Review 13, 414. July 1927]

My dear Fisher.

[August 1921]

Thanks for your letter. I am very glad you wrote freely, for I think I in some degree misunderstood your first letter. The sentence of yours to which I paid most attention was that the statement was warranted that "an immense amount of collateral evidence as to its historical importance has already been collected". This is, I doubt not, true; but it is not for me to say it, because I could not adequately back up my statement if heckled. There has certainly nothing arisen between us, though it is very likely I do now differ from you in your conclusions; though quite ready to be convinced I am wrong. I see in the R-State paper I say that looking to the internal agencies, "of all the factors affecting the birth-rate, wealth is the most important". And in "Some Birth Rate Problems" I allude to infertility as being ^{due} "in" a measure (by which I meant to a degree now unknown) to greater wealth leading to pleasures competing with marriage. I say it is "impossible to prove that the" infertility-or-better paid

is entirely due to the environmental effect. I think what I wanted was to leave it an open question how much these different factors were responsible for the results. I think I can, therefore, say I have always attached much importance to wealth - whether rightly is another question. Like this is leading up to ask you to read the enclosed footnote, to return it to me, and to criticize it freely. Does it meet your point? Please tell me frankly.

Many thanks for getting in the figures. I am a little surprised at the small number of the eminent who come to marriageable age each year. If there are 100,000,000 in the U S (is that so?) there are 25,000 eminent-at-birth. Does this give only 500 a year at marriageable age? I suppose you are right.

My present idea is to boil down all my papers into a book during the next three or four years. But-

I rather funk the task as my memory is, I think, not so good as it was. But I am much impressed with the fact that papers as permanently affecting opinions are of comparatively little use. Thus I hope when you are fully ready - not before - you will put your ideas into a book. But a book is an awful grind. I remember Huxley saying he often ~~wrote~~ wrote a thing out six times before he was satisfied; I am sure of the "six", but not quite of the "often".

Again thank you

Yours sincerely

Samuel Dawson.

The 18,000 years in the "Friedrich" example is startling; but it seems to me right & fair.

Foot-note

The theoretical side of all these questions is here quite inadequately discussed. I have always held ~~that~~ wealth ^{to be} a very important factor in limiting the size of families, a subject discussed by several authorities. As to the possible effects of physiological infertility see article by J A. Cobb in the Eugenics Review. Jan 1913 Vol. IV No 4 p 379. As to the development of mental traits producing this result, see "Some Hopes of a Eugenicist" in the Eugenics Review Jan 1914. Vol V No 4, by Mr R A Fisher, who will, I hope, deal with this subject in greater detail before long. I have discussed these problems in "Eugenics in relation of Economics and Statistics". J. of Royal. Stats. Soc. Jan 1919. "The need for widespread Eugenic Reform" Eugenics Review, Oct. 1918. "Some Birth Rate Problems" Eugenics Review. Oct 1920 and Jan 1921. "The Habitual Criminal" Eugenics Review. ?

See also