

Sept. 16. 38.

CRIPPS'S CORNER,

FOREST ROW,

SUSSEX.

Dear Fisher.

This letter will not need any reply to be written by you — or shall I say by M<sup>rs</sup> Fisher. I had a correspondence with the Secretary to the American Eugenics Society, when rejoicing that body, in which I at first expressed unwillingness to comment as requested on a pamphlet called "Procrustean Eugenics". But I thought better (or worse) or it later on and did write a letter a copy of which I now enclose, in case you like to read it. I don't want it back. I think that you will see that I felt just the

Same difficulties as you did.

I know that they think a good deal of this test of fitness, so I thought I ought to suppress my views. I began by as much better as I could put on. There it, it is true, only one paragraph in a fairly long pamphlet on the subject of this test. Many thanks for yours.

Yours sincerely

Dennard Danon

Cripps's Corner,  
Forest Row,  
Sussex.

Sept- 11- 38-

Dear Mr Bertheau,

In your letter to me of August 18th you were good enough to say that your Board would like to have my comments on your paper "Practical Eugenics". I have been in much doubt whether I can say anything of value, and I send these notes more as a proof of my interest in your work than for any other reason.

I may say at once that I think that it is on the whole an excellent pamphlet for wide distribution. I was especially glad to read the statement that "the education of leaders of public opinion is the first step" (p.6), and trust that this will be an easier matter in America than it is in England. I sincerely hope that the Conferences mentioned on p. 7 may be as numerous as is anticipated. I like what is said about Eugenics Education pages 7,8,9; though perhaps I should insist a little more clearly on the duty towards the State of producing families of adequate size. Much can be done by propaganda, as is proved by events in Germany.

In fact I find myself almost entirely in agreement with all that is here said. Naturally minor comments came to my mind of comparatively little importance. I should like the size of the family to be considered in the Awards of Scholarships

(page 11). On page <sup>13</sup>~~12~~ those who are "a menace to society" are spoken of. There will prove to be, I believe, a large class who are not a menace of this kind but are a menace to posterity. I believe that some pressure in such cases will often be needed to lessen parent-hood; though this may not yet be practicable. I cordially agree with what is said about the medical profession on p. 16. As far as immediate results are concerned, the enlistment of the sympathies of general practitioners seems to me to be most needed. Again the remarks on the choice of mates are excellent. This propaganda should include that to parents; for, to quote my own words, if "we only make worthy friends, our children will of their own accord also associate with worthy companions", and marry accordingly. I am glad that "more stable marriages" are advocated; though I have myself desired a movement in this direction more on non-eugenic than on eugenic grounds. But I will not run on with my favourable comments.

At first I was much taken with the idea that the home environment constituted a valuable eugenic test. But the more I consider this proposal the greater appear the difficulties connected with its adoption. I have for long been convinced that the practicability of a scheme cannot be estimated until it is worked out in detail, though not necessarily for publication.

This may have been done in America and all my difficulties solved.

In the first place, who is to implement this "practical means of comparing the eugenic values of different individuals"? Is this task to be entrusted to social workers? Persons who could thus be described do not, I imagine, enter more than 20% of the houses in this country. How about the remaining 80%?

If a social worker finds that the character of the social environment is good, how is the fertility of the parents in question to be increased? Are they to be told that their surroundings will be improved if in fact another child does appear? Is this a practical proposal? No doubt in these circumstances the money would only be spent if the goods were delivered, as is the case with family allowances; but the evils due to the caprice of administrators would not thus be similarly obviated. On the other hand, if the social worker finds the conditions to be bad, is he to refuse help? We cannot, I think, by any such plan get rid of the fundamental difficulty connected with charitable endeavours, namely that they are usually dysgenic in their effects. It is no doubt true that in like conditions family allowances would also be racially harmful.

The qualifying words "enjoyed essentially the same environmental opportunities" used in regard to this method of comparison between individuals show that its limitations are recognized, though, I think, not sufficiently stressed. Such

a comparative test would only be reasonably reliable, I suggest, within an area so small that social workers would by verbal exchange of ideas come to have the same levels of comparison in regard to the qualities of homes. It would be useless for any national investigations.

It should be recognized in this connection that a reform might be eugenic in every stratum taken separately and yet dysgenic for the whole community. If the birth rate of the more fit amongst the poorest strata <sup>was</sup> ~~was~~ to be raised whilst that of the less fit in the richer strata <sup>was</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>considerably</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>somewhat</sup> lowered, this anomalous result might in my opinion be obtained. This is an improbable contingency, but it ought to be possible to ascertain if anything of the kind was occurring. To do this, it would be necessary to compare the racial worth of the different social strata so as to ascertain whether, as I believe, the richer groups are on the average somewhat superior to the poorer; and this could not be done, I suggest, by means of the test here advocated. Mental testing is the only method now available for making such much needed comparisons; but in this document it is not even mentioned. This is a problem of the highest importance, always to be held in view by eugenic societies; and I am inclined to urge that the public ought to be educated in regard to the present value of these tests and to the need for further study in these directions.



The greatest danger to the race at the present time is, I hold, the enormous stream of recruits which is perpetually flowing from the poorer to the richer half of the community, these being the least fertile and the most able of their class. This problem should always be in the mind of those who are striving to frame a racial policy for the nation; and what is often said to be happening in Sweden seems to me to be a wholly insufficient excuse for the neglect of this vital but disagreeable question.

There is another point concerning this proposed method of estimating human values that I should like to see elucidated. It seems probable that small families are on the average more intelligent than are large ones, this being a conclusion supported by statistical evidence and rendered probable because forethought tends to promote family limitation. Since small families are likely to be better housed than are large ones, there will no doubt be a tendency to pick them out for aids to parenthood without reference to their inherent qualities. To guard against errors, social workers should therefore take the size of the family into consideration in rating the value of its members, though to do so would greatly increase the difficulty of their task.

The foregoing considerations indicate that we ought to have accurate statistical data on which to base our proposals; whereas the quality of the homes in different areas could never be recorded with sufficient accuracy for this purpose. Some

prominent economist remarked, I believe, that the only reason why money and prices figure so largely in economic literature is that they are the only bases on which statistical calculations concerning certain problems can be based; and this is also, I hold, true in regard to eugenics. Leave out the test of money incomes and some problems are now insoluble.

One of the very strongest impressions left on my mind as the result of 17 years experience as president of a Eugenic Society is that such bodies should not deal with immediate social problems, the reason being that such questions are so interesting as to tend to drive the thought of the racial qualities of future generations right off the field. Some keen philanthropists will want, in the words of an American Author, to capitalize the value of the word eugenics for use in non-eugenic directions; and I have seen symptoms of this desire in some of the other documents kindly sent to me. The word 'Eugenics' should always be used in the sense attributed to it by the man who coined it. More than half a century ago I asked Francis Galton if he would not write something in regard to the first practical steps to be taken towards eugenic reform, and he replied that it was much too early to consider such a move. That may then have been true; but now I think it is high time for us to get on with the job. To do so we must take considerable risks and must openly base our proposals



on probabilities rather than on certainties.

Yours sincerely,

L. D.