

To the Editor, Eugenics Review

SIR,—I have read Dr. Blacker's proposal in your last issue with the greatest interest, but I find myself disturbed concerning its effect as well as its practicability. As for the latter, I do not feel that so great a responsibility as this scheme would impose could safely be left in the hands of teachers in our schools. Intelligence should certainly not be given sole place; but how should we assess and give due weight to qualities of personality, and how allow for wider qualities of mind, which for the most part give no evidence of themselves until far beyond childhood? Unless all these other qualities were taken into consideration, however, we should run the risk of developing the bright at the expense of the wise among our people. On a different plane, there is another difficulty. A family is rarely known as a whole by teachers, except at the infant, or perhaps junior, stage. (This difficulty is further increased where the family is at all widely spaced.) Consequently, a family would have to be assessed by putting together assessments of its separate members. The highly important, but difficult, question of what weight to give to one child's qualities in relation to that of another, would therefore present itself.

My greatest misgivings about the scheme are, however, of a different nature. They concern the psychological problems. There would be the risk of a psychological reaction, perhaps a serious one, especially with the more sensitively-minded, upon those families which were not singled out by such a scheme. Such a reaction might be accepted in view of other gains, if there were an absolute confidence in the efficiency of the selection process. But, for the reasons given above, I do not feel that we could have any such confidence. Apart from all other difficulties and objections, however, consideration for the psychological effect upon the individual children who might be born under such a scheme should, I would suggest, make us hesitate very much before launching it. I can speak with no authority here; I cannot but feel, however, that those effects might be foreseen to be profound. If so, that above all would present the final challenge to proposals such as these.

GRACE LEYBOURNE-WHITE.

The University,
Manchester.

Assortative Mating*To the Editor, Eugenics Review*

SIR,—Dr. Slater's interesting article in the *EUGENICS REVIEW* for April 1946 provides further evidence for the existence of assortative mating in man. But nothing is known as to its causation. One possible cause is suggested by the Freudian psychology. A man may tend to fall in love with short or blue-eyed women because his mother was short or blue-eyed, and a woman may be attracted

by characteristics found in her father. If so the correlations between the characteristics of a mother and her son's wife and between a father and his daughter's husband should be more than half those between spouses, and might even be higher than the latter. On the other hand, the correlations between fathers and their sons' wives, and between mothers and their daughters' husbands, should be rather low.

It would also be interesting to determine the correlations between wives of two brothers, and husbands of two sisters. A high correlation would suggest that sexual preference, not necessarily assortative, was a family characteristic, though it would not prove that it was genetically determined. The necessary information could perhaps be obtained from as few as a hundred families, at no prohibitive cost.

A knowledge of how we actually do choose our spouses would seem to be an important prerequisite of any schemes for choosing them better; and I therefore suggest that the *Eugenics Society* might well encourage such research.

J. B. S. HALDANE.

Department of Biometry,
University College, London.

To the Editor, Eugenics Review

SIR,—Professor Haldane's suggestion is an extremely ingenious one. The difficulty (of distinguishing between the consequences of the Freudian hypothesis and of the simpler theory that people tend to marry those who resembled themselves) was present in my mind in planning the investigation; but it had not occurred to me that there was any simple method of attacking it. It is now too late to obtain information about physical characters, such as stature, in the parents of my *propositi*. However, I shall be stimulated into examining the material for evidence in respect of occupation and of temperamental traits. Psychoanalysts are rather shy of using Freudian theory as a basis for the prediction of human behaviour, although it is freely and successfully used for interpretation. Clearly here is a chance that should not be missed.

Professor Haldane's letter, and especially its last paragraph, raises important practical issues. Data bearing on assortative mating, and on the Freudian explanation for it, could be easily obtained in the course of almost any family investigation. At a recent meeting of the Genetical Society, Professor Penrose drew attention to the significance of blood factors in human inheritance. It is possible that certain abnormalities may show an incidence higher than the average not only in groups of persons related by blood but also in groups that are related by marriage. In the future family investigations must be more comprehensive than in the past; they