

legislatures, with the "business" which creates multimillionaires by mortgaging the resources of the State and the country.

Whether this is only a case of "worm-turning," or is a public-spirited utterance intended to test public sentiment regarding the subjection of rail highways to public control, it is at any rate another encouraging sign of a tendency toward those new lines of economic adjustment which foreshadow new lines of political adjustment.

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HEREDITY AND ENVIRONMENT.

The world surely "do move." It seems but yesterday that "heredity" accounted for all the ills that the disinherited masses suffer from, and all the goods that their parasites enjoy. The poverty, the vices, the crimes of the poor were laboriously explained with statistics of family history. "Heredity" was a "good enough Morgan" for repulsing every demand upon the exploiters of humanity that they drop their power to plunder. One notable instance of this scientific by-play in the interest of special privileges was the case of the woman thief (vol. iii, p. 740) whose several hundred descendants were all thieves or prostitutes or worse. Their demoralizing environment—an ample explanation if the facts were true—was ignored, and the whole pernicious result attributed to the blood of that woman, which, by the way, would have been indistinguishable by the finest tests of real science from the blood of Queen Victoria. But there is a reaction. Sensible people are beginning to see that the influence of heredity upon vice and crime is by no means so evident as the influence of poverty; and that poverty is allied to heredity about as closely as weather to the Gregorian calendar, and not more so. Such relationship as there may be is conventional and not congenital.

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Even heredity theories of disease—the one influence of heredity that was ever a reasonable inference—is fast going by the board. How fast it is going may be seen by reference to a speech in Congress on the 22d of February last by Herbert Parsons of New York, as printed in the Congressional Record. Congressman Parsons, speaking upon the authority of official investigations and alluding to the health of children, said: "Rich and poor children come into the world substantially on an equality. They are 'created equal.' The inequalities occur after they have arrived in the world." This is his entirely reasonable deduction from a report of the British inter-

departmental committee on physical deterioration, from which he quoted the following:

So far as the committee are in a position to judge, the influence of heredity in the form of the transmission of any direct taint is not a considerable factor in the production of degenerates. Professor Cunningham's views, that inferior bodily characters, the result of poverty and not of vice, are not transmissible, were confirmed by Doctor Mackenzie, who at the outset of his interesting evidence elaborated a distinction between inheritable characters and their environmental modifications, the result of these last being imposed on the individual by his life history and not therefore transmissible to the offspring. Doctor Eichholz was disposed to go further, and sought to explain how some mysterious law of transmitted impulse made for the recuperation of each generation, the unborn child fighting strenuously for its own health at the expense of the mother and arriving in the world with a full chance of living a normal physical existence. This view he supported by the assertion that the number of children born healthy in the worst districts was very great, he himself putting it at not less than 90 per cent. Doctor Ashby thought this was only partially true, as nature too often failed in its effort; and Doctor Mackenzie would not even concede so much, as investigations into the effect of food on guinea pigs during pregnancy had, he said, shown that the embryo suffers in greater proportion than the mother. He quoted the opinion of Dr. Noel Paton that "the nourishment of the maternal tissues seems to take precedence over the nutrition of the fetus." The committee deemed it advisable to hear on this point Dr. Edward Malins, president of the Obstetrical Society of London and professor of midwifery in the University of Birmingham, who thought the testimony of experienced persons was on the whole in accordance with the views expressed by Doctor Eichholz. He would say that from 80 to 85 per cent of children were born physically healthy, whatever the condition of the mother might be antecedently, so far confirming the opinion that nature intends all to have a fair start. Doctor Malins kindly undertook on behalf of the Obstetrical Society to institute an inquiry among the lying-in charities and hospitals in London which should furnish information on these facts; this inquiry is unfortunately not complete. The committee were, however, supplied by the courtesy of Doctor Eichholz with evidence which did tend to establish this conclusion from the medical officers working for the Royal Maternity Charity, and from the Paddington and Kensington Workhouse infirmaries. The committee can not ignore these opinions, though it may well be that the depressing effects of the life struggle on parents are, nevertheless, in some measure transmitted to the offspring. At any rate, some vulnerability toward disease may coexist with a superficially healthy appearance, and granted unfavorable environment the seeds of degeneration are not long in producing a rank harvest. The consolation of the doctrine lies in the encouragement it gives to working for the removal of the causes which are prejudicial to the health of each successive generation, an encouragement which is immensely strengthened by the concurrent testimony of all concerned as to the immediate effect upon growth and develop-

ment brought about by the withdrawal of even the most unpromising material from noxious surroundings.

Well indeed did Congressman Parsons comment upon that extract by saying: "If infants of the rich and poor come into the world on a substantial equality, they die with an inhuman inequality." "A German investigator," he added, "found that for every 1,000 children born among the working classes 505 died in the first year; among the middle classes 173 died in the first year; and among the higher classes only 89 died during the first year."

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Exactly what the British committee meant by "removal of the causes," is problematical. Their remedy, however, is the right one, its efficacy depending upon the extent of application. To rescue children from the environments of debasing poverty will of course have some effect, in individual cases; but in the grand result no effect can be secured without removing the fundamental causes of poverty in the midst of abundance. Anything else would be too much like Herbert Quick's greenhorn on a sail boat, who busied himself with pumping water out of the center-board slit, until he found that he was merely pumping the ocean up through the boat and into the ocean again. That the cause of poverty in the midst of abundance is not "heredity" is coming to be seen. That it is institutional, needs but to be candidly considered to be plainly recognized. So long as these institutional causes are tolerated, individual relief and rescue will be like trying to pump the ocean dry through the center-board slit of a sail boat.

NEWS NARRATIVE

To use the reference figures of this Department for obtaining continuous news narratives:

Observe the reference figures in any article; turn back to the page they indicate and find there the next preceding article, on the same subject; observe the reference figures in that article, and turn back as before; continue until you come to the earliest article on the subject; then retrace your course through the indicated pages, reading each article in chronological order, and you will have a continuous news narrative of the subject from its historical beginnings to date. ☉

Week ending Tuesday, June 22, 1909.

The British Finance Bill.

The best American reports on the conflict in Great Britain over the budget (p. 588) are the weekly cable letters of T. P. O'Connor. From that of last Saturday, as published in the Sunday Tribune of Chicago, it appears that Mr. O'Connor's belief (and he is a member of Parliament) is that—

the budget will pass triumphant. The minority among the Liberals against the land taxes, though much advertised in the Tory papers, is small in number and smaller in authority. The members of it consist mainly of a small remnant of Roseberyites and already are affrighted.

Mr. O'Connor explains that—

the land taxes have created the widest and wildest rage among the capitalists of all classes, and are put deliberately in the forefront of the fight by the Government.

But while these taxes—small in amount, but terrific in their significance—are so wildly opposed by privileged interests, Mr. O'Connor finds that—the land tax is the item in the budget which most appeals to the popular imagination, and it accounts largely for the return of virility and popularity to the Government.

Proceeding with his description of the situation, Mr. O'Connor writes:

As I have already cabled, the huge Liberal majority is split into relays, some taking their vacation now, so as to come back a month or two later, and relieve those who have remained at their posts. The Liberal majority is so huge that it can afford to take these liberties, the Tories still not forming one-fourth of the entire House. The Independent Labor members and the Irish party are, of course, uncertain factors; and they now and then vote against the Government and so fill up partially the big gap between the Liberal majority and the shrunken Tory minority. One day, for instance, these forces combined brought down the Government majority to 23. But on the budget the two sections may be counted as usually going with the Government. The Independent Labor section are so delighted with the land tax, with the big additional burdens put on the rich, and with the generally radical tone of the budget, that they may be counted on as among the most ardent friends Lloyd-George would have in fighting his way through. The Irish party resent the whisky tax as an additional burden on their already overtaxed country; but they know they cannot defeat the budget—the Liberal majority is omnipotent on that point—and they realize accordingly that by joining anything like filibustering tactics—as some factionists recommend them to do—they would be playing into the hands of those who want to wreck Birrell's land bill and in that way to discredit the Irish party.

So certain is the passage of this radical budget in the House of Commons by a tremendous majority, that the privileged interests are hysterically urging the House of Lords to block it. Says Mr. O'Connor on this point;

Frantic cries are raised in the jingo Tory newspapers against the budget. The Daily Telegraph, which represents the classes most opposed to the budget, is therefore making desperate appeals to the House of Lords to defeat this budget, if not in one form, then in another. The constitutional practice is that the House of Lords can accept or can