

Speech by the Earl of Meath on 6th July, 1903, on the national standard of physical health.

Contributors

Meath, Reginald Brabazon, Earl of, 1841-1929.
Royal College of Surgeons of England

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HOUSE OF LORDS.

SESSION 1903.

SPEECH

BY

THE EARL OF MEATH

ON 6TH JULY, 1903,

ON

THE NATIONAL STANDARD OF
PHYSICAL HEALTH.

THE EARL OF MEATH: My Lords, I rise to draw the attention of His Majesty's Government to the Report of the Royal Commission on Physical Training in Scotland, and to the Report of the Inspector-General of Recruiting for 1902, in which he states that

"the one subject which causes anxiety in the future as regards recruiting, is the gradual deterioration of the physique of the working classes from which the bulk of the recruits must always be drawn";

and to ask His Majesty's Government whether they would be prepared to issue a Royal Commission or a Committee of Inquiry with a view of ascertaining whether the poorer populations in our large towns are exposed to conditions which, if continued, must inevitably contribute to a low national standard of physical health and strength, seeing that if such be the case it would constitute a

grave national peril. The Report of the Royal Commission on Physical Training in Scotland, over which my noble friend the Earl of Mansfield presided, and to whom and his colleagues we owe a deep debt of gratitude for bringing before the public in so concise and lucid a manner the present physical conditions of the people of that country, unanimously reported that—

"there exists in Scotland an undeniable degeneration of individuals of the classes where food and environment are defective, which calls for attention and amelioration in obvious ways, one of which is a well regulated system of physical training."

Do these words apply only to Scotland, or are they applicable to the rest of the United Kingdom? This is the question I desire His Majesty's Government to take into their most serious consideration. The subject to which I am anxious



to draw the attention of the Government and of your Lordships' House is to my mind one of the most important of our social problems. It is a question of self-preservation. If my contention that a very large proportion of the population in our large cities are physically weak, be true, and that that degenerate portion is rapidly on the increase, then I think there can be no question about the urgent importance of the subject and the need of Government action. That wise statesman Lord Beaconsfield once said—

"The public health is the foundation on which repose the happiness of the people and the power of a country. The care of the public health is the first duty of a Statesman."

I am fully aware that the most important and the most interesting subject can be made unbearably dull by being over-weighted with statistics. I shall, therefore, do my best to spare your Lordships unnecessary figures; but, at the same time, I do not think it is possible for a subject of this character to be adequately and seriously discussed without occasional reference to statistics. I hope, therefore, your Lordships will bear with me, remembering the difficulty that there is in making clear such a subject without quoting figures.

In order that there may be no misapprehension in the minds of your Lordships in regard to the nature of the social problem to which I have called the attention of the Government and of this House, I should like to make it perfectly clear that I do not contend that physical deterioration is taking place among all classes in this country, nor, indeed, that any class is actually deteriorating, for the exact reverse is certainly the case in regard to some sections of society. Indeed, there can be no doubt that the physical condition of the upper and middle classes has on the whole improved. Evidence is doubtful as to whether the artisan and well-to-do labouring classes have improved or not; they probably have remained more or less stationary. Nor do I even assert that degeneration has taken place amongst the poorer classes in either town or country. What I desire to emphasise is that even should it be proved that the average individual member of a poor town population is physically the equal, or even slightly the superior, of his poor town predecessor, the overwhelming increase which has

taken place in recent years in the numbers of poor men and women who live in towns has completely altered the physical condition of England, and turned a negligible national defect into one of the most serious gravity. There can be no doubt that the poor of to-day are born and live under much better conditions than the poor of a century, or even of half a century ago, and that the death-rate, both in town and country, has diminished, and it is therefore possible, and even probable, that the general average health and strength of even the poorest and most neglected in the towns are greater than those formerly enjoyed by a class similarly miserable. But although there may be degrees of misery, and because there may be a slight diminution in the physical weakness of these wretched classes, it is no reason why the national conscience should be satisfied, if it can be shown that physical weakness in these classes is still excessive, is far greater than that to be found amongst the more well-to-do, and can be avoided, especially when it can be shown that people residing in urban districts already number nearly four-fifths of the population and are rapidly increasing, whilst the country bred, which in the past recruited the weakened blood of the cities, are either stationary in number or actually decreasing.

In 1851 the urban population of England and Wales numbered only 8,990,809 out of a total population of 17,927,609, or just 50 per cent.; according to the last census the urban districts are now inhabited by more than 25,000,000 souls out of 32,527,843, or 77 per cent. of the total population. Scotland shows a very similar state of things. There 3,367,280, or 75.3 per cent. of the population, live in urban districts. These figures mean that the population of Great Britain is largely town bred, and that for one man who lives in the country there are more than three who reside in the town. For purposes of comparison, and to show of how much greater importance this subject is to us than to neighbouring countries, I may state that whereas the urban inhabitants of Great Britain are 77 per cent., and those of Scotland 75.3 per cent., the town inhabitants of Germany are only 36 per cent., and those of France only 25 per cent. of their entire populations. Dwellers in cities need not necessarily be of inferior physique. I have no

doubt I shall be told that some of the finest athletes come from the towns. That is so, but they come from that portion of the population who are in comparatively comfortable circumstances, who are well fed, live in healthy homes, and have leisure for outdoor exercise. The great public schools of Great Britain are filled with the healthy and sturdy sons of the professional classes living largely in towns, but then, as a rule, their parents are healthy, and they come of a healthy stock. The sons of the upper and middle classes, educated at the great seminaries, far from degenerating, have increased in stature and weight above the limits attained by their predecessors. From statistics taken it can be shown that in 1901 the average Marlburian boy of thirteen years of age was $5\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. heavier and 2 inches taller than his predecessor of 1874, and that the Rugby boy of thirteen in 1901 was 6 lbs. heavier and $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches taller than his predecessor of 1879.

But if we consider the condition of the less favoured classes, we are confronted with an entirely different set of figures. Mr. Charles Roberts, in a Report to the Royal Commission on Secondary Education, says that—

“The more intelligent classes are taller and heavier at corresponding ages than the less intelligent, the more favoured classes than the less favoured;”

and he gives the following figures in support of his statement. He states that the public school boy, between eleven and twelve years of age, averages 55 inches in stature, and 78·7lbs in weight; the elementary school child 52·6 inches in height, and 67·8lbs. in weight; the factory child 51·6 inches in height, and 67·41lbs in weight; and those at Industrial and Reformatory Schools, whom Mr. Roberts, I think inaccurately, describes as representing the slum population, 50·8 inches in height, and 64·63lbs in weight. It must be remembered that the Industrial and Reformatory Schools, though they recruit their inmates largely from the slums of cities, do not in their statistics actually represent the physical conditions of the children of the slums, for, as the Royal Commission on Physical Training in Scotland have pointed out, these boys and girls are well fed, live in healthy dwellings, amid good sanitary surroundings, and under a healthy discipline, which rapidly improves their physique and morale, so that, on leaving

the school, 80 per cent. turn out good and useful citizens. Therefore, my contention is that Mr. Roberts's figures, although they are bad enough in themselves, do not represent the real state of affairs, and that, if we could obtain accurate anthropometric measurements of the children inhabiting city slums, we should possibly find that the figures were much lower than those given by Mr. Roberts. These figures are corroborated by Dr. Hunt, medical officer of the School Board of Halifax, who examined fifty boys, between the ages of ten and eleven, attending the schools, for weight, and 450 for height. These boys came from three categories of schools—country, suburban, and central, and the figures he gives show that the upper and middle class boy averages about 3 inches more in height, and 11 lbs. more in weight than the average elementary school boy; and 4 inches in height, and 14 lbs., or one stone, more in weight, than the slum or factory boy.

The Royal Commission on Physical Training in Scotland found that in Edinburgh nearly 30 per cent. of the elementary school children were badly nourished, 19·17 per cent. were in poor health, 12·33 per cent. were mentally dull, and 78 per cent. were more or less physically weak and suffering from some kind of disease. And the gentlemen who carried out these investigations for the noble Earl and his colleagues stated that the percentage of defective children would be larger if slight affections of throat and ear were included. Out of 30,000 children in Edinburgh, Dr. Leslie Mackenzie calculated that some 50 per cent.—that is, a total of 15,000 children—were suffering from the throat, and some 40 per cent., or 12,000, from slight affections of the ear, making a total of 27,000 children out of 30,000 suffering from ear and throat. In the course of his examination he found that 259 male children out of 299 and 294 females out of 298 were suffering from either affections of the ear or throat. These figures are the more alarming as one would imagine that Edinburgh, with its magnificent situation, in close proximity to its splendid Queen's Park and picturesque Arthur's Seat, would produce healthier children than, say, the enormous industrial city of Glasgow. If the children of Edinburgh are in this lamentable condition, what must be the condition of those of Glasgow and of some

of the more crowded cities of England? In Liverpool we know that its medical officer has reported that out of 4,574 children there is an infantile mortality of 2,229—or about 50 per cent. This is less than the average mortality amongst working-class children, which is 55 per cent. as against 18 per cent. in the upper classes. One child in every six dies in the British Isles in its first year, and, of course, many more if we consider only children of the working classes. If Edinburgh is as bad as has been stated, what must be the condition of the children of Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, Newcastle, Bradford, Bristol—I could go through an endless list of manufacturing towns into the slums of which the sun scarcely ever penetrates, and where the air is polluted with vicious vapours and impregnated with black soot.

To combat these evils Lord Mansfield and his colleagues acknowledge that many reforms are needed. In his "Essays on Education" Herbert Spencer said—

"To be a good animal is the first requisite to success in life, and to be a nation of good animals is the first condition to national prosperity."

To be good animals children must have strong and healthy parents, good and ample food, plenty of fresh air and exercise, be properly housed, and lead regular disciplined lives. It is only necessary to mention these requisites for health in order to see at once how impossible it is that a race of healthy and strong children can, under present conditions, be reared in the poorer parts of our large cities. Mr. John Burns, M.P., has very truly said that—

"The conditions essential to manhood begin before the baby is born—a healthy home, reasonable labour, temperate living on the part of the father and mother, these are the indispensable preliminaries to healthy life in children."

Again, this admirable representative of all that is best amongst the artisan class—an exemplification in his own person of mental combined with physical vigour—has said that if our future working class are to be healthy—

"The fathers must drink less beer and the mothers less tea."

I would add that the mothers of the future must be taught knowledge necessary to the proper nurture of children. At present

there are working-class mothers—I trust not many—who are under the impression that babies flourish on gin, pork, bacon, and cabbage; and if they should cry and show physical discomfort from the effects of this diet, that all can be set right by a dose of some much advertised soothing syrup.

Without proper feeding we cannot have a sturdy nation. It must be seen that pure, fresh milk be brought within the reach of the poor both in town and country, and this is of even more importance in the country than in the town, for it is a sad fact that in many parts of the rural districts it is almost impossible for the labouring classes to obtain fresh milk. The future mothers must be taught not only that milk is the proper food for babes, but that the greatest care must be taken to see that the milk is sweet, for a large proportion of infantile mortality is due to decomposing or septic milk. The death-rate among breast-fed children is only about one-thirtieth of that among those who are fed otherwise. A most laudable effort, and one which should be largely followed, has been made by the Battersea Borough Council in order to enable mothers to obtain pure, fresh milk at a reasonable charge. The Council has started a milk depôt for mothers. The milk is humanised and sterilised, and at this moment some 300 babes are being daily fed at a charge of 1s. 9d. a week for those from six to eight months, and at 2s. for older babies. A baby fund has also been started to assist the poorer mothers, and arrangements have been made with the local Poor Law Guardians in the case of absolute paupers. As long ago as 1870, when I was in the diplomatic service, there existed in Berlin a model dairy which brought pure milk to the very doors of the poor by means of locked perambulating milk and cream carts, which passed at regular hours through the poorer quarters of the town and stopped at fixed points. The people could themselves fill their jugs from taps in the vehicle, over which was clearly painted the kind of milk and price. Owing to the cans being locked it was quite impossible for anyone to tamper with the supply. I cannot help thinking that something of that sort might be done nearer home.

I am quite prepared to be met with the statement that the average city

child is both taller and heavier than the city child was, say, when her late Majesty Queen Victoria came to the Throne. This may very possibly be true, but such a statement, if proved, would not weaken my argument. Our knowledge of the laws of health and of sanitation has vastly improved; our factory laws have been passed since those days; we have established an universal and compulsory system of education; we have passed special laws for the protection of children, and public opinion is much more alive to their interests than it was in 1837. It would, then, be indeed sad if we could not point to some physical improvement in the case of city children of the poorer classes, even though it has been estimated, with what truth I know not, that 3,250,000 persons in the British Isles live in overcrowded dwellings, with an average of three persons in each room. I desire to point out, that whereas city children in 1837 constituted a comparatively insignificant portion of the infantile population of the country, they now form an overwhelming majority, and, as such, must in the future materially influence the national physical average, and that annually this urban and weaker element is growing more and more numerous to the serious detriment of the nation. I, for one, shall never be satisfied as long as such a material difference can be shown between the physical condition of the children of the richer and of the poorer classes. I believe that science and municipal effort, supported by a sensitive public conscience and the spread of knowledge of the laws of health and of sanitation amongst the future mothers of England, can to a very large extent neutralise the advantages which at present those classes enjoy who can live in the country and need not consider money in the bringing up and training of their children. Before I leave the subject of the children I must draw attention to the fact that the population of this country is not increasing as it used to do. Lord Rosebery has remarked that it is useless to possess an Empire unless it is inhabited by an Imperial race. At this moment the population of Australia is practically stationary. What our colonies need is a continued steady stream of healthy agriculturists to develop their boundless

resources. If the increase of population in Great Britain had proceeded since 1881 in the same ratio as it did previous to that period, there would in 1891 have been 2,434,000 more children in the country than there actually were. Since that period the birth and marriage rates show a still further decline. I now come to the youths and adults. Lord Selborne has been good enough to cause me to be supplied with a Return of the boys and youths medically examined from the 1st of January to the 31st of December, 1902, at the Royal Marine Recruiting Offices for the Royal Navy and Royal Marines, and he has remarked that—

“He thinks it desirable to point out that this list by no means covers the whole number of men and boys who apply for entry into either of these services, as a very large percentage of the applicants are turned away by the recruiting sergeants for some physical deficiency, such as defective teeth without being brought before the doctors at all.”

This Return shows that, during that period, 6,169 lads offered themselves, out of which number 1,686, or 27·3 per cent., were rejected as unfit. This proportion is a little better than that which is recorded in the case of Army recruits. The General Inspector of Recruiting for the Army, in his Report for the year 1901, states that the percentage of rejections on grounds of physical development all over the kingdom of those who offered themselves for the Army was 29·04. But from statistics I have obtained, through the kindness of the First Lord of the Admiralty, it would appear that just under 33 per cent. of the lads who desired to enter Greenwich Hospital with a view to joining the Navy had to be rejected. This is the more extraordinary, as these lads must be sons of former seamen or marines, and, one would fancy, would consequently enjoy the advantage of, at all events, a healthy father.

It must not be forgotten that in this case also no account is taken of those who were rejected by the recruiters for physical defects so apparent as to be noticed on sight. None of these figures, therefore, show the numbers of those who were rejected by the sergeants as being obviously unfit, and it must always be remembered that there is a direct pecuniary inducement to a recruiting officer to bring a recruit before the doctor, so that those rejected by the recruiters must have been physically hopelessly defective. There is nothing

to show how large was the number thus rejected, but report puts it at about half those who presented themselves. This may be an exaggeration, but, if true, it would mean that over 50 per cent. of the young men and lads offering themselves for the Army and Navy have to be rejected. Let us, however, leave out of consideration those rejected by the recruiting sergeants. The figures are quite large enough in all conscience, and I have no desire to exaggerate the matter. I do not, however, believe that there would be much, if any, exaggeration in saying that some 50 per cent. of those who offer themselves for the Army and Navy are rejected between recruiting officers and medical men, and subsequent dismissals for inferior physique. I have been shown a statement in writing from an Admiralty provincial recruiting officer, in which he asserts that fully 50 per cent. of the candidates for the Navy are rejected for physical causes, and General Sir Frederick Maurice has lately informed the public that, out of five men who enlist, only two remain effective soldiers after two years, and that the men who slipped through the officers tests, and afterwards had to be turned out of the Army, were—

“ Miserable, anæmic specimens of humanity, fit to do no proper man's work in any position of life.”

Let us leave these extra rejections out of consideration. It will then be seen that considerably more than one-fourth of those who offer themselves from both town and country for the Army and Navy are rejected for physical defects. That more than a fourth of the young men and lads who desire to serve their country in Army or Navy should be unfit to do so, is surely a very serious matter. What makes it still more serious is that it is reported for 1901 that the proportion of men rejected was highest in the class headed “labourers, servants, husbandmen, etc.,” the rejections amongst labourers being 18·37 per 1,000. In 1902, owing probably to the great efforts made to obtain recruits during the war, the rejections for the Army were nearly 50 per cent. in excess of the figures for the previous year. The actual figures were: 100,771 recruits offered themselves, and 47,916, or nearly 50,000, were rejected. In Germany,

town life exercises a similarly harmful influence on national physique, for whereas 80 per cent. of the recruits from the country are found to be physically fit for military service, only 38 per cent. of those coming from Berlin can take their places in the ranks, and it must be remembered that these figures represent the average physical condition of the entire young male population of Berlin, and not only those coming from the poorer districts, as is the case in dealing with town recruits in the British Isles.

The Royal Commission on Physical Training in Scotland showed that the condition of life under which the poor lived in Edinburgh was detrimental to health and strength, but in considering the rejections for the Navy from this town we find in 1902 only 23·6 per cent. were rejected, whilst 24·9 were rejected from Bristol, 30·3 from Exeter, and 35·9 from London, so that Edinburgh is not so bad as some towns in England. In Manchester, from figures supplied by Colonel Leatham, the chief recruiting officer, it appears that in 1899, during the early part of the Boer War, some 11,000 men offered their services to the Army; of these only 3,000 could be accepted, and eventually it was found that out of these 3,000 only 1,072 were fit for service in the Regular Army, 2,107 being relegated to the Militia. So that in round numbers, out of 11,000 men from Manchester, 8,000 were rejected, whilst only 1,000 were found fit to fight the battles of their country. These figures were not peculiar to the year 1899, for in 1900, out of 12,235 who offered to enlist in Manchester, 8,205 were rejected, and in 1901, out of 11,896 who came forward, 8,820 were found physically incapable of military service. It may be said that these figures relate to men brought up in the slums and who are out of employment owing to physical incapacity to do any hard work. This probably is more or less true, but it only strengthens the force of my argument for inquiring into the condition of life of the poorer populations in our large cities. But that physical weakness is not confined only to the very poor in our towns is shown by the recent statement publicly made by the colonel of the Birmingham Volunteers, who complained that he had to reject some 32 per cent. of the young men who

applied to him for admission into his battalion, and that on one occasion he had to reject eleven out of thirty-one recruits. Now, these men must have been men of a superior social position to the ordinary Army recruit, and should not have been subject to the influences hurtful to health entailed by extreme poverty.

Mr. Cantlie, F.R.C.S., after making some most exhaustive inquiries, has come to the conclusion that pure-bred Londoners cannot exist beyond the third generation, showing that without the infusion of country blood the populations in our large cities would, under present conditions, inevitably die out. Mr. Cantlie has also made inquiries in the country, and found that rickets is one of the commonest ailments in country districts. He ascribes this to want of food, insufficient food, or the wrong food. It is probably owing to want of milk, which in some parts of the country it is almost impossible for the poor to obtain, as milk farmers are under contract to send their entire supply to the large centres of population, and cannot, therefore, sell it locally. This is a very serious grievance, and one which should be remedied. There are other causes, however, which lead to a low physical condition amongst the people. The Royal Commission on Physical Training in Scotland has pointed out that many reforms are needed in order to ensure a physically healthy population, and that all these reforms must proceed *pari passu*, or more harm than good may be done; for instance, they have shown how harmful physical exercises can prove in the case of underfed and sickly children, though the same exercises are indispensable to proper development, and most beneficial when carried out under medical supervision.

Briefly stated, the principal requisites in the production of a physically capable population are: first, healthy parents; secondly, sanitary homes; thirdly, good, abundant and well-cooked food, including a cheap supply of fresh milk; fourthly, pure air and water; fifthly, facilities for exercise and healthy recreation; sixthly, a good educational system, which shall combine physical with mental and moral training, and shall

instruct the young, especially the girls, in the elements of hygiene, dietetics, and the care of infants and home sanitation, and shall bring them up under good and healthy moral surroundings. It is only necessary to mention the above, which are but a few of the indispensable requisites to the production of a healthy population, in order to show how much remains to be done before we can hope to attain, not perfection, but even a moderately healthy standard of national life. If this moderate standard is to be reached, it will not be sufficient for one Department of Government to move in the right direction. The subject, when investigation has pointed out the proper course to be pursued, must be made a national one, and Government and people combined, must throw their entire energies into the matter, and insist on a general advance along the lines of national health and strength, so that future generations may be able fearlessly to face and bear the burden which fierce foreign competition and the ever increasing responsibilities of extending Empire have placed, and will place, on the shoulders of the subjects of King Edward. I am no pessimist. I firmly believe in the capabilities and energy of the Anglo-Saxon, and have confidence that, with the ancient pluck of their race, the future of the Empire will be made by its sons and daughters even more glorious than its memorable past, if only we, the fathers of the rising generation, do not neglect our duties, but give our sons and our grandsons a chance to equip themselves properly for the contest, and see that, in founding the mightiest Empire the world has ever known, we do not, by our indifference and carelessness, hinder nature in her efforts to people that Empire with an Imperial race.

*THE LORD BISHOP OF RIPON: My Lords, I make no apology for rising in support of the inquiry which the noble Earl has asked for. I am sure that every man who desires to see a great and efficient race raised in these islands and in the Greater Britain beyond the seas will feel that it never can be unwise to investigate the conditions of life, and to see how far they contribute to the development of a fine and noble race.

I am not here for one moment, therefore, to hold a brief on behalf of any pessimistic attitude with regard to the population or its physical deterioration, but I am here to try and show that there are very good grounds for asking for a searching and careful inquiry. I do not wish to approach this matter in a spirit of dread, for there are so many matters which appear incontrovertibly to prove that over a large period of years a distinct advance has been made, and this it would be neither wise nor politic to overlook. In the first instance, there has been an improvement with regard to the stature and vigour of the population of our country. As compared with a hundred years ago our population has trebled, and nearly quadrupled—from 8,900,000 to 32,500,000. As a result of investigation made by the British Association it has been ascertained that the stature of the race has risen within the last generation or two from 5 feet 7½ inches to 5 feet 8¼ inches, and I am sure we are all acquainted with the commonplace argument that we have only to visit the Tower of London and attempt to put on the armour of our ancestors to ascertain how far far the physique of the race has developed in the course of centuries. We should not look upon things from a dark point of view. Petulance and fear paint everything dark, and one can see nothing in the dark.

I, for one, am prepared to say at the outset, that there is so much to encourage us, that we ought to face every inquiry with a wise and well-balanced judgment. Amongst such encouraging features is the increase of longevity. The child born yesterday, if it was a boy, can look forward to 4·39 years more of life than did the child of fifty years ago; and if a girl her expectation is 6·11 years more. In other words, there is a distinct increase in the expectation of life, and to every child born to-day there is the opportunity of from four to six years longer service of its country and race. It is true that this is largely due to the advance of medical skill and sanitary science, but these have combined with the happier conditions of modern life to give the greater chance of a vigorous and healthy race. Such constitute to us abundant reasons for gratitude that our lot is cast in an age of greater physical and material advantages. But

surely for that very reason we ought to look more anxiously and more carefully to ascertain whether any causes are at work which may arrest these happy and healthful conditions. The greater caution, therefore, should be exercised by us lest unobserved changes should be introduced which might deprive us of so noble an inheritance and undermine the physical vigour of our race. Whatever we send beyond the seas in the form of manufactured goods, believe me to export men and women of noble and healthy physique, who will be worthy representatives of our people on other shores, must form the most important commodity of our manufacture. Far more than gold mines and acquired territories is the manufacture of that manhood and womanhood which can go forth with strength, intelligence, and moral force to fulfil the destinies of our people.

I am bound, therefore, to ask you to consider those great and grave questions which are being put to us by men who have studied these matters deeply and who ask that those questions may be answered "yes" or "no" after due and careful inquiry. Are we sending out in sufficient quantity and in sufficient quality a race which is calculated to hold this great Empire together and to fulfil what we all believe to be the duties and the destinies of our people? The answers which are given by some who have considered the matter are, that as regards numbers our population is not growing as rapidly as it should, but that the declining rate of increase is a matter of great moment. Let me ask your Lordships to notice one or two facts in this matter. First, I take the birth rate. The birth rate, which was 36·3 in 1876, had declined in 1898 to 29·4. But birth rate is, perhaps, not in itself a final test of the increase of population. Experts, therefore, have called our attention to the marriage question, and have endeavoured to arrive at some definite opinion as to the productive power of marriages in this country. Dr. Newsholme, taking a large range of married people of the age in which a family would naturally be expected, reached the conclusion that in 1,000 such marriages the children born in 1871 were equal to 292, in 1881, to 286, and in 1891 to 264. Here is a

distinct fall in the out-put of the population.

I turn to the evidence of Mr. Edward Cannan, a well recognised expert in political economics. In order not to be betrayed by a mere superficial estimate of figures, he arranged a careful system by which the births of one year could be compared with the births of twenty-six years previously in order to test the relative increase. Taking the cases, of married women under forty-five years of age, he found that for 100 births twenty-six years previously, there were in 1880, 139; that is, an increase of 39 per cent. But when the same comparison was made for the year 1890, the figure was only 117. Making the comparison once more for the year 1900, the figure was only 108. Here, again, is a distinct drop in the output of population. But Mr. Cannan undertook a further calculation. He arranged a system which he called a system of "weighted marriages"—that is to say, he only selects married people of an age in which a family is probable, and he considers what are the normal figures of birth rate for the earlier and the later years of such marriages. Out of this careful system he arrives at the conclusion that whereas the size of the families in 1880 was 4.34, in 1890 it had fallen to 4.08, and in 1900 to 3.63; in other words, in twenty years the average size of families had fallen from four and one-third to three and two-thirds, on which he makes the ominous remark that if the same rate of decline continues for sixteen years longer the source of natural increase would be dried up. I turn now to what appears to be confirmatory evidence of this decline in the size of families. If there is a diminution in the rate of increase that diminution will show itself in the lessened proportion of the number of children. In order to test this, I propose to take the census Returns of 1881 and the two following decades. If we divide the population into two sections, those under fifteen to represent the child section, and those above fifteen the older section, we encounter the following results—that whereas in 1881 those over fifteen numbered 16,505,848, those under fifteen numbered 9,468,591. In 1891 the population over fifteen had

risen to 18,830,290, and the children—that is, those under fifteen—numbered 10,172,235. In 1901 those over fifteen were 22,000,000, and those under fifteen, 10,526,075. That is to say, whereas the children under fifteen were 36.5 per cent. of the total population in 1881, they were only 32.3 per cent. of the population in 1901. The result of this is, and each of us can work it out for himself, that there are 1,142,000 fewer children under fifteen in the country than there would have been if the proportion of 1881 had been maintained.

Mr. Thomas Welton, F.C.A., on the basis of this shortage of children, reckoned that in the seven largest counties there were 858,500 children short of what there would have been had the old rate of increase been maintained, and if these seven counties were taken as representatives of the whole population, the shortage of children amounted to no fewer than 1,579,000. But in any case we seem to be confronted by the fact that there are more than 1,000,000 children less than there would have been had the old rates of increase continued, and this, I fear, is not a matter which we can feel ends with the census of 1901. One of the daily papers has shown us that the case of London in 1902 exhibits the same tendency. Then the birth rate fell to 28.5, that is, .05 lower than it was in 1901, and this means that there are 2,309 children fewer in London than there would have been if the average of the previous ten years had been maintained. Now it may be said that a diminished population is not necessarily a bad thing: it may arise from a noble and self-denying spirit actuating its citizens, and certainly I, for one, would pay the homage of my respect to any man who, from motives of prudence and chivalry refused to draw to his side the partner of his life till he had first prepared adequately a home for her and her children. But I fear that these diminishing returns are not wholly due to creditable or self-denying causes. Experts who have looked at the matter have come to this conclusion also. Professor Marshall tells us—

"In France for a long time, recently in America, and to a less extent in England, there has been a tendency for the abler and more intelligent part of the working-class population to avoid having large families, and this is a source of great danger."

Dr. J. S. Billings attributes in the same way the main cause of the declining rate of increase to the deliberate and voluntary avoidance of child bearing on the part of a steadily increasing number of married people. Dr. Billings is speaking for the United States it is true, but the fashion of one place is becoming, I fear, the fashion of more than one place. A doctor in a northern city told me that £30 a week was paid in postal orders in the purchase of appliances for the restriction of population. But we are not without evidence of a statistical kind. Mr. Welton, whom I have before quoted, has pointed out, and he has based his statistics on married women under forty-five years of age, that whereas in the decade 1881 to 1890 the mean number of births of such marriages was 132,917, in the following decade the mean number was 132,943, an incredibly small increase; in other words, that the percentage of birth for a hundred wives of the age mentioned was in the first decade 27·2, and in the second decade only 25·1. And he adds the ominous conclusion—

“It follows that we have gradually reached conditions when the ratio of births having sunk from 28·3 to 23·6, the natural births are reduced by artificial means to the extent of 26,000 a year, or 500 a week.”

He continues these calculations outside London and reaches similar conclusions. There is, therefore, from every point of view, ground for inquiry as to whether causes are not at work which tend in an unnatural way to weaken the vigour, the force, and the numbers of the growing population of the country.

But we sometimes console ourselves that the deficiencies of the mother country are compensated by the vigour and prolific character of the colonies. I am afraid that here, too, we must read the story of a declining rate of increase in the population. Take the case of Canada. Canada increased in the decade, 1871 to 1880, by 839,000. In the following decade her increase was 508,000, and in the last decade, 1891 to 1900, it was 506,000. It has been pointed out by Mr. Cænnan, that Scotland, which has a population 800,000 less than that of Canada, yet increased by natural means 500,000 within the last decade. What can we say when the increase of Canada, with its larger population, only exceeds that of Scotland by 6,000? I turn to Australia, and I meet the same story of

diminishing births. The births in 1891 were 126,000; they had fallen in 1899 to 114,000. And lastly, when I group together the Colonies of Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, and compare their population to-day with their population of thirty years ago, I find in all cases a tendency to a diminished birth rate. It has been calculated by Mr. J. A. Baines, C.S.I., that the percentage of children under five years of age is normally 12·70 of the whole population. Let us take this figure and test the condition of the colonies I have named. In 1871 the number of children in these colonies under five years of age was 16·5 of their whole population. In 1901 the number of children under five years of age was represented by 11·66, that is to say, while in 1871 the children under five were 4 per cent. above the normal they are now 1 per cent. under the normal figure. It is true that we have an Empire of great and extensive colonies; it is true that the spaces of the earth are given to us; but of what service are these unless a great, numerous, and vigorous population is ready to fill them, or how can we, with diminishing numbers, speak with our enemies in the gate? Lord Rosebery rightly said—

“An Empire is but little use without an Imperial race.”

I turn now to the second allegation, namely, that there are signs of a deterioration in physique amongst our population. It is not my purpose to commit myself to these figures. My only object is to prove that there are adequate grounds for inquiry. But when I look at the arguments which are adduced, I first encounter what I may describe as some birth facts. There has been an increase in infant mortality in the decade from 1871 to 1880 of 149 per thousand; in the next decade it had risen to 160·59 per thousand; and in the last decade to 173·45 per thousand. Within the last thirty years births with congenital defects have risen from 1·85 to 4·08. Perhaps still more striking is the fact that in the last fifty years we are told that premature births have risen 300 per cent. But from these birth facts we may turn to those results which are arrived at by inspection and investigation. And here let me first speak of Army Returns. I am quite ready to admit that Army Returns ought not to

be regarded as final or sufficient evidence of the state of the whole population. In the nature of the case they are only partial, but this is a very different thing from saying that they have no value at all. They certainly represent samples of some classes of the population. They are, in one sense, a test of the condition of the rural population. For let me remind your Lordships that in 1901, out of 76,750 men inspected, 49,138 are classed as labourers, servants, and husbandmen—that is, I take it, they are representatives of the rural population. But, out of these, 15,095—that is, 30·7 per cent.—were rejected. This has its significance, and while, of course, not to be taken as evidence of a deterioration throughout the whole population, is surely sufficient to constitute evidence which calls for inquiry.

I do not propose to weary you with the more particular results which come from the Army Returns, but I may remind your Lordships that whereas in 1845 the standard height for admission to the Army was 5 feet 6 inches, in 1883 it was dropped to 5 feet 3 inches, and in 1900 to 5 feet, and that of the men in 1901 no fewer than 593·4 per thousand were under the old standard height of 5 feet 6 inches. The chest measurement, again, was a 34 inch standard up to 1883, and in 1901 I find that 511·8 per thousand were under this measurement. In the matter of weight 8 stone 8 lbs. is not a great weight, but whereas in 1871 159·4 per thousand were under this weight, in 1898 269 per thousand were under it, and in 1901 325 per thousand. As a general result the War Office Report tells us that 12·30 per thousand represents the increase of rejection in 1901, and amongst those offering themselves from England and Wales the ratio rejected per thousand was 30 per cent., being 299·77 per thousand.

The opinions of military experts speak pretty freely of the apprehension which those interested in military matters feel regarding the material from which the Army is drawn. But we have not only military statistics to proceed upon. We have the results of the Scottish Commission, and here we have the startling statement that the children in the schools very often suffer from unrecognised

ailments. Thus, in the schools of Edinburgh no fewer than 700 children were found suffering from phthisis, 1,300 from heart complaints, and 15,000 from lesser ailments. Every one of these children suffering from an unrecognised ailment might be protected and developed into a more healthy child by a little care, thought, and medical inspection. I must pass by the statements which have already been put before your Lordships by Lord Meath, but it is enough for us to remember that in the evidence which is brought before us the question of race plays but a small part. The enfeebled condition of the children both in height and weight is, as far as evidence goes, rather a result of conditions than of pedigree. You have heard how the boys in our public schools are taller and heavier than those in factories and industrial schools. Mr. Hall, in Leeds, arrived at similar results, for he showed us that while the Jewish children of twelve years of age measured 57½ in. and weighed 85 lbs., and the Gentile children in good localities measured 57 ins. and weighed 77 lbs., the Gentile children in the poorer localities measured only 50½ ins. and weighed only 67½ lbs. I submit therefore that there is evidence which warrants our inquiring into the physical condition of the population.

One more fact needs to be noticed, because it has an important bearing upon the public welfare. The rural districts, it will be admitted, are the reservoirs of our national strength. We are no longer a nation in which the rural districts are as populous as they were. In 1870 the urban population was 15,697,000, and the rural population 15,787,000; that is to say, the urban and the rural populations were equally balanced. Fifty per cent. of the people were then in the country districts. To-day this has been reversed, and only 23 per cent. of the population can be reckoned as rural; 77 are urban. What becomes of the population crowded into the towns? The influence of the town is to burn up the population in numbers and in vigour. You have heard from Lord Meath Dr Cantlie's evidence that it is difficult to find the fourth generation of a Londoner. Professor Marshall tells us the same. Only a very small proportion, he says, of those artisans to whom London owes its

pre-eminence as a centre of highly skilled work come from parents who were born there, and there are scarcely any whose grandparents were born there. In other words, not merely do the conditions of the town impair the physical vigour, but that inestimable quality of energy is weakened amongst the urban population. Lowered vitality, less energy, are the inevitable results of unfortunate town conditions.

Our aim, therefore, should be, seeing that the country, as the natural reservoir of strength and energy, is being depleted, to pay as much heed as we can to the conditions of town life, to make our town conditions approximate as far as possible to country ones, and, I might venture to say, our country conditions to approximate as much as possible to our town conditions. By giving health to the towns and providing recreation and attraction in our country districts we may do much to conserve the general vigour of the population. My object in asking for this inquiry is not from any belief that we can do very much by distinct legislation, but that by such inquiry we may be enabled to rouse public attention and public spirit in these important matters. We are tempted to ask whether a change has not come over the moral ideals of the people. Is it true that as a generation we love pleasure more and responsibility less? Have we formed different ideas of family life? Is the child that was once a welcome addition to the home circle now regarded as a burden? If this should be the case we might well despair of the commonwealth. But I am persuaded that it is possible for us to reinvigorate our moral ideals by an improved public opinion. Then better and nobler days are before us; then, when duty and responsibility, rather than pleasure and comfort, are the guides of our conduct, we shall bring back that time when the home was the unit of the nation, and the sanctity, happiness, and vigour of the home were matters of careful thought and attention, and in this way we shall bring back those conditions which make for the happiness of the individual and for the welfare and prosperity of the nation.

THE LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL (the Duke of DEVONSHIRE): My Lords, I am sure your Lordships will agree with me that the House is deeply indebted to the noble Earl and to the right rev. Prelate for the speeches with which they have brought before it this Question, than which none can be more important to the welfare of the country. I must, in the first instance, congratulate the noble Earl on the change which he has introduced into this Question since he first placed it on the Notice Paper. The latter part of his notice then ran—

“To ask His Majesty’s Government what steps they propose to take in order to arrest this physical deterioration, which varied and undoubted evidence shows to be gradually taking place among the poorer portions of the populations of the large cities of Great Britain, and which, if allowed to continue unchecked, threatens the State with grave national peril.”

In those words the noble Earl, I think, unduly assumed what he has attempted to-day to prove, that an actual deterioration is taking place in the physical condition of the people. He also assumed that it was in the power of His Majesty’s Government, without further inquiry and without obtaining further advice, to take certain steps to remedy that deterioration. I think the noble Earl has been very well advised in altering the form of his Question and asking simply whether His Majesty’s Government are prepared to enter into any inquiry on the subject.

Perhaps I had better advert first, for a moment, to a Question which is not referred to in the notice on the Paper, but of which the right rev. Prelate gave me private notice—namely, as to the symptoms which he thinks exist, not of a decrease, but of a retardation of the rate of increase of the population of the country. I am sure your Lordships will not expect me to follow the extremely able, if somewhat elaborate, argument which the right rev. Prelate addressed to us on that subject. It must, I think, have been a subject of astonishment to your Lordships, as it has been to myself, that it should be possible for the right rev. Prelate to carry in his memory the mass of figures and statistics he placed before your Lordships, so far as I could see, without the assistance of a single

note. If I had many days in which to consider all the figures the right rev. Prelate has placed before us, I do not know that I could feel sure of being able to arrive at any accurate conclusion on that subject. It requires a trained professional statistician to deal with statistics of that character and arrive at an accurate conclusion upon them. All I was able to do when the right rev. Prelate gave me notice that he was going to add his Question to that of the noble Earl was to consult the Local Government Board as to the opinion which they had formed upon the subject of a possible retardation of the rate of population; and this is the opinion which I have obtained from them:—

“The Bishop of Ripon, in his letter to the Duke of Devonshire, speaks also of a retrogression or retardation of the increase of the population. This, however, is not so. At each census during the last ninety years there has been a decennial increase of the population, varying from 11·6 to 18·0 per cent. At the last census, 1901, the increase was 12·2, compared with 11·7 at the preceding census. The population was over 3,500,000 more than in 1891. It is the fact that the birth-rate has declined during the last quarter of a century, but during the last five years there has been a tendency to a rise in the marriage-rate, and it remains to be seen whether this is arresting the fall in the birth-rate. There has, no doubt, been a growth of emigration from country to town, with the result that the increase of the town population has been much greater than the increase of the country population. The increase of the country population, including urban districts with less than 5,000 inhabitants, during the last decennial period was just over 3 per cent. It has been suggested that the number of children in the average family is decreasing, but there are no official statistics on this subject, and any statement upon it must be conjectural.”

I quite admit that the right rev. Prelate has brought before our notice, at all events, many facts which are eminently worthy of consideration, and which may tend to modify in some degree the conclusion arrived at at the present time by the Department chiefly concerned, and they will, no doubt, form the subject of most careful inquiry by that Department. But it appears to me that, important as that part of the question is, it is perhaps less important than the other branch of the subject which has been raised to-day. If the condition of a large part of our population is such as it has been described, and if this alleged deterioration is taking place in consequence of the increased numbers of the

population who dwell in our towns, then it seems to me doubtful whether it can be an object which any of us desire that the population should go on increasing under conditions which, as it appears, are unfavourable to their health and physical development. It appears to me, also, a question whether the two branches of this inquiry can be satisfactorily conducted together, and whether it is not desirable that our attention should first be concentrated on the subject of the alleged deterioration of our population. As to that deterioration, the evidence which has been referred to is chiefly that obtained from the Report of the Inspector-General of Recruiting. He speaks of—

“the gradual deterioration of the physique of the working classes, from which the bulk of the recruits must always be drawn,”

and he goes on to say that in the reports from all the manufacturing districts stress is invariably laid on the number of men rejected on account of bad teeth, flat feet, and inferior physique. His statement of the way in which the working classes have deteriorated appears to be based solely on the reports of recruiting officers in these manufacturing districts, and must be, to a very large extent, a matter of personal observation and opinion. They are not, and I do not believe they can be, supported by any accurate statistics.

Some reference has been made to the statistics contained in the Report of the Inspector-General of Recruiting showing the percentage of recruits rejected as unfit for military service on medical examination. Those Returns, however, appear to me to be absolutely inconclusive in regard to the question of deterioration of any large part of our population. There is one factor in the matter as to which no figures are given, and which yet seems to me to govern the whole question—that is to say, the number of recruits that are rejected by the recruiters before undergoing a medical examination at all. No attempt is made to give the number of these recruits, and the number of those rejected at the subsequent medical examination must depend to a large extent on the care and stringency with which that preliminary examination has been conducted. If your Lordships look at the return of recruiting last year, you will see that entirely different results will be obtained from the figures given, according as you take a period of five years

or three years. Beginning in 1898 the percentage of rejections was 35; in 1899 it was 32·9; in 1900, 27·4; in 1901, 29·04; in 1902, 32·22. It is quite impossible to suppose that those figures really throw any light on the physical condition of the population during those years. Whatever they may show, it is impossible to suppose that the physical condition of any part of the population varied in proportion to those figures. Those figures, and the conclusion of the Inspector-General of Recruiting based upon them, have also been examined by the officials of the Local Government Board; and, although I do not say that they are in a position to draw broad deductions from them, they are at least in as good a position to form their conclusions upon them as the Inspector-General of Recruiting. They concur in the view that there is no evidence of deterioration in the physique of the town working-classes in this country, but rather that it has improved of recent years; and that if a better class of men do not enlist it is because a more permanent and lucrative prospect is offered in civil life.

I do not submit those conclusions as absolutely conclusive on the subject, but they do offer for our consideration another view of the question from that which has been presented by the noble Lords who have preceded me. But, my Lords, I do not think that it is at all necessary to prove that there is actual deterioration going on with respect to the physical condition of any class of the population. These figures do undoubtedly present for our consideration a question at the present moment which, whether it is better or worse than it has been in former years, is sufficiently grave and important to merit the fullest consideration and inquiry. The subject has been brought recently under the consideration of the Secretary of State for War. In a Minute by the Director-General of the Army Medical Department, Sir William Taylor, which I propose to lay on the Table, that officer says—

“The rejection of one out of every three men examined by the medical recruiting officer points clearly to poorness of recruiting material.”

And this does not represent the whole of the physical unfitness among men who seek to become soldiers. A large number of men are rejected by the recruiting

sergeants, and are never medically inspected. This is a condition of things which is serious, not only from the military point of view but from the industrial point of view. Another passage in the Minute I have mentioned says—

“If these men are unfit for military service, what are they fit for?”

And it states that the rising generation in all classes below the artisan class includes a large number of men of very low physique. I trust that those conclusions may be to a certain extent exaggerated and extreme conclusions. Looking to the very stringent requirements of such a profession as the military, and the high standard of physique which is necessary to make a really good soldier, it may be hoped that a very large proportion of these rejected candidates for enlistment are not altogether unfitted for some useful employment in civil life. But undoubtedly it is a serious fact that considerably more than one in three of those who offer themselves for enlistment are pronounced medically unfit. That is a subject which deserves our most careful consideration. I do not think I can dwell much upon the conclusions which were arrived at by the Commissioners on Physical Training in Scotland. I do not understand that they arrived at any definite conclusion as to the deterioration or otherwise of any class of the population in Scotland. All they say is that—

“There exists in Scotland an undeniable degeneration of individuals of the classes where food and environment are defective.”

This means, no doubt, not a degeneration as compared with the lower classes of previous years, but as compared with the less needy classes of the present time. These questions have been brought, as I have said, under the attention of the Secretary of State for War, and he is, and has been, in communication with the Home Office and with the Local Government Board upon them. Those Departments are all agreed that further inquiry of a complete and searching character is most necessary, and I think it is extremely likely that the mode of inquiry which has been suggested, namely, the appointment of a Royal Commission, will be found to be the most desirable. But we are not disposed to think that the immediate

appointment of that Royal Commission would be most desirable. We are not yet in possession of all the necessary facts. The general Report of the Registrar-General, and the decennial supplement, which are issued after every census, are in course of preparation, but they have not yet been completed. Further, we consider that there would be no advantage in appointing a Royal Commission until the scope of its inquiry and the terms of reference had been made the subject of the most careful consideration. What my right hon. friends the Secretary of State for War and the Home Secretary propose to do is to consult upon these subjects, in the first instance the medical profession, through the Councils of the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons. They propose to consult with them as to the best means of obtaining information, not so much as to the extent, but—what appears to us much more important—as to the causes of this undoubted physical deficiency existing in some parts of the population, and as to the best means of remedying these deficiencies, and of improving the national health and strength. We propose to consult these bodies as to whether, in the first place, the appointment of a Royal Commission would be desirable; and, if so, what should be the reference to it and what should be its composition. When these preliminary inquiries have been completed, I think that no time will be lost in taking further steps. As I have said, though I cannot promise the immediate appointment of a Royal Commission I think that may be found to be the most expedient course.

THE EARL OF MANSFIELD: My Lords, I am sure your Lordships are all glad to hear from the noble Duke that some means of dealing with this subject are in prospect. Having been the Chairman of the Royal Commission which has been referred to in the course of this debate, I am somewhat disappointed that the noble Duke has not made more allusion to Scotland in his speech, because, so far as I could learn, the Local Government Board, and the other authorities quoted, had reference mainly to England and not to the portion of the country with which this Report was concerned. And I may say that I regret now, not as a Commissioner but as a member of your Lordships'

House, that this Commission did not extend its operations to a larger portion of the United Kingdom, because it strikes me that after all the welfare of the rising generation is very much the same, whether the children be Scottish children or English or Welsh children. I am disappointed also to find that something more is not going to be done immediately to inquire into this subject in other portions of the United Kingdom. At the same time I am perfectly certain that what the Government put their hand to they will carry out properly, and I feel sure that any means that can be found to show, and to make others in the country realise, the serious state of matters that has been brought forward, will be adopted by His Majesty's Government. The reason we were unable to obtain more medical information as to the state of matters in the big towns in Scotland was naturally one of Treasury consideration. We were only able to have certain children inspected in Edinburgh and Aberdeen, and we would greatly have preferred to have included Glasgow in the scope of our investigations. We ventured to state this in our Report and to hint that at no distant date a similar investigation into the needs and conditions of the school children in Glasgow would not only be appropriate but almost a necessity. The medical evidence that we received was the best that we could obtain, and, although the number of children that were examined was not very large, still the results that were obtained were sufficiently alarming. I trust that some further inquiry will be made without loss of time, because this is more than a mere Scottish question or a mere British question—it is, as the right rev. Prelate said just now, a question of the most intense Imperial interest. Although His Majesty's Government have, as we know, many important inquiries on at the present time, I consider that an inquiry into this matter is almost more important than any other.

THE EARL OF LEVEN AND MELVILLE: My Lords, I would ask your Lordships' permission to read a letter which deals in a very important way with this subject. In the north of Scotland the race had, perhaps, some of the finest specimens anywhere in the

United Kingdom, but the deterioration that has taken place for many years has been very marked and rapid. I hold in my hand a letter from a medical gentleman who practises over a large extent of country in the north-east of Scotland—Dr. G. P. Hay, of Forres, who writes—

“ I am sorry I cannot furnish you with any statistics on the deterioration of the physique of the people, but the facts are many and come under my daily notice. Children's first teeth are, in a great many cases, decayed as they appear in the mouth, and, in many cases, the second teeth decay as fast as they appear. The health of young servant girls is much affected by the condition of their teeth, and their usefulness, as a consequence, is impaired. There are few who have not false teeth before they are twenty years of age. This class of girls suffer greatly from bloodlessness. The cause of all this is, in my opinion, due to the working class feeding principally on tea (boiled), wheaten bread, jams, and tinned food. There are very few houses in which porridge is made for this class, or milk taken by the children, and it is a great difficulty to get them to take it when ill. Many parents complain to me that the children have too many home lessons, having to stay up late to finish them, and suffer in their health accordingly. All this tends to deteriorate the physique of the rising generation, and to injure their nervous system.”

I merely give that as an instance of the deterioration that is going on in the north of Scotland, and I am glad that this important matter is receiving consideration.

*THE SECRETARY FOR SCOTLAND (Lord BALFOUR of BURLEIGH): My Lords, I did not intend to intervene in this discussion, because I thought the noble Duke's answer to the two interesting speeches which we heard first would have been sufficient for the position at which we have now arrived. But when the noble Earl behind me, who was Chairman of the Commission which I appointed a couple of years ago, spoke, I thought it desirable that I should assure him that at any rate those of us who are responsible for the administration of Scotland in these matters are by no means ungrateful to him for the great trouble which he took in the inquiry, and for the successful results at which he arrived. But I think it right to point out that, after all, the exact reference which was put before his Commission dealt rather with the question of physical training. The point which has come out most prominently to-night—the alleged deteriora-

tion of the population—arose under the inquiry of the noble Earl in a more or less accidental way. There is no doubt whatever that, upon the medical evidence put before the noble Lord's Commission, they did arrive at the conclusion that there exists in Scotland an undeniable degeneration of individuals in places where food and environment are defective. Further than that I do not think the noble Earl himself would say that the inquiry, he was able to make into that branch of the subject, was in any way exhaustive or conclusive of any definite result. There was no idea of regarding the Scottish inquiry as in itself complete, but I do think the noble Duke was right when he pointed out that, at any rate in the first instance, what was necessary for arriving even at a preliminary result was a distinct detailed scientific inquiry by expert medical men rather than by a Royal Commission who had no special training for the duty which might be laid upon them. The Commission over which the noble Earl presided noted certain causes as predisposing to physical degeneration. He mentioned bad housing and bad and insufficient nourishment. I am satisfied that we are in some danger in putting in this matter effect in place of cause, and cause in place of effect. I admit at once there is a case for further inquiry, but I am rather inclined to think that the cases that were inquired into under my noble friend's auspices were those from which you all must certainly expect the very results which his Commissioners found to be existing. In other words, I am not at all sure that it is not the fact that those who are weakly and who are going under in the struggle for life, are those who are unable to provide their children with proper housing and with sufficient nourishment. My Lords, various suggestions have been made by the Commission over which the noble Earl presided, some of which can be further tested without waiting for the inquiry indicated by the noble Duke. There is, for instance, the matter of further medical inspection of children at school. Some large School Boards in Scotland are taking steps to place this inspection upon a scientific and proper basis. It will be our desire, as far as the Scottish Education Department is concerned, to encourage other School Boards to follow

their example, and we hope that by these means we shall obtain a truer estimate of the actual state of the school population than we have at the present time. There is also a Joint Commission of the Scottish Education Board and the Board of Education which has for this purpose to arrange for physical exercises suitable for the various ages and various conditions of the children. The Earl of Meath was perfectly accurate when he said that unless these things were carefully supervised they would do more harm than good. It is the opinion of the Scottish Department that much longer time should be devoted to physical training and recreation in schools than is done at the present time. How this may be made possible is a matter for consideration and inquiry, but I hope that

the suggestions which have been made will encourage effort in this direction, and we are prepared to consider any application of this kind. I would not have risen at all had I not felt some apprehensions that the noble Earl thought the Commission's Report had not received attention, but I can assure him that the matters referred to therein have been brought to our notice, and that the inquiry over which he presided will bear good fruit in the future.

*EARL STANHOPE: I trust the Government will pursue the inquiry, especially into the physical condition of the children of the working classes in those places like Glasgow where manufacturing pursuits are followed and the conditions of life are hardest.

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