Oct. 10 23

Cripps's Corner,
Forest Row,
Sussex.

My dear Fisher,
I have seen a copy of the question which you put to the Research Committee, and I am fully in accord with you in thinking that the plan and area should be as far as possible worked out in advance. I think that the question that I want to get answered is: what enquiries in the extent to which the sterilization of the smoker class under
consideration would not the next generation of panpernia.
I am now writing about feedblunderdom, and I find Goddard shows that 44.7% of his families are descended from a family pair. Hence I argue that 44.7% of the family population would disappear in their present form if all the previous generations had been sterilized. I think this is correct, if it be assumed that the firm
population tend otherwise to remain stationary in numbers — but I doubt I feel quite sure.
No doubt as the males of those sterilized might have sought other males in their place, and would probably have had some fine offspring, the rate of diminution of mental defect will not be as great as it thus represented.
What I should like to know is how the enquiry could have been conducted so as to find out the answer to my question. I do not want great accuracy as regards results; for all social policy
must be founded on broad conclusions. What I do want to
avoid is statistical palaver affecting the arguments
involved.

Does Goddard's work show
that assortative mating is al-
most? About 15% of his
cases had 2 f.m. parents.
Is it not true that the more
assortive the mating, the
more rapid will be the
elimination of any defect by
prevention of parenthood or
stereotypes? I am asking
Mr. Hudson to send me
Journal Hered. 1917. VIII. p
464, in which Punnett I
believe mentions that the
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Extinction of mental defect would be an extraordinary slow proceeding if only the defectives themselves were sterilized. I wonder if he has taken asservative mating into account. My deduction from Goddard's figures are that feeblemindedness might be reduced by 50% in less than 2 generations by sterilizing only the females. I wonder if I am right, or whether Punnett is.
chobber's pedigree, will be very useful to me if they give me a broad ground for argument, similar to what I get from Goddard's work.

There is another point on which I fear a statistical fallacy in my argument. If you make a pedigree or family tree centered round a selected mental defective, I argue that from
The amount of defects of various kinds in the tree spreading upwards, we can forecast the probable amount of defects in the tree spreading downwards. This, I suppose, assumes that the absolute rate of the same in intensity in the upward and downward tree. But does the fact that I select a few persons as the basis of my enquiry vitally my conclusion or prophecy?

If you see that I am running into danger or any statistical fallacy, a
word of warning would be gratefully received. I hope
I have made my meaning tolerably clear.

Yours sincerely,

L. Darwin