

The Sterilization of the Unfit by Means of the X Rays

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“One of the greatest problems which confronts humanity is that of dealing with the ever increasing number of insane persons, imbeciles and idiots, who are yearly added to our population. While on the one hand there is a tendency for the total birth-rate to decrease, there can be little doubt that it is on the increase among the special individuals whom it should be our endeavor to restrain.”

“At the present time we have something like 132,000 insane persons in asylums, who are absolutely useless beings, at an average cost of about 14s. 6d.” (\$3.48 in United States money) “per head, per week, the total sum for the payment of which has to come out of the pocket of the ratepayer. To this number we must add the habitual drunkards, idiots, harmless imbeciles and criminals, who are largely kept in the same manner.”

“It is reported that last year 111 women were sent by the Lancashire magistrates to the Inebriates' Infirmary at Langho. These 111 women have brought into the world no fewer than 367 children. More than half of these—to be correct, 205—are dead; the remainder, however, will in all probability be

brought up and carefully nurtured to help fill our goals and asylums."

"Experimental investigation has taught us that in the X rays we have an agent which can bring about such changes in the sexual organs that complete sterilization results, and in animals this can be done without producing any ill-results, or at any rate any effects which have so far been noticed."

"The chief point about this method, to which I particularly wish to draw your attention, is that while it produces sterilization it does not produce impotency."

"At the present time the X rays are only to a very slight extent used by quacks, for the simple reason that they are so fraught with danger that they are afraid of them. There would be little difficulty in drawing up an act for bringing about sterilization of the unfit, and owing to the ease with which it could be brought about, to the painlessness of the operation, and to the fact that impotency does not result, we may assume that a large number of feeble-minded persons who are sufficiently sane to be alive to the necessity would be only too willing to submit themselves for the public good; for the others who are beyond this we need have no consideration.

"The matter is of such great and increasing importance that it is well that we should consider it from all its standpoints; and at the present time, when a bill is about to be brought into parliament for the restraint and care of the mentally defected, it has a special importance, and is, perhaps, of even greater importance that the imposing of penalties in the case of marriage with defectives."

W. H. MICK (Omaha).