

NEWS AND NOTES

THE EUGENICS CLUB AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Having been interested in plant breeding for several years, the writer last October suggested to other members of Professor Ross' seminar in sociology that the formation of a small study group would afford us more information about the eugenics movement. The idea was immediately approved, but it was soon learned that the various courses and seminars in biology, experimental breeding, and sociology were offering such work. Moreover, most of us were pressed for time, and hence wished our information condensed and from authorities, if possible. So it was decided to organize a more popular Eugenics Club, secure speakers, and meet twice monthly. Immediately several young ladies applied for membership, involving a second problem, which was decided in the affirmative. And may I add that the women have proven a source of strength to the club, and that at no time has there occurred any occasion for embarrassment.

Organization:—There are a president, vice-president, and secretary-treasurer, and five committees, whose chairmen, with the officers, constitute an executive committee:

The Extension Committee, whose work at present is three fold:

- (1) The investigation and tabulation of all laws, such as those of Indiana, Connecticut, Switzerland, relative to marriage of defectives, sterilization and other means of eugenic control.
- (2) The preparation of a study bulletin for distribution through the Extension Department of the University.
- (3) The recommendation of lecturers to the Extension Department.
The first piece of work is approaching completion, the second has been begun, and the third is under consideration.

The Research Committee, whose work is also three fold:

- (1) The gathering of genealogies of interesting cases.
- (2) The investigation of certain subjects allied to eugenics, several of the members securing credit for the work performed from the University departments concerned, while others are taking eugenic subjects for their seminary or thesis topics. Several members of the Extension Committee are also securing University credits for their work.
- (3) The supplying of information to the Extension Committee.

The Literature Committee, whose work is two fold:

- (1) The reading and tabulation of all available literature upon the subject.
- (2) The supplying of information, list of readings, etc., to the Extension Committee and to the Club.

The Membership Committee, whose work is two fold:

- (1) The solicitation of desirable members.

(2) Passing upon applicants for membership.

The Chairman of this committee is a woman.

The Program Committee, which,—

- (1) Secures speakers, advertises the meeting, and inserts press notices.

Membership.—The membership at present is about 75, and the attendance averages one hundred. Probably one-half are graduate students, mostly from the College of Letters and Science and from the Agricultural College. An effort will soon be made to interest the medical and law students. About one-quarter are undergraduates from the same colleges, and the remaining fourth physicians (mostly women), a lawyer, and other mature people from the city, and several professors. Each of the three committees first mentioned, by the way, has three professors serving as consulting members.

Programs.—Four meetings have been held, three addressed by University professors, and one by a city physician. The next session will be devoted to a report of the Extension Committee, giving the results of its investigations; and now that the club has gotten into running order it is anticipated that fully half of the sessions will be conducted by the student members alone. Since willingness to work is as excellent a criterion of sincere interest in a subject in a university as an appropriation bill is in a legislature, it would appear that the eugenic movement has secured a substantial hold upon the affections of the members of the club.

Both Mr. Kelly, of the Research Committee, and myself have called the attention of the Club to the American Breeders Association, and I suppose that ere this Professor Cole has sent you some new names.

Now may I be pardoned in offering some observations, and asking opinions on some hasty suggestions upon a certain aspect of Eugenic reform. Probably our modern system of education, particularly of higher education, is one of the most potent anti-eugenic forces operating today. I believe that an investigation in England has shown that whereas defectives and criminals average over six children per family, the normal family ranges from four to five children, while the "intellectuals" are credited with less than four. Our own American college graduates appear in an equally undesirable light, Harvard and Yale men averaging much less than two children apiece. In other words, that portion of our population which is intellectually superior is not self-maintaining; but, as Professor Holmes remarked at a recent meeting of the Club, we are killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. Which he suggested might explain the prevalent opinion among instructors of increasing mediocrity of college students.

A few hours consideration of this problem has suggested to me several means of relief: First, I am inclined to credit the Carnegie Pension Fund, in addition to other excellent results, as being one

of the most effective eugenic measures ever accomplished. This suggests the ultimate desirability of the establishment of fellowships for married students. There appear to be three ways of encouraging fecundity among educated people:

(1) By shortening the period of preparation; and since the fetish of mental discipline is no longer being worshipped, and professional courses are being driven down into the freshmen and sophomore years, this would appear in process of accomplishment.

(2) By economic encouragement permitting marriage before the completion of professional preparation, as suggested above.

(3) By substituting a different social standard for that dilettante etiquette which today frowns upon family life. We must exalt motherhood and fatherhood, and insist not only upon limiting the propagation of the undesirable classes, but also upon encouraging the perpetuation of the most perfect. No social duty can exceed this. In the Eugenics Club reference has several times been made to the enactment of legal restrictions upon unfit marriages; which is well—it is easier to reform the other fellow; but I believe it would be better for the leaders of the eugenic movement to endeavor to establish a more sturdy social code among the higher classes; substituting for the criterion of conspicuous expenditures, by which men, and more particularly women, are prone to judge each other today, the higher and more difficult accomplishment of rearing a healthy and happy family.—OLIVER E. BAKER, *Madison, Wisconsin*.

ILLUSTRATION OF MENDELIAN SEGREGATION

On page 210 of the *American Breeders Magazine*, vol. ii, no. 3, Prof. Arthur W. Gilbert in his interesting article on "Suggestive Laboratory Exercises for a Course in Plant Breeding," gives in Exercise 18 an illustration of the application of the law of chance. Under "(a)" materials and methods are suggested to illustrate the union of gametes where two pairs of characters are concerned. While this illustration gives very well the theoretical ratio, an optical representation of Mendelian segregation would be greatly appreciated by those students who find it difficult to get a clear conception of abstract relations. For this purpose and to simplify matters it would seem better to let a single kernel of corn (or other object) represent a single character rather than two, i. e., yellow color and flintiness, in the above example. Starting with two individuals each having two characters which are to be combined in the cross, the resultant