

Eugenics

AND THIS IS THE TWENTIETH CENTURY!

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A few months ago a man and his bride-soon-to-be were found wandering about the streets of Cincinnati. The couple had been told that they could not get a marriage license in their own county in Indiana where they were well-known, so they had gone to a neighboring state. A runner for a marriage parlor in Covington, Kentucky, -- just across the river -- noted the well-known symptoms, accosted them and offered to take them across the river, get their license, and have them duly married for the sum of fifteen dollars. Not such a bargain to be sure, but since these poor saps were completely at loss as to the modus operandi they were very anxious to take advantage of the kind offer.

But the bridegroom only had eleven dollars! Very well, the runner being charitably disposed offered to take them for that amount and did so. When they were at last man and wife they paid the sum agreed upon and had not a cent left for eats, for a place to stay, or for fare back home. The State of Kentucky had granted them a marriage license -- really a most important legal process -- without a question as to their fitness to reproduce themselves -- both were feeble-minded -- or their ability to provide for themselves and the potential family that they represented. And, amazing to relate, THIS WAS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

Some time before another couple had come across the Ohio river in the opposite direction -- from Kentucky to Indiana -- to get married. The bridegroom, a young man preparing to establish a family, did not know his age, his birthday, the year of his birth, or anything of his parentage except that "Pap" and "Mam" lived in a shack on the side of a hill and had a lot of good hound "dawgs" and uncounted kids; he did not know the day of the week, or month, the year, or anything of contemporary events; he had no job and less than two dollars in money after the license was paid for, but had the promise of a place to stay all night -- the bridal night. Oh night of love!

The blushing bride was a tuberculous hunchback, epileptic and feeble-minded. She had no home, having been a county ward for years. They were united in the bonds of holy (?) wedlock by the express permission of the sovereign state. And horrible dictu, THIS WAS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY -- the century of science, knowledge, and enlightenment. But 'twould have been a burning shame to have busted so charming a romance.

In a certain county in Indiana there is a feeble-minded woman who has been committed to the county asylum eight times. Seven times she has borne there an illegitimate child, and then a few weeks later has gone out -- leaving the child -- to get another job, and another baby!

In another county a man with an ill-balanced nervous system married a feeble-minded woman. In the chaotic state of affairs about the home he became insane and was sent to an asylum. After a few months of the well ordered existence there he was straightened out. In the mean time the wife had borne a baby. She learned that her husband was again sane and asked that he be allowed to come home and support her and the baby. He did so. In a few months, however, he was back in the asylum -- couldn't stand the strain of living with an imbecile. Before he went back, however, another baby was started.

Thurman B. Rice

One Hundred Years of Medicine
in Indianapolis

And so ran the merry cycle, -- home again, gone again, dad again -- with apologies to Flanagan. An insane father -- a fopple-minded, dirty, slatternly mother -- six children! And the end is by no means in sight, as charity and the state are taking care of the family, and absolutely no provision has been made or is being contemplated to break the circle. Six times this amazing spectacle was repeated IN THIS THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

Sam and Carrie lived in a shack dirtier than a pig-pen. They had ten children, five of whom might with charity be called half-wits, and five who were slobbering, driveling idiots. One of the half-wits had incestuous relations with his idiotic sister, and she bore another idiot. It was believed by the community that the father often had improper relations with his daughters, and that incest was commonly practised in the family, but nothing was done about it.

An older boy and girl of this family migrated down the road and married into another family of nit-wits. Already large families are started-families like the families from which they came. Nothing was -- or could be -- done about it, even in THIS THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

The legislature of the great state where those things happened considered a bill the aim of which was to make a start toward preventing such social catastrophies. Intelligent folks everywhere were strongly in favor of it. Business men, professional men, farmers, club women, teachers, physicians and ministers urged its passage because they understood the power of the heredity and environment which defective people bequeath to their children. But the bill was defeated because its administration would cost about as much as it costs to support one single degenerate family in the same state, and because it was contended that the right of reproduction is a sacred and inviolate right. Indeed reproduction is a sacred right -- it is far too sacred to be intrusted to morons, criminals and degenerates who cannot appreciate its privileges and meet its obligations.

In spite of the fact that degeneracy and delinquency are rapidly increasing; in spite of the fact that expenses for charitable and correctional institutions have been doubling each decade (and even so the institutions are not keeping up with the need); in spite of the fact that a careful survey puts the number of defectives at 2.1% of the total population; in spite of the fact that our courts and jails are gorged with criminals in their teens it was decided that nothing should be done about it.

Science has demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that feeble-mindedness, and other antisocial characteristics may be transmitted with directly or by predisposition from parent to child; social science points to the horrible effect upon children of the type of environment provided by defective parents; and common sense warns us that we cannot continue to breed from our poorest stock and get away with it. Yet nothing is done about it!

We are turning the most important task in the world -- the bearing and the rearing of children over to folks who are not equipped for the task. We have not learned that until the problem of the defective is solved there can be no solution for a myriad of most perplexing problems of society, economics, religion, government, crime and disease prevention, charity and philanthropy; some how we cannot seem to understand that so long as the socially inadequate classes are increasing there must be a great increase in the number and complexity of the problems which the future must face. And yet WE ARE LIVING IN THE GLORIOUS TWENTIETH CENTURY.

BLESS YOU, MY CHILDREN

A few weeks ago the charitable institutions and the reformatory, schools were asked to take charge of the rearing of the six children of a certain married couple in this fair state. The children were running wild, and were not being brought up as future citizens of this great state and country deserve. The already over-crowded institutions were given the task of completing the job which these parents, so poorly prepared, had started. Very well, there was nothing else to do about it. A close look at the parents should have warned the community years ago that they were unfit to have children, but folks are optimistic about weddings as a rule, and the state gave them a license and the church blessed them.

But this is but half of the story. This couple are still well within the age of reproduction. It is not unlikely that they may have four or five children more. Their inability to raise children has been demonstrated beyond question, and yet the sovereign state is powerless in this age of science and efficiency to do a thing. Funny, isn't it?

A county clerk was talking to me, and I was berating him and his fellows for granting marriage licenses to such folks. He told me two stories, the first of which happened to him personally. He had studied these matters and was determined not to license such persons as it is the evident intent of the law to keep out of wedlock. He refused a number of couples, and they merely laughed at him. They simply went somewhere else and got the license and come back and gave him the merry razzberries. Besides he missed a fee which he might just as well have had. By refusing them he merely made trouble and enemies - and people in politics don't like to make enemies. One day a degenerate man and a feeble-minded girl came in to be married. He refused them license, thinking this time that he was getting somewhere because he thought likely they would not know enough to go elsewhere, or would not have the money. "All right then, I'll live with her anyway", said the man, and he did. The neighborhood was scandalized, and criticized the clerk severely. A year later indignation ran high - a baby was soon to be born. A petition was passed, headed by two ministers and signed by all the good people in the community, demanding that a license to marry be granted to this couple so that this scandalous relation might be sanctified. There was no intention of cleaning up the mess, as we would do if it were a matter of ordinary hygiene; it was merely intended to cover up the foul smelling nuisance with the odor of frankincense and myrrh.

The other story was of another clerk who refused a license to a couple described somewhat as follows: The prospective bridegroom did not know how old he was, did not know his birthday, or the year of his birth; did not know the day of the week or month of his longed for wedding day; he had no job, and had never had a job that paid more than six or eight dollars a week; he had the grand sum of two dollars and a half, of which if I remember correctly two dollars would be required for the clerk's fee; he had no place to stay, except that they had been invited to spend the nuptial night at the home of a friend - Oh, Night of Love! The blushing bride was a tuberculous, hunchback, imbecile who had spent practically all of her life in an asylum for the poor, and in a sense had been released because she had a chance to marry, though the asylum authorities probably did not know this - (she had come from an adjoining state). The clerk refused the

license on his own responsibility, putting the matter up to the judge. The judge advised him to grant the license.

A degenerate family of father, mother and ten children lived in a human pen. Not one of the dozen but would have been flattered by the term "half-wit!" Three miles away lived another similar family except that the latter was more intelligent somewhat but much more depraved. Two boys of the first family married two girls of the latter - at least I think they were married. Anyway they are following one of the Biblical injunctions - "Be fruitful and multiply". Each of the wives now has four or five children, but there is no assurance whatever that the respective husbands are the actual fathers.

It is true that the right to a mate is a fundamental human right; that the right to bear children is the most sacred privilege which one may hope to attain. I cherish these rights above all others. I have four beautiful children of my own and would not wish to be deprived of them or the right to have others. My right to vote - I would fight to preserve it - has probably never decided a single election. Indeed I know it hasn't because I never voted for anyone that got elected that I can think of just now. My right to drive a car - so long as I do not abuse that right; my right to go unmolested about my business or pleasure - so long as I do not molest others; my right to own property - so long as I do not put that property to uses that are inimical to the welfare of the community; my right to worship God as I see fit, and to hold my own peculiar form of heterodoxy - so long as I grant others the same right - are very dear to me. But dear as they are, they are as nothing compared to the right to bear and rear children. These blue-eyed kiddies, they are we, us, me, mine. They are IT. And I don't mean possibly.

I am saying these intimate things because I want it clear that I appreciate the sacredness of the rights concerning them. The right to a mate and children is a most sacred thing. It is too sacred to place in the hands of nit-wits, and degenerates; it is too sacred to turn over to lascivious pigs who wish merely to make unlimited sexual indulgence convenient and safe. It is sacrilegious to convert the house of God into a stable; it is an indignity to drag the flag through the slime; it is disgusting to hear a burlesque-queen eulogizing the name of mother; but not more improper than the licensing of the marriage of a couple of simpletons, or the blessing of the church upon the union.

Time was when we left the dirt in the milk and simply made it safe by Pasteurization; when we left the sewage in the water and made it safe by adding chlorine; when we fumigated a sick room with foul gases that would presumably kill the germs but leave unmolested the dirt in which the germs were; when the surgeon didn't wash his hands he merely dipped them in a carbolic acid solution. Nowadays, however, we insist that the dirt be kept out of the milk in the first place and then let it be Pasteurized: we try to keep the sewage out of the water, and then filter besides; we scrub the room which we are wishing to make safe; we insist that the surgeon shall scrub and scrub and scrub. We want folks to bathe, rather than cover up their B. O. with perfume; we want them to get rid of their "halitosis" instead of taking "sen sens" as we did in the old days. As a result of these changed attitudes, hygiene, sanitation and preventive medicine have made amazing progress in recent decades.

Racial hygiene demands exactly the same prophylaxis. We can never solve the problems of the race, the nation, the community, the family by spreading on the sweet ointment of public charity, and personal philanthropy, excellent and commendable as they are. We can never solve the problem of the poor by carrying Christmas baskets to the slums. We can never really improve a great many of the appalling problems until we realize that not all marriages are made in Heaven. It sounds nice to say "Whom GOD has joined together --," but what shall we say about those whom - if we may judge by the outcome - the DEVIL has joined together?

Preventive medicine has been in the same pickle. Time was when it was heresy to think that germs and filth and lice and flies caused epidemics. In those times it was Divine Providence, the Hand of God, the Inscrutable Will of the Most High that brought famine and pestilence. We know better now and are far healthier. Now we recognize that all those things that happen here on earth have sufficient earthly cause. Will we ever learn that this matter of human relations and reproduction is on exactly the same basis. We have tried to solve these problems with education, with religion, with philanthropy, with legislation, with social work, and have failed. The problems are increasing faster than the solution. When will we learn to apply to biological problems the obvious biological solutions? When will we have learned to take the bull by the horns while he is still a calf?

IF I WERE MUSSOLINI

If I were Mussolini . . . and if this were Italy . . . and if so much power didn't turn my head, there are a lot of things that I would not do.

For example I would not require every one to be vaccinated against smallpox even though I believe thoroughly in vaccination. Of course I'd have my Minister of Public Health instruct the people as to the advisability of having it done, and have him tell them that the only way to prevent smallpox is to be vaccinated, but we wouldn't force it upon them. Inasmuch as I like very much to talk I think I should step out and make a few speeches on the subject myself. I'd tell them that it is better to have one scar than many, and that when properly done and properly cared for afterwards vaccination is really a trivial matter as compared with smallpox as it used to be. Then after being instructed, if folks wanted to go ahead and have smallpox rather than be vaccinated, I'm sure I should want them to have their way about it. Me and mine have been vaccinated, so why should we worry? Smallpox is not a menace to a family or community that is vaccinated. So I'd just let the family decide whether it should affiliate itself with progress or with smallpox.

Neither would I try to force upon a given community a full-time health officer. I think I should try to get a law through that would enable a community to decide how it wanted to spend its money for health, and then I'd just let them decide which way they want to do it. They have to pay the bills, and so they should reap the benefits or suffer the consequences as the case may be. Why should I worry about it? Personally, of course, I believe that a part-time health officer is a full-time joke, and that the only hope for preventive medicine and public health in this country lies in the hands of men who make the health of the community their whole-time job. Just the same I wouldn't try to rush folks into doing things that they don't want to do. I would try to educate them into wanting to do the things that I think they should.

I would not try to tell folks that they might not go to a ball game on Sunday, nor even try to make them do what seems to me to be the right thing to do. Of course I think that they should go to church but I wouldn't try to make them do it. I wouldn't pay much attention to the religion that they might choose to worship, though of course I would trust them a heap further if they had some sort of conviction. I wouldn't try to tell them what they should or should not drink in their own homes if they didn't disturb the peace with it, though personally I am as dry as an Arabian camel, and a teetotaler of long standing. I wouldn't try to tell a physician that he must not prescribe alcohol, though as a physician I am mighty glad that the law makes it impossible for me to prescribe it, and so saves me a lot of trouble being pestered by my "friends" who are thirsty.

There are a lot of things that I wouldn't do, but there are also some that I would do or bust a tug in trying. I would try my very best to prevent a lot of people from marrying and bringing up a house full of kids to go in the way of the parents. There is undoubtedly a lot in this matter of heredity, and there is also a great deal to be considered in relation to environment and training, so why should I let a couple marry and bear the next generation when every indication points to the fact that

these people are unfit to be parents. There is nothing of greater importance to the Fatherland than the quality and the training of the young people that will make the citizens and the problems of the years to come and there is not a bit of sense in this business of letting a couple of nit-wits reproduce themselves.

Yes sir! As Il Duce I would take the imperial mace in hand and fiat that marriage licenses should not be granted to the feeble-minded unless they were sterilized, and if any of them attempted to live in common law marriage or showed signs of being promiscuous in their relations I'd put them in institutions where they couldn't get with the members of the opposite sex. I would decree that people who were convicted of major crimes more than once should be sterilized - not as part of the punishment at all but merely to protect society from the possibility of their having children with a possibly bad heredity, and a certain bad environment. Folks who were suffering from diseases and defects that are pretty well understood to be hereditary would be required to show a certificate that they had been sterilized before they were granted a marriage license. If a family were found to have defective children in number more than one I would insist that one or the other of the parents should be sterilized so that there might not be further repetition of the tragedy.

Of course I suppose I should have a lot of trouble in doing all of this and have no doubt that I'd be wearing a black wooden kimona in a few weeks instead of a Black Shirt but it would be worth the effort. My friends ask me how I would decide who should be sterilized. They suggest that it would be very hard to pick out a great number of folks as being definitely unfit to procreate. Perhaps so, but I shouldn't think it would be very hard here in Indiana - if this were Italy - to find enough to keep me pretty busy along with my other stuff. It has been estimated after a rather careful survey that at least two per cent of the population of this fair state is of defective mentality - really it's probably more than that. But two per cent of three million makes six thousand if I mistake not. Then there are the chronic criminal class, and those who have hereditary forms of insanity, and epilepsy. There are those who have hereditary blindness, deafness, deformity, and disease. There are those who are seriously involved with venereal disease, and also those who have other diseases of serious mien but not hereditary. Do you think that a diseased person has a right to marry and assume the responsibilities of a family even though his disease is not catching? This matter of leaving orphans is a matter of much importance to the state. It isn't at all that I do not appreciate the tremendous privilege of a parent; it is rather that I appreciate it so much that I would restrict the privilege to those who are probably capable of performing this most important function with average ability at least.

But I am not Mussolini and if I were I'd want to stay Mussolini and would probably have to cater to the rabble, -- so I guess I'll go fishing.

THE HOME FOR FEEBLE-MINDED YOUTH

Today I passed the home for Feeble-minded Youth, and I didn't go to Fort Wayne to do it either. It was a wretched shanty of two rooms with a 5 by 8 leanto at the side. The roof was half gone; most of the window panes were stuffed with old rags, and the others were so dirty that one could scarcely see through them. The doors were sagging from their ancient hinges, the chimney had fallen; the place about was overgrown with weeds and strewn with trash, tin cans, ash piles and the Lord-knows-what. It was the home of a feeble-minded man, his feeble-minded wife, and their eight feeble-minded children.

It is really too bad that this and other such "tumble-down shacks" are not all in Ireland because then John McCormick could sing charming songs about them and everything would be lovely, but in this land of plenty they appear most incongruous, and rather far from being romantic. Time was when most every one lived in a log house, and I believe it is true that all of our great men have been born of "poor but honest parents" in a log cabin. But those days are gone -- gone forever we hope. In these times, there seems to be no reason for supposing that the child born in a brick veneer with a tile bathroom will be discriminated against at the polls.

To be sure it isn't the house that determines the destiny of the child so much as it is quality of the parents who bear it, but somehow there seems to be a correlation. Personally I am mighty glad that the stork did not get tired as he was passing over such a shanty on my natal day. The human stock that would be content to live in such squalor and filth does not appeal to me as being the kind that should be bearing large families, and yet we have the word of Dr. Amos Butler, for many years the secretary of the Board of State Charities, and a distinguished student of such affairs, that when both parents are feeble-minded the average size of family is 7.5 children. Seven or eight children born to squalor, filth, ignorance, superstition, vice, pauperism and misery; seven or eight children of defective mentality capable of transmitting the defect to other generations of imbeciles still unborn; seven or eight children most of whom will be public charges and neighborhood menaces, spreading disease, setting a bad example, and generally mussing up the picture even when not positively criminal or vicious.

On New Years night 1920, the writer delivered a woman 20 years old of her fourth child in such a shack as has been described. It was bitterly cold and there was but a handful of coals in the stove. The same woman had a baby in 1917, another in 1918, another in 1919, and another on the first day of 1920. Both she and her husband were evidently feeble-minded; the two older children were apparently mentally deficient and the two younger ones showed definite stigmata of degeneracy. I wonder how many children they have by this time? The only evidence of anything rational was in the form of a dirty, ragged old hag who seemed to be a grandmother. She was sitting in a low chair nervously rocking back and forth in double quick tempo and muttering over and over something that sounded like "Geezus-elpus, geezuselpus, geezuselpus, geezuselpus, geezuselpus--". As I came to realize the import of the situation I found myself muttering the same thing -- "Jesus help us! Jesus help us!"

Has the world gone coo-coo that it will permit such a condition within

a mile of a university, a mission and a half dozen churches? Is our much vaunted civilization a ridiculous farce; is there no such thing as an understanding human heredity, and the effect of environment upon children? Here was a marriage licensed by the state, blessed by the church, and sanctioned by society; a marriage of two imbeciles who in the space of four years bear four other imbeciles -- or possibly idiots. Thanks to charity and local benevolence they were all living and well.

At another time we visited a home of much the same sort but of longer standing. The mother, 28 years of age, had ten children. She was hopelessly feeble-minded while the father was rather of the vicious sort, crafty enough in too many ways. The children in this case, for the most part at least, were brighter than the mother. They were a wild brood being brought up without the least effort at decency, morality, cleanliness or anything else that is worth while, dirty, profane, obscene, half starved, unkept. God help us.

It is well known that feeble-mindedness is a hereditary defect in most cases. The legitimate children of a couple suffering from hereditary feeble-mindedness will all be defective. But even if there were no such thing as heredity it would be eternally wrong to turn over to the care of imbeciles the body, mind and soul of a helpless child. There is no sense in fussing over which is responsible, heredity or environment, for in the words of Sancho Panza the maxim maker, "Whether the pitcher hits the stone or the stone hits the pitcher, it's all the same to the pitcher." It's all the same to the unfortunate youngster who has been born in such a home and it's all the same to society who will have to support the youngster and his progeny when he grows up and sets up with the aid of another nitwit another Home for Feeble-minded Children.

And society, apparently herself an idiot, sits, bound by silly and worn-out restraints, helpless to check the tide of defectiveness which threatens to engulf us. Knowing full well the threat that overhangs us she hasn't the courage or the sense to begin to put a stop to the reproduction of imbeciles and morons. Yes, it is true that the right of reproduction is a most sacred right. Indeed it is too sacred to turn over to nuts and never-do-wells who cannot possibly appreciate it or meet its obligations.