

EUGENIC QUALITIES OF PRIMARY IMPORTANCE

By SIR FRANCIS GALTON, F.R.S.

THESE few lines are offered as a contribution to the art of justly appraising the eugenic values of different qualities. It may fairly be assumed that the presence of certain inborn traits is requisite before a claim to eugenic rank can be justified, because these qualities are needed to bring out the full values of such special faculties as broadly distinguish philosophers, artists, financiers, soldiers, and other representative classes. The method adopted for discovering the qualities in question, is to consider groups of individuals, and to compare the qualities that distinguish such groups as flourish or prosper from others of the same kind that decline or decay. This method has the advantage of giving results more free from the possibility of bias than those derived from examples of individual cases.

In what follows I shall use the word "community" in its widest sense, as including any group of persons who are connected by a common interest,—families, schools, clubs, sects, municipalities, nations, and all intermediate social units. Whatever qualities increase the prosperity of most or everyone of these will, as I hold, deserve a place in the first rank of eugenic importance.

Most of us have experience, either by direct observation or through historical reading, of the working of several communities, and are capable of forming a correct picture in our own minds of the salient characteristics of those that, on the one hand, are eminently prosperous, and of those that, on the other hand, are as eminently decadent. I have little doubt that the reader will agree with me, that the members of prospering communities are, as a rule, conspicuously strenuous, and that those of decaying or decadent ones are conspicuously slack. A prosperous community is distinguished by the alertness of its members, by their busy

occupations, by their taking pleasure in their work, by their doing it thoroughly, and by an honest pride in their community as a whole. The members of a decaying community are, for the most part, languid and indolent; their very gestures are dawdling and slouching, the opposite of smart. They shirk work when they can do so, and scamp what they undertake. A prosperous community is remarkable for the variety of the solid interests in which some or other of its members are eagerly engaged, but the questions that agitate a decadent community are for the most part of a frivolous order. Prosperous communities are also notable for enjoyment of life, for though their members must work hard in order to procure the necessary luxuries of an advanced civilisation, they are endowed with so large a store of energy that, when their daily toil is over, enough of it remains unexpended to allow them to pursue their special hobbies during the remainder of the day. In a decadent community, the men tire easily and soon sink into drudgery; there is consequently much languor among them and little enjoyment of life.

I have studied the causes of civic prosperity in various directions and from many points of view, and the conclusion at which I have arrived is emphatic, namely, that chief among those causes is a large capacity for labour—mental, bodily, or both—combined with eagerness for work. The course of evolution in animals shows that this view is correct in general. The huge lizards, incapable of rapid action, unless it be brief in duration and associated with long terms of repose, have been supplanted by birds and mammals possessed of powers of long endurance. These latter are so constituted as to require work, becoming restless and suffering in health when precluded from exertion.

We must not, however, overlook the fact that the influence of circumstance on a community is a powerful factor in raising its tone. A cause that catches the popular feeling will often rouse a potentially capable nation from apathy into action. A good officer, backed by adequate supplies of food and with funds for the regular payment of his troops, will change a regiment even of ill-developed louts and hooligans into a fairly smart and well-disciplined corps. But with better material as a foundation,

the influence of a favourable environment is correspondingly increased, and is less liable to impairment whenever the environment changes and become less propitious. Hence it follows that a sound mind and body, enlightened, I should add, with an intelligence above the average, and combined with a natural capacity and zeal for work, are essential elements in eugenics. For however famous a man may become in other respects, he cannot, I think, be justly termed eugenic if deficient in the qualities I have just named.

Eugenists justly claim to be true philanthropists, or lovers of mankind, and should bestir themselves in their special province as eagerly as the philanthropists, in the current and very restricted meaning of that word, have done in theirs. They should interest themselves in such families of civic worth as they come across, especially in those that are large, making friends both with the parents and the children, and showing themselves disposed to help to a reasonable degree, as opportunity may offer, whenever help is really needful. They should compare their own notes with those of others who are similarly engaged. They should regard such families as an eager horticulturist regards beds of seedlings of some rare variety of plant, but with an enthusiasm of a far nobler and more patriotic kind. For, since it has been shown elsewhere that about 10 per cent. of the individuals born in one generation provide half the next generation, large families that are also eugenic may prove of primary importance to the nation and become its most valuable asset.

CAN THE SCHOOL PREPARE FOR PARENTHOOD ?

By JOHN RUSSELL, M.A.

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AT the suggestion of the Eugenics Education Society I have attempted to answer this question, but I write as a schoolmaster, not as a biologist. And I speak in my private capacity only.

The science of Eugenics may be shortly defined as "the study of the conditions under control which affect the quality of children at birth," and the art of Eugenics may be defined as "the steps by which the knowledge gained from that study may be turned to practical account in the interest of children yet unborn, and ideals yet unrealised."

The school does not specialise, and can, I think, do little more for the science than lead to some understanding of the place and power of science in human affairs. Can it do anything for the art? Can it in any sense prepare for parenthood? There is perhaps a preliminary question—is it desirable that it should so prepare?

With the school lie the destinies of the future, and if we really desire the betterment of the race, and really believe in the physical basis of life, and therefore of betterment, there can be only one answer—it is desirable. Those only can say "No" who either are content with the prevailing wholesale happy-go-lucky propagation of fit and unfit, or else are afraid that the school, with its pervasive corporate life, will be unable to treat so intimate a matter with becoming delicacy, so think it safer to let sleeping dogs lie. As for the nothing-can-be-done philosophers, we can, I think, afford to ignore them.