

July 19-33

CRIPPS'S CORNER,  
FOREST ROW,  
SUSSEX.

Dear Fisher.

If I pass an idle hour —  
of which I have too many — in  
writing to you, I really hope that you  
will feel no obligation to reply.  
Then I shall hesitate less in doing  
so, though I may bore you all the  
more.

I see a letter in this *Engines*  
*Review* on Family Allowances, it  
being an answer to a note in a  
previous issue. That note I have  
not looked up, for I don't want  
to tread on anyone's corns by  
criticizing it — though I suspect you  
had nothing to do with it. Write  
a good deal of M. E. Green's letter

I agree; but in her last para. she seems to me to make as many mistakes as could be crowded into it. "... the rearing of children would not become a paying concern." This hints at the argument that a more loosening of the strain of parenthood would have no effect. "... the birth rate, where it is already artificially low ...". Is it not artificially low where it is somewhat prevented being at its maximum? Something has prevented huge families of 20 or so from appearing often anywhere, and the birth rate is, in a sense, almost everywhere artificially low. Hence, according to her argument, allowances might increase the birth rate almost everywhere. "... where the technique of limitation is scarcely known ... they could scarcely have any effect."

But such effects would be cumulative,  
and serious in the course of centuries.  
"... whose prudential motive does not  
operate..." Have you ever met a  
human being without any prudential  
check? I have not. "The determining  
factor here is surely....". Here is,  
I think, an example of the very  
commonest of all blunders in  
reasoning, namely that the proof of  
the operation of one cause justifies  
the exclusion of all other causes.  
I think you are more inclined to  
agree than I am that a mere  
betterment of social conditions  
tends to lower the birth rate, and  
you may be right. But slum  
conditions are often reported in  
new houses, and I see no real proof  
that an "improvement" in the standard  
of living in itself reduces fertility.  
She talks of "where hope and foresight  
are obliterated". I do not know the  
poorer classes myself; but for some

years whenever I have met anyone who really knows the poorest classes, I have asked them on this subject. Putting aside illness, which they regard as fate, and not including those who have fallen in social status, all have agreed that the poorest can be described as happy. My neighbour Duckworth, who in the old Boothe street, what into a home in every street in all London, was particularly definite on this point.

Now this is the stream I wanted to blow off, and I could not have done it if I had not had you to blow it on to. So look on yourself as doing me a kindness - that is all

Yours sincerely,

Leonard Darwin