

Is the New Woman a Traitor to the Race?

THE TREND OF THE RACE: A Study of Present Tendencies in the Biological Development of Civilized Mankind. By Samuel J. Holmes. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. \$4.

Is the New Woman a traitor to the race? Is this modern development of the status of woman making of her a destructive factor, injuring and undermining its very fabric? According to the author of this book, who is a lifelong student of biology and of evolutionary development and is now professor of zoology in the University of California, the question is one which needs very serious consideration. Heretofore, adverse biological criticism of the woman movement, even when offered by scientists of acknowledged standing, has been so strongly flavored with prejudice and so violent in its spirit as to make it of doubtful value. But Professor Holmes studies the matter with an absolutely dispassionate and judicial mind. His only concern is for the facts in the case and the light they can throw, when interpreted with caution and without prejudice, upon the progress of the race.

He is equally dispassionate, just as cold-bloodedly and carefully scientific in all the phases of his theme. Most important of these, perhaps, are the subject of woman's status, the rise of industrialism and the question of the effect of alcohol upon the race. The most salient and most important developments of civilization during the last half century have been the rapid and very great change which has taken place, and is still going forward at accelerated speed, in the position of woman and the excessive growth of industrialism. The question of whether or not the race ought to divorce itself from alcoholic drinks has begun to come forward prominently, and within the next ten years it will probably become a matter of fierce and world-wide discussion and of bitter wrangling in legislative bodies and over law enforcement in many countries. It is now but at the beginning of its career as a mooted question of universal consequence, while the other two are already full-fledged and at the height of their importance.

Getting together a variety of statistics which deal with the biological results of the higher education of woman, her growing economic independence and the wide range of activities from which she can now select her career, Professor Holmes scans all these closely and finds as the result that about 50 per cent. of college women remain unmarried, that the date of marriage among educated women and among those who are economically independent tends to grow later and later and their families smaller and smaller. Here are his conclusions on the biological results of collegiate education for women:

It may be said that about 50 per cent. of college women remain unmarried. It is apparently true that women of superior intellect and force of character are those who, whether college women or not, are pretty apt to be selected for spinsterhood. They are more likely to win positions which permit them to enjoy the comforts and many of the luxuries of life; they develop other interests which often detract from the appeal to matrimony. In some cases they lose a certain feminine charm, a misfortune that arouses a deep-seated instinctive recoil in the opposite sex. There can be no doubt that the race is losing a vast wealth of material for motherhood of the best and most efficient type. Many of the women who are nowadays most prone to sacrifice motherhood to a "career" are just the ones upon whom the obligation of motherhood should rest with the greatest weight. It may be

seriously doubted if the growing independence of women, despite its many advantages, is an unmitigated blessing. Thus far it has worked to deteriorate the race in the interests of social advancement, a process which is bound to be disastrous in the long run.

The employment of large numbers of young women in sedentary occupations in offices and elsewhere is, the author thinks, multiplying the troubles of childbirth, while the conditions of present-day civilization have in the last few generations seriously weakened the physique of the modern civilized woman. Both the willingness and the ability of the modern mother to nurse her children have decreased very considerably. There has probably been, the author thinks, a certain amount of atrophy of this function, and this and the growing unwillingness to exercise it increase infant mortality

modern developments in the status of woman.

The modern industrial development, Professor Holmes shows, is the source of many of the most potent factors now influencing the biological tendencies of mankind. It would be an impossible task, he declares, to give an adequate exposition of the complex and indirect ways in which it makes itself felt, while the solving of even the simpler problems is often impossible because of the insufficient data at present available. Nevertheless, certain effects and tendencies seem to be evident, and these he sets forth and discusses with clarity, and always with scientific caution. For one thing, the unprecedented growth of cities during the last century is a direct result of this industrial development, and cities are bad for

rises. Industrial development in the United States has created an added problem and menace in the enormous immigration it has induced in order to secure cheap labor. Professor Holmes sees in the character of the majority of our immigrants during recent years the likelihood of the lowering of the general level of intellect and character of our stock. He says:

Mine and factory owners, caring nothing for the racial and social effects of their action but solicitous only for the profits to be derived from a plentiful supply of cheap labor, have encouraged immigration to the utmost and have exercised their strong political influence to lower the standard of admission. . . . The needs of employers for cheap labor are of very minor consequence when compared with keeping the blood of the nation free from contamination by inferior breeds of humanity. Considerations of blood and not dollars should dictate the

palling results, although the investigator thought that the alcohol probably injured the weaker germ cells so that the number of progeny was lessened and only the larger and stronger individuals survived. The author thinks that the evidence with regard to the hereditary influence of alcohol upon the human race is still inconclusive, and he feels very strongly that there has been too much bias both for and against the proposition among investigators and in the interpretation and discussion of their findings. Many of the conclusions which have been reached are the result, he says, of interpretations of findings which might just as reasonably be interpreted in some other way. But he does consider it well established that alcoholism in the pregnant mother has an injurious effect on the fetus and that the alcoholic mother is more frequently unable to nurse her children. The percentage of still-births and infant mortality is higher in the offspring of alcoholic than in those of non-alcoholic parents. Alcoholism, he says, "is open to grave suspicion as a cause of defective inheritance."

Professor Holmes does not accept the belief of certain scientists, among whom Lombroso is the best known, that genius is so frequently associated with insanity as to warrant the conclusion that there is some connection between them. On the contrary, he declares that "what data we have on the subject indicate that insanity is rather less frequent among those of intellectual ability than among the people at large." He agrees with many other scientists and cites much proof that mental ability is hereditary and that its higher manifestations run in easily traceable lines. It is for this reason that he sees menace in the withdrawal from marriage and motherhood of such large numbers of highly endowed young women, and in the increasing tendency, among people of intelligence and character to limit their families to such small numbers that they cannot maintain their due proportion. While such stocks as these are dwindling and running out on the low levels of intellect and character multiply as rapidly as ever. He has, however, no objection to birth control, provided it can be applied where it will most benefit the race.

Finally, studying the effect of civilization upon the race, the author says:

When we attempt to gain a comprehensive view of the forces which are changing human inheritance it becomes apparent that those forces which have been called into action as a result of the development of our culture are in large part racially destructive. We cannot say that they are entirely so because there are counter-tendencies that sometimes arise. All those agencies which bring about the present well-marked correlation between sterility and success in life tend to rob the race of its best inheritance. It is chiefly the primitive evolutionary factors which operate among the lower animals that are making for racial improvement in man. Civilization brings in its train so many factors that undermine its own biological foundations that, from the racial standpoint at least, we may well ask with E. Carpenter, "Is Civilization a Disease?" If it is a disease, it is evidently one which has apparently proven fatal to many nations in the past. . . . In the present book we have made what is perhaps a very inadequate effort to diagnose some of the racial maladies that affect our own day and generation. It is only by recognizing these and understanding the methods of their working that effective means can be taken to keep them in check. . . . The race has its fate in its own hands to make or to mar. Will it ever take itself in hand and shape its own destiny?



and lessen the subsequent vigor of the children who live. He quotes an investigator who found that "breast-fed children were superior in later life to those artificially fed in weight, character of teeth, intelligence and general physical development." Several influences, chiefly springing out of the social and economic results of the desire of the modern woman for a larger, more interesting and more independent life, would appear, therefore, in the author's opinion, to react greatly to the disadvantage of the race, in addition to that loss of "a vast wealth of material for motherhood of the best and most efficient type," which Professor Holmes thinks, as quoted above, "is bound to be disastrous in the long run." Apparently he understands and sympathizes with the desire of the individual woman for the larger social and economic privileges the last fifty years have given her and recognizes the benefits she and society have gained. But as a biologist his attention is centred upon the race, and it is evident that he thinks serious injury is being worked upon it by the results of

the race. "As destroyers of humanity," he says, "they have ranked among the most potent. . . . They cause a gradual deterioration of their inhabitants and constitute a potent factor in the decline and fall of empires." The birth rate of several large cities tends to show that they are sustained only by sucking in large numbers of migrants from rural districts. They are "consumers of men." And this rapid fall of the urban birth rate "has affected most of the classes upon whose intelligence, initiative and energy the rank of a people mainly depends," and therefore "the process of diminishing the capable and enterprising elements of the community is apparently intensified in cities, and especially in large cities." The industrial development exercises a baneful influence upon the race also through the increasing employment of women, upon whose physique it has an unwholesome effect, while also diverting from marriage and motherhood the better endowed. When married women are employed in industry to any extent, the rate of infant mortality always

immigration policy of our country. In the long run the eugenic policy will prove the most valuable economically as well.

These are words of high consequence in the present unsettled state of our immigration policy, and before Congress attempts to reshape it its members should consider them well.

On the subject of the effect of alcohol upon the race Professor Holmes thinks that in most of its phases there are not enough trustworthy data to warrant final conclusions. A certain set of experiments on guinea pigs, which he seems to consider more convincing than most of these investigations because of their extent and the care with which they were carried on, yielded some striking results. Matings of animals either or both of whom had been alcoholized resulted in an astonishing train of sterility, stillborn or short-lived young, deformities and defects which persisted and reappeared for several generations after the alcoholization. A series of experiments with alcohol upon domestic fowl, however, did not have such a