

Foreign Department

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# FOREIGN DEPARTMENT



IN CHARGE OF

LAVINIA L. DOCK, R.N.

## THE EUGENICS EDUCATION SOCIETY OF ENGLAND

MANY signs and wonders portend the oncoming of a new era in civilization and in the development of the human race. Of these, one of the most significant and hopeful is the formation of associations of people who intend to investigate all the factors having to do with the propagation and rearing of the best known types of human beings. This is the purpose of the Eugenics Education Societies, wherever found, the one in England being perhaps at present the most prominent and strongly founded.

“Eugenics” means, speaking colloquially, “race betterment.” The term was invented by Francis Galton, “the first to set on foot scientific methods of measurement and calculation” in regard to human beings; who is also the founder of the “Eugenics Laboratory” organized in consultation with the authorities of the London University, where important researches are carried on in the problems of how the future generations shall be well born; who is also called the apostle as well as founder of the new science,—for it must and will prove to be the most supreme and all-important, all-embracing science known, to which all others will be but contributory—the science of developing a higher and nobler race of men.

A more scientific definition of the word than the one just mentioned is given in the circulars of the society: “Eugenics is the study of agencies under social control that may improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations either physically or mentally,” and extracts from the report of the Physical Deterioration Committee appointed by the British Government in 1904, signed by Galton, point out: that the fact that laws of heredity apply to man as well as to plants and animals, and that heredity affects the mental as well as physical qualities, is generally ignored by the public; that “degenerates” are not less fertile than normal persons, and frequently propagate children; that one of the first efforts of practical eugenics will be to restrict the breeding of the notoriously *unfit*, as later efforts must be to promote the propagation of the *fit*.

Eugenics "teaches the responsibility of the noblest and most sacred of all professions, that of parentage, and makes a sober and dignified claim to be regarded as a constituent of the religion of the future . . . the eugenist seeks to brand the transmission of hereditary disease as a crime and to extirpate such disease altogether. . . . It offers, in the judgment of many scientific students of human history, the sole chance of our escape from the fate which has overtaken all previous civilizations. . . . The young people of the next and all succeeding generations must be taught the supreme sanctity of parenthood. . . . There is here a field for moral education of the highest and most valuable kind, both for the individual and the race. . . ."

The society, through its various committees, publishes educational literature and distributes it, arranges meetings, conferences, lectures, and papers for public propaganda, and in general works on the same line as the societies for sanitary and moral prophylaxis. It publishes a journal called *The Eugenics Review* which may be ordered from the office of the society, 6 York Buildings, Adelphi, London, W. C.

The society has many members distinguished in the intellectual world. A visit made to its honorary (meaning an unpaid) secretary, Mrs. Gotto, disclosed the fact that she is greatly interested in the movement now being carried on to combat venereal diseases, and was especially pleased to learn of the resolutions carried at the International Congress of Nurses in London, to promote this movement by every means in their power. She hopes much from nurses, when intelligently awakened to human problems—every one does, about all kinds of problems; but this is one intimately connected with health, and nurses who marry and have families should find their knowledge and training an excellent preparation for taking up the higher study of eugenics. Such women, if they entered the society, should be a most valuable and effective source of strength to it.

It would seem that the English nurses have been more courageous and more earnest in taking up the matter of sanitary and moral prophylaxis than the physicians. England has as yet no society, such as has been formed in America and in most European countries, composed of medical men, teachers, and leaders of progress among the laity. Perhaps the example of the nurses may stimulate one to arise, or perhaps the Eugenics Society might develop a strong committee to work on this special line. We were told, in London, that a woman physician had requested to be allowed to read a paper on the lines of sanitary and moral prophylaxis at a medical meeting composed of both men and

women physicians, but that her request was refused and she was not allowed to bring the matter up. Great and wide-spread interest is being shown in the three papers that were read on this subject at the congress. So many requests for the full text have come to the *British Journal of Nursing* that they may possibly be issued as reprints.

THE women physicians of England, being repressed in the medical societies as to the crusade against venereal disease, carry their activities and energies into "The British Committee of the International Federation for the Abolition of State Regulation of Vice," the honorary secretary of this committee being a physician, Dr. Helen Wilson. As the name explains, this society stands for the overthrow of the present horrible system usual on the continent, of state licensing and supervision of vice under a set of special police called, most cynically, "morals police." This system was established for twenty years in England and was overthrown by a great uprising of women.

THERE is a vexing question discussed just now, in England, in regard to venereal diseases, namely, "notification," and with it is connected the sinister phrase "detention in hospital." Those who study past history and present dangers will see that this is only a subtle attempt to introduce in specious guise the old evil of "regulation" under police control, of the women only, not the men, who lead immoral lives. The wisest medical authorities agree that compulsory notification and treatment would defeat their own ends, just as regulation has done. Ample free treatment should be provided for all, boards of health may well take censuses of venereal disease so that the public may know its extent (and there is much that they can do in sanitation and teaching), patients should be encouraged to avoid quacks and seek medical aid early, but any hounding of individual patients can only be possible with those who are defenceless. The long period of time needed for cure makes isolation resolve itself into imprisonment for a few. Nurses, accustomed to see scarlet fever, etc., isolated, should not conclude that venereal diseases can be reckoned with in the same way. Only full, free public enlightenment is hopeful, for these diseases are absolutely avoidable, and people only need to be taught how to avoid them. We had better limit our activity to educational propaganda and not take part in projects for direct legislation at present.