

Statement of aims / Eugenics Society.

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Publication/Creation

London : Eugenics Society.

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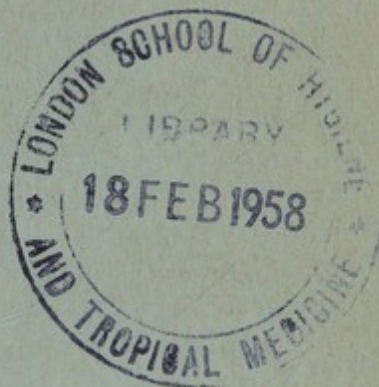
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AS. 43



The Eugenics Society

STATEMENT OF AIMS

Revised 1957

THE EUGENICS SOCIETY 69 ECCLESTON SQUARE, LONDON, S.W.1

The Eugenics Society : 1957

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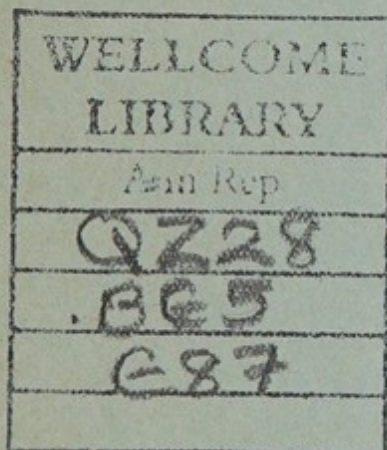
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THE EUGENICS SOCIETY

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THE EUGENICS SOCIETY

THE SOCIETY was organized and founded in 1907-8. At first it was entitled the Eugenics Education Society, but the present title was adopted in 1926.

The General Aims of the *Society* put briefly are:

To study the influences that may modify inborn human qualities; to formulate and support policies for developing these qualities to the utmost advantage; to promote research on eugenic problems; to foster a responsible attitude to parenthood; to guide public opinion in these matters.

* * *

These aims fall into three parts: the study of the scientific aspects of the subject, the education of the public, and the consideration of practical policies by which good effects may be produced. More detailed accounts of these studies and policies will be found below.

The past activities of the *Society* are listed on pages 13 and 14.

The *Society* every year holds about six meetings open to the public, each of which is devoted to a lecture or a discussion on some pertinent question.

Once a year the *Galton Lecture* is delivered to the *Society* by some distinguished person dealing with an aspect of the subject in which he is an expert.

The *Society* publishes the *Eugenics Review* as a quarterly journal.

It publishes *Occasional Papers*, of which a list will be found on page 15.

The specialist library of the *Society* is available to Fellows and Members.

The *Society's* financial position is favourable compared with that of many other such voluntary organizations. A legacy from an Australian pastoralist in 1929, Mr. Henry Twitchin, has provided capital assets and income which have enabled the *Society* to assist other societies with cognate aims.

Mainly through its Council—elected each year at the Annual General Meeting—the *Society* works out the detail of its studies and policies. This is partly done by taking note of the activities of other societies and workers some of whose aims are cognate with eugenics, and by co-operating with them.

* * *

Anyone contemplating membership of the *Society* will find details on p. 16. All communications should be addressed to:

THE SECRETARY, THE EUGENICS SOCIETY
69 ECCLESTON SQUARE, LONDON, S.W.1

The Meaning of Eugenics

“Man is gifted with pity and other kindly feelings; he has also the power of preventing many kinds of suffering. I conceive it to fall well within his province to replace Natural Selection by other processes that are more merciful and not less effective. This is precisely the aim of eugenics.”

THIS QUOTATION is from *Memories of My Life* (1908, pp. 322-3) by Sir Francis Galton, F.R.S., O.M. (1822-1911), the founder of the subject of eugenics.

Galton grew up under the profound influence of the writings of his first-cousin Charles Darwin, and he devoted most of his long life to the study of how the principles of evolution might affect humanity. In this he drew lessons from the animal kingdom, where the process of Natural Selection usually controls animal populations by the brutal process of causing each generation to produce too many offspring and then killing off the less fit among them in the course of the Struggle for Life. It was recognized that the same rule used to apply to mankind in the past, but during the last century or so, with the great developments in the fields of science and technology, it seemed to have ceased to operate at any rate in western countries. It is true that the old system with “nature red in tooth and claw” was ruthless, but still it did ensure the Survival of the Fittest. In the quotation cited above Galton expressed the hope that this process might be replaced by something more in conformity with man’s moral sense. He asked whether by the exercise of his intelligence man might not be able to discover a way which would replace nature’s brutal method by something more merciful and not less effective. He recognized that this change will not occur of itself, and he therefore set to work to study the subject of eugenics, whereby man might hope to accomplish this tremendous change.

It was Galton who invented the name Eugenics. It is intended to signify the study of the problems of increasing the good *inborn* qualities and decreasing the bad in the successive generations of a people. The term might have been used for the improvement of any race of animals, but in fact it has always been applied only to mankind.

The question then arises as to what would constitute an improvement in the inborn qualities of the race. Galton gave a considerable list of qualities relating to physique, health, ability and character. No doubt some would emphasize one among the qualities that he named more than the rest, and some would add further ones to the list, but there would surely be a broad consensus of opinion on the subject. The aim then of the eugenicist is to study what is happening to the successive generations of the human race, and to see whether policies can be found which will improve their inborn qualities. To quote from Galton again:

“Let us for a moment suppose that the practice of eugenics should hereafter raise the average quality of our nation to that of its better moiety at the present day and consider the gain. The general tone of domestic, social and political life would be higher. The race as a whole would be less foolish, less frivolous, less excitable and politically more provident than now.” (*Eugenics: Its Definition, Scope and Aims*. 1904.)

It is not, of course, enough merely to set up an ideal, but the practical question arises how this ideal is to be achieved. It would be a formidable enough question anyhow, but it has to be recognized that at the present time many causes are operating which trend in the precisely opposite direction. The weight of taxation, the cost of housing, the cost of further education, make it difficult for many parents who undoubtedly have valuable inborn qualities to have as many children as they would like. On the other hand there is a fraction of the population with undoubtedly inferior qualities, producing large families which all too often develop the same characteristics as their parents. There is a serious danger that this fraction may be increasing in numbers relative to the other. The eugenicist is acutely conscious of such dangers as this, and it is largely in the hope of overcoming them that he explores the various problems that are described below.

Eugenic Science

HEREDITY

The science of genetics, that is to say the study of the inheritance of various qualities in successive generations of an animal, has made enormous advances during the past sixty years. This has been mainly accomplished through the study of various quick-breeding animals (in particular certain flies which go through a generation in a month, and mice which do so four times a year) so that a great number of successive generations can be observed. The study of the genetics of slow-breeding man is much more difficult, and for the most part it has only been achieved in countries which have good medical services, so that pedigrees could be traced of those suffering from various complaints. In this way many human diseases and abnormalities have been recognized as behaving according to genetic principles; indeed much more is known about the inheritance of diseases and defects than about the inheritance of any of the valuable qualities. But at best this study could only involve a few of the past generations of mankind, and it must take many generations—which at best means several centuries—before as much can be known of the genetic constitution of man as is already known for some of the quick-breeding animals.

Without this detail of genetic knowledge, however, it is still possible to do a great deal. Animal breeders have in the past produced enormous changes in the characteristics of our domestic animals with the much simpler guide that *like produces like*, and the same principle can be applied to man. There is of course no certainty about it, but we know that the child will usually inherit a great many of its parents' characteristics. This should be quite enough to make eugenic policies very profitable to the human race.

It is hardly necessary to say there is no proposal to take the parallel of the animal breeder closely, involving as it does the complete control of his animals. Such a policy would be clearly intolerable to human beings, even if it were possible. Furthermore, the parallel fails because of the complexity of human characteristics compared with the rather few features which alone interest the breeders of animals. Nevertheless much could be done on a purely voluntary basis to encourage those in the human population who are evidently valuable to have more children, and those who are judged inferior to have less.

NATURE AND NURTURE

Man is always under the influence both of his inborn qualities and of his environment, and it would be most desirable to be able to assess the relative importance of these rival influences. There seem to be only two ways in which this can be even attempted. The first is the study of "identical twins," who certainly possess the same inborn characteristics; the interesting cases are those where the two twins have been exposed to very different conditions of life, but the number of known examples is not very great. The second is the study of children, possessing usually quite different inborn characters, who have been reared together in the same environment, for example in an orphanage. Both these groups very much repay study, but it must be recognized that they are only a small fraction of the population, and there will always be an immensely larger number in whom it is almost impossible to distinguish the influences of the inborn qualities from those of the environment.

THE FAMILY

It is necessary for the most part then, in deciding on eugenic policies, to accept the fact that the environment must be considered as well as the inborn characteristics. With this in mind the *Society* regards the *family* as the centre of its interest, and this has been the guiding principle of most of its studies. If, as suggested by Galton, man is to succeed in replacing the ruthless method of Natural Selection by something more merciful, this necessarily implies some limitation of population. Through the wonderful developments of medical science the average length of human life has been enormously prolonged, and some factor must be found to balance this great success in *death-control*. Consequently the *Society* is deeply interested in all the various methods of *birth-control*. It regards the adoption of planned conceptions as one of the chief aims of the eugenic policy. So a main object of eugenic policy is the encouragement of appropriate couples to produce healthy, energetic and intelligent families *by design*, that is by planned parenthood involving suitably spaced births. Conversely, couples suffering from inborn physical and mental disabilities can be saved from giving birth to children who are likely to inherit the same handicaps.

Eugenic Studies

IN VIEW of these considerations a list may be given of the main subjects in which the *Society* has been and is concerned.

HUMAN HEREDITY

As described above, this study only progresses slowly. Its results are watched by the *Society*, but the work is for the most part done by professional biologists in universities or research laboratories.

MEASUREMENT OF QUALITIES

Qualities such as height, weight or longevity are easily measured, but more important ones such as health, intelligence or character less easily so. The *Society* is deeply interested in all developments by which human qualities can be measured, because it may be hoped that such measurements, when perfected, will help towards making easier a classification of people in regard to their eugenic value.

FAMILY RECORDS

To enable studies of human heredity to continue over long periods family records are valuable. They should record details such as health, physique, longevity, intelligence, and also the attainments in life, of all the known near relatives on both male and female sides of a family. Far too few records of this kind exist at present. The *Society* can supply on demand a schedule adapted to the purpose.

PROBLEM FAMILIES

Individuals suffering from such severe mental handicaps that they are incapable of managing their own affairs are now largely cared for in institutions. The Problem Family is the next higher level. These are families where the parents, because of subnormal intelligence or unstable character, do not provide minimum standards of care for their often numerous children. The parents are usually difficult to reclaim, and the children all too often inherit the same qualities, and in addition they are handicapped by growing up in such bad conditions. Apart from other considerations, such families are a

great expense to the country, both by creating slums, in the necessity for special schools, and in actions in the criminal courts.

A study has been made by the *Society* of such families. It explores the best ways of identifying them and it considers how afterwards they can best be treated. This type of study is conveniently called Negative Eugenics.

PROMISING FAMILIES

There is the opposite question, Positive Eugenics: the identification of families which are likely to be exceptionally valuable to the community. This is much harder than the identification of the Problem Families, and the best starting point would seem to be with the schools. Every schoolmaster is aware of children in his class who are notable for their valuable qualities; they are by no means always to be found at the top of the class, but they are the type who hold the promise of reliability, energy and general ability of the kinds which will later make valuable citizens.

The *Society* has initiated an inquiry along these lines. Its aim is that steps should be taken to encourage such Promising Families to have more children. It should be noted that the project is not intended to include the discovery of the rare genius (who anyhow will be self-revealing); it is the more difficult problem of discovering the next level, that of the much greater number of families that will produce the generally valuable citizens referred to in the second quotation given above from the writings of Galton. Promising Families call for much further investigation, and the *Society* regards this matter as one of the most useful things which it is doing.

POPULATION PROBLEMS

The present rapid increases in world population constitute one of the central features of world development. Whatever view may be taken of these increases and of the possibilities or expectations of feeding further thousands of millions of people, ultimate limitation is quite inevitable. Thus, whether the mode of limitation is to be starvation, warfare or deliberate contraception, the eugenicist cannot fail to be concerned with the subject of population numbers.

Demographers study the numbers of births, deaths, marriages and migrations in the various countries, and as far as they can they make estimates of the qualities of the individuals concerned. All this is of immense importance to the eugenicist. In particular he wants to know the relation between fertility and survival on the one hand, and such qualities as intelligence and character on the other. It is important to him to know what proportion of conceptions

is deliberately planned by the parents, and whether communities which extensively practice birth-control are maintaining their numbers. On the principle quoted from Galton, that the ruthless method of Natural Selection for controlling populations might be replaced by something more merciful, it is of the very greatest importance to the eugenicist to know how far such methods as birth-control are proving effective in maintaining population as against uncontrolled conceptions, and in particular he wants to know the effect of birth-control in altering the relative fertility of groups of differing genetic constitution.

All this information is clearly very hard to gain, and difficult to analyse, but the eugenicist makes every effort to encourage the demographer in his study of such matters.

RACE MIXTURE

This is a subject of profound importance to the world, and with ever-increasing ease of travel it is fairly certain that mixed marriages will increase in frequency. The subject excites violent passions in both directions, so that it is hardly possible at the present time to get it considered without arousing deep prejudices. It is certainly of great interest to eugenicists, but it is difficult to collect impartial evidence on the subject. It is to be hoped nevertheless that information will be gradually accumulated on this most important matter.

MIGRATION

Ease of travel is also increasing migrations from one country to another. This has a national interest to us, because at the present time it is occurring both ways not only in Britain, but throughout the Commonwealth. It is of the greatest importance to know how far the balance of eugenic qualities is being disturbed by these migrations, and it is a question to which the *Society* is giving its attention.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS

The list given here is of subjects in the public eye which are obviously connected with eugenic matters. Some have been considered by Royal Commissions and other bodies. They are for the most part related to the question of the *family* and its size:

HOUSING POLICIES
FAMILY ALLOWANCES
EDUCATIONAL REFORM
SOCIAL MOBILITY

AGE OF MARRIAGE
AGE OF RETIREMENT
SERVICES FOR THE OLD
DEATH DUTIES

Eugenic Policies

THE STUDIES enumerated above show the subjects which interest the *Society*, and on them they wish to get as much information as possible. But the purpose of information is to lead to action, and, since there is little reliable information on some of these subjects, policies determining action will be liable to modification as new knowledge accumulates. Consequently it is natural that the *Society's* immediate interests should be changing from time to time.

Many of the subjects considered are being studied by other bodies, each with its own special interests, and, to save duplication of work, the general policy of the *Society* has been to give assistance and co-operation to such bodies in so far as they are connected with the *Society's* own interests.

As has been said the central interest of the *Society* is the *family*, and its policies have mainly been adopted in this connection. People usually enjoy what they do well, so that there is a normal and natural tendency for good parents to have larger families than bad, though in the past the tendency was often upset by the occurrence of unwanted pregnancies among those who did not make good parents. With the use of any of the methods of birth-control now available, there is no need to leave the matter to chance in this way any longer, and the couples who make bad parents can be shown how to avoid having a large family. In the case of the good parents similar advice may be useful, though of course here with the opposite intention, but for them even more important is the matter of overcoming the economic penalties that are apt to attach to a large family. All these matters are very much the concern of the *Society*, and they seem a particularly profitable line to follow, because both for good and for bad parents they are likely to be co-operating with the natural instincts of the individuals. In general the *Society* would like to see eugenically inferior couples content to aim at one or two children. Conversely, they would like to see eugenically superior couples aim at four or more children.

BIRTH CONTROL

For planned parenthood birth-control is practically indispensable, and it has

to be recognized that one of the most formidable difficulties is that some of the methods, in particular those connected with the use of appliances, are forbidden to some people by religious doctrines. There is very great need for the extension of researches on the general subject of methods of birth-control. It is of importance to the whole world, in particular to the over-populated countries of Asia and elsewhere, that cheap and easy methods of birth-control should be developed. The *Society* strongly supports these activities; in particular it welcomes researches into methods which would be effective, acceptable on economic grounds, simple to use, and not contrary to the doctrines referred to above.

HEALTH SERVICES

The *Society* associates itself with PEP (Political and Economic Planning, 1948 *Population Policy in Great Britain*) in supporting the proposal to establish Parenthood Centres as part of the Health Services. Such centres would deal with many aspects of parenthood which are important eugenically. Among these the following may be singled out especially.

MARRIAGE GUIDANCE This includes sex-instruction to adolescents and young adults, more specialized instruction to those about to marry, and help and advice in the case of marriages which are in danger of foundering.

EUGENIC PROGNoses Guidance on genetic problems is sometimes sought by those who fear they may be affected by a hereditary taint which they might pass on to their children. Facilities should be provided within the Health Service to give them information about such dangers in so far as it is available.

PRE-MARITAL HEALTH EXAMINATIONS Such examinations have been made compulsory in certain countries, but there is reason to believe that the intentions of this are often evaded. The *Society* advocates a voluntary system for Great Britain.

Irrespective of any visible signs of ill-health, physical examinations are already carried out at various stages of life, such as at schools and before engagement in certain professions. There is no stage when such an examination is more appropriate than before marriage. Not only might the examination detect threats to the success of the marriage such as venereal disease or the early stages of tuberculosis, but it would also give opportunity for advice about intimate problems that may be causing anxiety to either party. Such

matters could also be discussed as the spacing of child-births and how it should be related to the ages of the parents.

ADVICE ON BIRTH CONTROL The *Society* supports the Royal Commission on Population* which recommended that, whereas the local authorities are at present only empowered to give advice on birth-control for reasons of health, this restriction should be removed. The advice should be such as would conform to the couple's religious beliefs.

INFECUNDITY It is estimated that something like ten per cent of married couples are involuntarily sterile; they want children but do not succeed in having them. Such conditions, whether in the male or the female, are mainly not congenital nor hereditary. They can often be diagnosed and cured, as can be cases of sub-fecundity where children have been born, but more have been wanted in vain. The *Society* supports the Royal Commission on Population in advocating further developments of this service.

ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION Closely connected with infecundity is the question of artificial insemination, which may arise when it is the man who is at fault, either through being naturally sterile, or through carrying some hereditary taint which he fears to pass on to the next generation. Artificial insemination has been a subject of acute controversy on moral grounds, and obvious legal questions might arise from it in connection with the inheritance of property. The *Society* holds that the practice should not be prohibited, though it recognizes that attention must be given to these moral and legal aspects, and to prevailing sentiments on the subject.

VOLUNTARY STERILIZATION The introduction of compulsory sterilization in Germany during the war brought this subject into discredit. The valuable possibilities of a controlled *voluntary* measure have been forgotten, and yet the process has been legalized in Scandinavian countries on a voluntary basis and it appears to work well there.

Over twenty years ago a Departmental Committee (Brock Committee, 1934, Cmd. 4485) unanimously approved the principle that where a person suffering from a hereditary infirmity applies, it should be admissible to have a sterilizing operation performed. There have been legal uncertainties which

* Royal Commission on Population *Report*, 1949. H.M. Stationery Office, Cmd. 7695.

have deterred doctors from taking action on such grounds, and the Committee recommended that, subject to safeguards, the process should be legalized. No action, however, was taken, and not long afterwards the idea appears to have been dropped, partly no doubt on account of the dangerous parallel of the compulsory sterilization practised in Germany.

In view of its concern for the welfare of the family as a whole, the *Society* holds that voluntary sterilization should be legalized.

TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY The *Society* holds that doctors should be permitted by law to terminate a pregnancy at the request of the parents and under suitable safeguards. This would arise if there was good reason to expect that the child would later suffer from conditions like those regarded by the Brock Committee as justifying the sterilization of a parent.

GENERAL

The *Society* recognizes that many of its questions of policy involve important moral and ethical issues which demand informed and impartial study.

The *Society* supports recommendations made by the Royal Commission on Population on many subjects connected with the welfare of the family. These include considerations of housing schemes, etc., suitable for families of varying sizes and ages; home-helps and nursery schools, etc.

Another recommendation that was made was in connection with taxation. The Commission recommended that the existing flat-rate of child allowances should be replaced by a graded system adjusted to the size of the income and to the number of the children. With its interest in the Promising Families, the *Society* strongly endorses these recommendations.

“Eugenics is the science which deals with all influences that improve the inborn qualities of a race; also with those that develop them to the utmost advantage.”—SIR FRANCIS GALTON, 1904.

Past Activities of the Eugenics Society

PUBLICATIONS

- (1) *Eugenics Review*. This quarterly learned journal has been issued since 1909.
- (2) *Occasional Papers*. These special studies have been published from time to time since 1945.

MENTAL DEFICIENCY ACT 1912

This Act, authorizing the segregation of mental defectives, resulted from the successful advocacy of the *Society* and other bodies.

CHILDREN'S ALLOWANCES

The *Society's* plea for Children's Allowances for income-tax payers was largely met by the Finance Act 1928.

VOLUNTARY STERILIZATION

The *Society's* proposals (1927-32) for the legalizing of voluntary sterilization were largely adopted by the Departmental Committee on Sterilization (Brock Committee, 1934). This Committee's recommendations have not yet been implemented by Parliament.

SOCIAL PROBLEM GROUP

The *Society* sponsored Mr. E. J. Lidbetter's now classical researches on the "Social Problem Group" (Heredity and the Social Problem Group: Arnold, 1933). It has since published a symposium on the same subject (*A Social Problem Group?* Oxford University Press, 1937), and a volume of recent studies (*Problem Families: Five Inquiries*. Eugenics Society. 1952).

BIRTH CONTROL

The *Society* encouraged research on methods of birth-control (1930-6) and it assisted the discovery of the "Volpar" group of spermicides, the first complete reports of which were published in the *Eugenics Review*.

MORBID INHERITANCE

The *Society* produced a symposium by medical specialists (*The Chances of Morbid Inheritance*. H. K. Lewis. 1934) whose object is to guide the medical profession in advising persons with abnormal family histories as to problems of marriage and parenthood. A pre-marital health schedule was prepared (1933) for use by doctors who are asked to advise on fitness for marriage.

FAMILY RECORDS

A volume has been made available (1934), wherein people can enter full records of genetic and other features of their families and ancestries, and which can be handed on and kept up to date from generation to generation.

RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS

Through its Darwin Research Fellowships (1932-9) the *Society* has promoted and subsidized research into the inheritance of intelligence, the factors determining occupational selection and success, race-crossing, social and economic factors impeding early marriage, twins, etc.

ANNALS OF EUGENICS

Between 1934 and 1940 the *Society* financially assisted the Galton Laboratory of the University of London in the publication of this Journal.

POPULATION POLICY IN GREAT BRITAIN

The *Society*, jointly with PEP (Political and Economic Planning) established in 1936 the Population Policies Committee which produced in 1948 the report entitled *Population Policy in Great Britain*.

POPULATION INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE

The *Society* called together (1936) and helped to subsidize this Committee, which has been responsible, directly and indirectly, for inquiries of eugenic importance and has itself become important. Among these studies have been the relation between intelligence and fertility (promoted by the Scottish Council for Research in Education), and the proportion of pregnancies which are planned. These inquiries led to the more comprehensive investigation promoted by the Royal Commission on Population and sponsored by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. (See *Family Limitation and Its Influence on Human Fertility in the Past Fifty Years*, by E. Lewis-Fanning. Papers of the Royal Commission on Population. Vol. I. 1949.)

WORLD POPULATION AND RESOURCES

The *Society* participated with PEP (Political and Economic Planning) in the production of two broadsheets and a volume *World Population and Resources* (PEP. 1956).

INFANT SICKNESS AND MORTALITY

The *Society* financed and published a report on this topic, following an inquiry by the medical officers of health in fifteen special survey areas. (*Morbidity and Mortality in the First Year of Life*. Grundy and Lewis-Fanning. 1957.)

PROMISING FAMILIES

An inquiry is in progress (1957).

Occasional Papers on Eugenics

Published by The Eugenics Society

I. Eugenics in Prospect and Retrospect

By C. P. BLACKER, 2nd ed. 1950

II. Intelligence and Fertility

By SIR CYRIL BURT, 2nd ed. 1952

III. The Trend of National Intelligence

By SIR GODFREY THOMSON, 1947

IV. Psychological Approaches to the
Biography of Genius

By LEWIS TERMAN, 1947

V. Population Trends and the World's
Biological Resources

By G. C. L. BERTRAM, 1949

VI. Problem Families in Bristol

By R. C. WOFINDEN, 1950

VII. The Expectation of Mental Infirmary in a
Sample of the Danish Population

By KURT H. FREMMING, 1951

VIII. Family Environment

By JOHN D. NISBET, 1953

IX. Some Aspects of World Population
and Food Resources

By LORD SIMON OF WYTHENSHAW, LL.D., 1955

The Eugenics Society

OBJECTS : To study the influences that may modify inborn human qualities; to formulate and support policies for developing these qualities to the utmost advantage; to promote research on eugenic problems; to foster a responsible attitude to parenthood; to guide public opinion in these matters.

Conditions of Election to Fellowship. Election to the Society's Fellowship is restricted to persons who have made, or might be expected to make, some contribution to eugenics or to the activities of the Society. Fellows are elected by the Council, but no candidate shall be elected a Fellow unless he has been proposed and recommended by a Fellow.

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*which is reproduced on the front page of the cover,
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