July 19, 33
Cripps's Corner,
Forest Row,
Sussex.

Dear Fisher,

If I pass an idle hour — of which I have too many — in writing to you, I really hope that you will feel no obligation to reply. Then I shall hesitate less in doing so, though I may bore you all the more.

I see a letter in the Eugenics Review on Family Allowances, it being an answer to a note in a previous issue. That note I have not looked up, for I don't want to tread on anyone's corn by criticizing it — though I suspect you had nothing to do with it. With a good deal of M.E. Green's letter
I agree; but in her last para. she seems to me to make as many mistakes as could be crowded into it. "... the rearing of children would not become a paying career."

This hints at the argument that a mere lowering of the strain of parenthood would have no effect. "... the birth rate, where it is already artificially low...". Is it not artificially low whereas it is smoke-screened being at its maximum? Something has prevented huge families of 20 or so from appearing often long since, and the birth rate is, in a sense, almost everywhere artificially low. Hence, according to her argument, allowances might increase the birth rate almost everywhere. "... while the technique of limitation is scarcely known.... they would scarcely have any effect."
But such effects would be cumulative, and really, in the course of centuries, "...where prudential motive does not operate..." Have you ever met a human being without any prudential check? I have not. "The determining factor here is surely...". Here is, I think, an example of the very commonest of all blunders in reasoning, namely that the proof of the operation of one cause justifies the exclusion of all other causes, I think you are more inclined to agree than I am that a mere betterment of social conditions tends to lower the birth rate, and you may be right. But Shun Cretinism are often reported in new homes, and I see no real proof that "improvement" in the standard of living itself reduces fertility. She decries the "where hope and foresight are obliterated". I do not know the border clans myself, but for some...
years whenever I have met anyone who really knows the poorest classes, I have asked them on this subject. Putting aside illness, which they regard as fate, and not including those who have fallen in social status, all have agreed that the poorest can be described as happy. My neighbour Dickworth, who in the Old Booth Survey, what-like a house in every street-in all London, was particularly definite on this point.

Now this is the dream I wanted to blow off, and I could not have done it if I had not had you to blow it on to. So look on yourself as doing me a kindness— that is all.

Yours sincerely,

Bernard Darwin