

EUGENICS IN NORWAY

By C. B. S. HODSON, F.L.S.

THE world at large has become aware of eugenic progress in Norway owing to the passing of the Sterilization Law in May of this year. English eugenicists, however, have known something of the long and strenuous work which has preceded this achievement, for the *EUGENICS REVIEW* has been fortunate in receiving, from time to time, articles from Dr. Jon Alfred Mjoen dealing with various aspects both of his own work and of that achieved in his Institute, the Winderen Laboratory.

It may be of interest to go more into detail in the history of the movement in Norway, partly as a study of methods of achieving effective eugenic propaganda ; partly for the demonstration which that history gives of the value of interchange of thought between one country and another. Indeed, it would be a difficult task to disentangle the priority of the eugenic movement, stage by stage, as between Germany, Scandinavia and England ; for while Francis Galton is the recognized founder of eugenics, the labours in Germany of Ploetz and his friends round about 1900 precede the crystallization of the group of eugenic workers in England in 1908, while in Norway it was in 1906 that Dr. Mjoen first set up the Winderen Biological Laboratory.

It should be interesting at some future date to get the precise story of the interchange of ideas between Germany and Norway ; the veteran leaders, whose influence still figures so large in the International Federation of Eugenics, recall schemes laid before the foundation of the Laboratory for an international meeting, and an informal gathering took place in Germany prior to the London Congress in 1912, which ranks as the first International Eugenics Congress. From the first the Winderen Laboratory made biology of man the pivotal point of its work. It has combined in a happy way biological research

—education in the form of publication of results—and finally formulation of legislative proposals for the practical realization of race hygiene. Here one may deduce an important point—namely, the necessity for such a combination in any fruitful attempt at lasting human progress. Improvement based merely on theoretical ideals and ignoring the fundamental natural laws which can only be probed by careful scientific investigation, builds, if it builds at all, on sand ; indeed, more often than not such well-meant but ill-founded attempts bring results widely different from those desired. On the other hand, research isolated from practical problems and practical issues may, for a long time, give neither tangible nor valuable results.

Another interesting point about the work of the Laboratory in general is brought out by the degree to which preliminary researches on animals can and may be used to indicate which lines of investigation on man can most conclusively be undertaken for the solution of any particular problem.

In the following survey it will be noted that a number of subjects have been followed up at the Winderen Laboratory, and later by Norwegian Committees, which by English eugenicists would not be considered as falling strictly within their field. Although the terms race hygiene and eugenics are sometimes taken as interchangeable, they cannot be so regarded in this particular instance. Race hygiene for the Norwegians has meant more than eugenics pure and simple, in that it has covered a number of factors influencing maternity and the healthy life of unborn children, as well as embracing those factors which concern a remoter posterity, namely, heredity and selection. Indeed, in the brief outline of the work at Winderen which was published for its twenty-five year jubilee by Professor Dr. O. Reche, the objectives are described as being heredity and race hygiene.

THE 1908 PROGRAMME

It was in 1908 that Dr. Mjoen made public the programme of measures aimed at race hygiene under the following headings :

1. Negative race hygiene (measures for diminishing undesirable racial elements).

(a) Permanent segregation of recidivists in working colonies.

(b) Sterilization of the unfit.

2. Positive race hygiene (measures aimed at the increase of valuable racial elements).

(a) Selective internal colonization with schemes for diminishing the movement from country to town. Agricultural organization independent of urban centres. Decrease of rates and taxes according to family.

(b) Maternal insurance. Introduction of human biology in school and university curricula, with discouragement of the tendency for the education of girls to approximate to that of boys by laying stress on preparation for motherhood.

(c) Centrally controlled propaganda in knowledge of the renewal, health and nutrition of the population, with bureaux for giving information on questions of racial hygiene.

3. Prophylactic race hygiene (protection of the unborn child).

(a) A campaign against racial poisons, venereal diseases, narcotics, etc.

(b) Measures to make these part of the functions of public health control.

(c) Certificates of health before marriage, including the discouragement of marriage with widely unrelated races.

(d) Biological assessment of the whole population. Introduction of individual registration including health data.

(e) Immigration control based on biological standards, with powers to prevent admission.

Certain sections of this programme received full development somewhat later, in particular the control of migration and the drink laws. As for the latter, whilst Sweden has tried to put down excessive alcoholism by

making the merchant responsible for withholding intoxicants from certain categories in the community, the Mjoen plan, as it has been called, taxes alcoholic drinks according to their content of alcohol, so that from a small tax on light wines and beers a steeply graded tax leads up to an almost prohibitive price for spirits.

THE CONSULTATIVE EUGENICS COMMISSION

The eugenic section of this programme of 1908 was considered by a commission which grew out of the London Congress. In Paris this commission in 1913 accepted the programme as a basis for eugenic endeavour. Subsequently, the Norwegians succeeded in forming a group known as the Consultative Eugenics Commission of Norway. In addition to eminent Norwegians, other Scandinavians have served from time to time on this commission, notably, up to the time of his death, Professor Johannsen of Copenhagen and Professor Herman Lundborg. Recently Professor Herribert Nilsson of Lund has replaced Professor Johannsen.

This Commission has been of importance not merely for Norway and Scandinavia, but for the International Eugenics movement. It has attracted, one after another, a number of eminent Scandinavians, and the difficult work of careful periodic revision of the practical programme was left largely to that group. Between the International Congresses in New York in 1921 and 1932, this Committee secured comments and critiques of the Norwegian programme from practically all the outstanding eugenicists of Europe and America and published their opinions as a commentary. This is a document of very considerable interest, giving cross-section references to the opinions of those whose researches and studies, either in eugenics itself or in kindred sciences, entitles them to be heard with attention, and we believe that not a little of the favourable public opinion which has resulted in recent eugenic legislation in Norway is due to the existence of this Consultative Commission. The original members were undoubtedly wise in securing membership of lawyers, social

economists, and men of affairs as well as medical men and biologists. It is only by such co-operation that sound practical measures can be outlined, while on the other hand enactments supported by eminent people of such different standings are more readily accepted than the findings of scientists unsupported by those with political knowledge.

CONFLICTS OF OPINION

Acceptance of eugenic measures was not won without prolonged and sometimes acrimonious opposition, proceeding not only from the uninstructed laity but from scientists as well. There would be no special interest or profit in studying in detail the phases of the conflict, but one aspect should be mentioned, namely, that the group which has worked most keenly for contraception and for the legalization of abortion has, in the main, been in the opposite camp to the eugenicists proper. Norway does not stand alone in this; the same type of cleavage has appeared in the Eastern United States and has cropped up from time to time in the course of the German movement. England has perhaps shown best that such opposition is not inherent in the two positions when they are properly understood. Here we have come nearer to realizing that contraception is primarily a question of maternal hygiene, to be wisely used for health in pregnancy in the mother, which naturally contributes in its turn to the well-being of the offspring. Such health measures are outside eugenics in the strict sense, but may be a potent practical ally. Birth-control has been proved to be of little use for the avoidance of pregnancy amongst the physically and mentally unhealthy. On the other hand, its mere existence need not endanger the size of families amongst those naturally well endowed for parenthood where a sufficient eugenic incentive exists.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

With the passing of the Sterilization Bill this spring, there remains but little of the Norwegian programme which still awaits introduction. The two main outstanding points are personal registration with health

data incorporated in the identity book (Kennbok) and more effective biological control of migration. It is noteworthy that the Sterilization Bill was introduced by a cousin of Dr. Mjoen, representing the agricultural interests of his country, and was passed with one sole opposing vote.

The researches at the Winderen Laboratory have turned mainly in two directions; on the one side the heredity of intellectual capacity, and on the other the results of race crossing. Dr. Mjoen selected music as the chief subject of his psychological research, the first task being conceived as the isolation of basic faculties. In his earliest researches published on musical faculty, this analysis isolated ten factors. Later these were further subdivided or added to, and now number twenty. Some of these are more definitely diagnostic than others, but the value of them all for genetic studies is undoubted. A thousand families or groups of relatives covering two to four generations have now been investigated from the Winderen Laboratory, running to more than ten thousand individuals. The work has demonstrated the course of each particular faculty measured, so that the study does not merely demonstrate inheritance of musical ability in general, but the type of inheritance for each of this considerable number of factorial capacities.

It was these studies which gave an early corroboration, in fact, to the Mendelian hypothesis that any character having multiple factors will be shown to be closely correlated with the family as a whole, including the collaterals; which is true to such an extent that the heredity of offspring should never be assessed and never can be assessed, with any truth, from that of the parents apart from their own relatives. It may be superfluous to recall that the faculties often found in musical ability include not merely some aspects of intelligence, but those temperamental or emotional qualities which we should speak of as inspiration, imagination and creative ability.

RACE-CROSSING STUDIES

In race-crossing studies the Winderen Laboratory has shown the same prevision in

instituting a careful study to make clear the fundamentals of the problem before embarking on particular research. Hybridization of widely different varieties of rabbit were made and a careful study of the hybrids was undertaken. These showed blending of antagonistic characters was not to be expected, the hybrids presenting a mosaic of the parental points. Part of the bony skeleton may be inherited from one race, part from another, and physiological and psychological aberrations showed similar disharmonies in glandular and other tissues. When study of the offspring of Norwegian Lapps mating with Norwegian Nordics was undertaken, it was towards such indications of disharmony that the research was directed. Physical measurements of 600 Nordics, 600 Lapps and 300 hybrids showed the following points: wider variation amongst the hybrids in stature, facial symmetry, lung capacity and skeletal structure, a higher incidence of diabetes and a loss of immunity from certain

diseases. Hand grip also showed greater variation in the hybrids.

The question of mental stability or instability was not disregarded, but this difficult diagnosis has not been fully worked out. Mjoen suggests that hybridization amongst races showing great similarity may have considerable value, in that the aptitudes of one superimposed upon those of another may give very valuable combinations, particularly of psychological faculty, so long as the somatic and physiological kinship between the two is sufficiently close for there to be no question of disharmony.

The Winderen Laboratory has been a training ground for a small but distinguished body of students, scientific and medical, of human biology and research method, and it is to be hoped that these happy traditions will, in the future, continue not only for the good of Norway but of students of eugenics the world over.

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