

THE EUGENISTS AND THE RESIDUUM: THE PROBLEM OF THE URBAN POOR*

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In the deeply class-divided society of early 20th-century Britain, the problem of the urban poor was one that profoundly interested the many serious and highly educated people who were concerned about social change and who were working for social reforms through legislation. This interest showed itself in the Royal Commission on the Poor Law, which reported in 1909,¹ and in its sequel, the National Conference on the Prevention of Destitution of 1911.² The conference had been promoted in the first place by the National Committee for the Prevention of Destitution³ which was itself a product of the campaign organized by the Fabian Society to "break up the poor law and abolish the workhouse."⁴ The conference brought together the representatives of all three political parties, of local government, and of voluntary associations interested not only in medical and sanitary problems but also in education and in social welfare. Also participating were various societies such as the Charity Organization Society, the Eugenics Education Society, the Lancashire and Cheshire Society for the Permanent Care of the Feeble-minded, and the National Temperance League, which were directly involved in the problem of destitution.⁵

This paper will attempt to set the eugenics movement in Britain in the context of the endeavors of a number of different but interconnected groups of social activists, all of them concerned with this same problem, the problem of the urban poor. It is this setting and this problem that

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¹ *Great Britain, Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress. Report*, Vol. I, C.d. 4499 of Session 1909 (London: H.M.S.O., 1909).

² *National Conference on the Prevention of Destitution. Report of the Proceedings*. (London: King, 1911).

³ See, "National Conference on the Prevention of Destitution to be Held at Caxton Hall, Westminster on May 30th to June 2nd, 1911," *Crusade Against Destitution*, 1911, 2: 63-64.

⁴ [B. Webb], "Break Up the Poor Law and Abolish the Workhouse" being Part I of *The Minority Report of the Poor Law Commission* (London: Fabian Society, 1909).

⁵ See list of organizations and individuals involved in *Report of Proceedings* (n. 2 above), pp. iii-iv, vii-xxvi.

distinguish the British Eugenists from those in other countries, such as the United States and Germany, where eugenics was concerned primarily with the politics of race rather than class.

One of the most powerful and important of these groups in Britain was the Charity Organization Society, founded in 1869.⁶ The Society's principle was to give charity only where it would tide an applicant over a temporary difficulty. It was felt that aid was wasted on the *true destitute*. His difficulties were not temporary; they were due to a basic weakness of character, a moral pathology rather than an economic problem.

Six of the eighteen members of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws of 1909 were members of the Charity Organization Society, and all six of them signed the Commission's Majority Report. The list of causes of destitution of the Majority Commissioners was adopted from the evidence of a Poor Law Relieving Officer from Leeds, who told them:

The most important causes of pauperism are a) old age b) the early marriage of persons dependent upon casual labour. Large families are the rule . . . c) imprisonment for criminal offences . . . d) venereal disease . . . e) intemperance is another contribution, and in this I find females to be the worst offenders: many men are perforce paupers by the intemperance of their wives. f) indiscriminate relief by private persons and religious bodies also contributes to pauperism and cases have occurred where relief has been in the first instance given in this manner and the recipients eventually become confirmed paupers. g) cases are not wanting to show that pauperism is hereditary—two generations being quite common and third generations occasionally occur.⁷

As Beatrice Webb, who with three other members of the Fabian Society signed the Minority Report of the Commission,⁸ noted, the Charity Organization Society felt that a pauper was not a normal person. Normal people did not need help from the Poor Law: they came from healthy stock, they were not promiscuous or intemperate, they committed no crimes, they prudently married late and had small families, and they thriftily saved for their old age.⁹

Of course, this did not mean that the entire working class was lumped together as "lacking in character." The "true industrials"—the respectable, self-supporting wage-earners—were quite different from this pauper

⁶ See C. L. Mowat, *The Charity Organization Society 1869-1913: Its Ideas and Its Work* (London: Methuen, 1961).

⁷ *Report* (n. 1 above), Vol. I, being parts I to VI of the Majority Report, p. 286, par. 529.

⁸ D. Owen, *English Philanthropy 1660-1960* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964), p. 521.

⁹ B. Webb, *Our Partnership*, B. Drake and M. I. Cole, eds. (London: Longmans, 1948), p. 403.

class called the "Residuum" by Helen Dendy. She was one of the Charity Organization Society's activists and had sat on the Royal Commission. This Residuum, she said, in an article in the *Economic Journal* in 1893 has

. . . no foresight or self-control, [they] live only in the present and . . . everyday only repeat the mistakes and follies of the day before . . . To fully realize the facts, it is necessary to live among them, watch their extraordinary freaks and feel the burden of their total irresponsibility.¹⁰

The absence of economic virtues in this group, she noted, was accompanied by a low order of intellect and a degrading of the natural affections to something little better than animal instincts. Miss Dendy's examples of these extraordinary freaks were the coster, the wood-man, the coal man, the girl who goes round cleaning people's steps, the charwoman, the knocker-up, and the old woman who minds babies. These were the people that the Charity Organization Society felt should *not* be helped—they lacked the individual strength of character to help themselves.

In economic terms, this Residuum represented one half of a dual labor market. Economists and labor historians agree that something of this kind can be found in almost all industrial situations. The labor market can be divided into a formal and an informal sector: the formal sector, Miss Dendy's true industrials, earned regular wages in large concerns such as shops and factories. The informal sector, Miss Dendy's Residuum, earned irregularly, from casual labor, or in one-man enterprises, or in the street—outside the industrial-capitalist system. Economists have often called this "surplus labor."¹¹ They generally feel that these workers have some kind of disability: they may be too young or too old, for example, or have too little education, or be of an unacceptable race or sex, or simply be new entrants on the industrial scene, on their way from a rural to an urban life.¹² Two recent writers, however, have made the new suggestion that the informal sector exists by the small-scale provision of low-cost goods and services to the formal sector workers.¹³

From the point of view of the Charity Organization Society, the informal sector was the Residuum, that is, the paupers without the moral

¹⁰ H. Dendy, "The industrial Residuum," *Econ. J.*, 1863, 3: 600-616, and reprinted in B. Bosanquet, ed., *Aspects of the Social Problem by Various Writers* (London: Macmillan, 1895), pp. 82-102.

¹¹ See, for example, H. and V. Joshi, *Surplus Labour and the City: A Study of Bombay*. (Delhi: O.U.P., 1976).

¹² See, for example, D. Mazumdar, "The urban informal sector," *World Development*, 1976, 4: 655-680.

¹³ R. Sandbrook and J. Arn, *The Labouring Poor and Urban Class Formation*, Monograph Series No. 12, Centre for Developing-Areas Studies. (Montreal: McGill University, 1977).

strength to become true industrials. This view was shared by several other reforming groups. Each of the causes of pauperism quoted in the Majority Report had a corresponding society to deal with it: there were societies interested in feeble-mindedness as a cause of pauperism, in intemperance, in the large families of the poor, in venereal disease and in hereditary pauperism. All of them regarded the poor, the Residuum, as somehow pathologically different. These groups shared both interests and members: many people were active in two or more of the societies. Their multi-lateral connections make it difficult to describe them at all clearly. They must be taken as a complex whole, a tissue of the strands of thought and feeling of the highly educated professional middle class as they looked at the lives of the very poor of the industrial towns. This paper will try to sketch some of these societies and their interconnections, and discuss their relationships with the Eugenics Society.

First, the Moral Education League: it was formed in 1898, to promote moral instruction in schools.¹⁴ According to the League, the purpose of education was the formation of character.¹⁵ Like the Charity Organization Society, the Moral Education League stood for individual responsibility. Many of its members were teachers; their method was to send a member to a school to teach a demonstration lesson on character and ethical choices in everyday life, and then to follow up with books and pamphlets so that the school's ordinary teachers could use the same plan.¹⁶

The Eugenics Education Society was formed in 1907 as a breakaway group from the Moral Education League. In spite of this, the two societies continued to meet together and had many members and interests in common. The Eugenics Education Society's early lectures were often on moral-education subjects, such as "Mental integrity and how to attain it"¹⁷ or "Moral education"¹⁸ itself. Dr. Ettie Sayer, one of the original breakaways, and a member of both Societies, spoke at the First International Moral Education Congress. Her speech was a nice mixture of social reform, moral education and eugenics. It was reported in the *Daily Mail* under the headline

¹⁴ G. A. S. [G. A. Spiller, secretary of the Moral Education League], "The growth of an idea," *Moral Education League Quarterly*, 1914, 35: 2-4.

¹⁵ "Editorial," *Moral Education League Quarterly*, 1914, 35: 1.

¹⁶ See, for example, F. J. Gould, "Mr. Gould in India: Demonstrator's Report," *Moral Education League Quarterly*, 1913, 32: 1-5.

¹⁷ R. Jones, "Mental integrity and how to attain it," at Monthly Meeting for June 1908 (title only) *Eugen. Ed. Soc., First Annual Report (1907-8)*, p. 17.

¹⁸ S. Coit, "Moral education, a drawing-room lecture, March 1908," (cited by title only) *Eugen. Ed. Soc., First Annual Report (1907-8)*, p. 17.

A WOMAN DOCTOR'S REMEDIES

As to real moral degenerates [the Residuum] . . . If diagnosed as so actively antisocial and morally indirigible as to be unfit ever to live among a pure, honest, unselfish and public spirited people, they should be classified and shipped off to various uninhabited isles . . .¹⁹

The idea of segregating the "real moral degenerates" was the center of the program of another society, the National Association for the Care and Protection of the Feeble-Minded. This was started by Mary Dendy and Mrs. Hume Pinsent in 1896.²⁰ Mrs. Pinsent was chairman of the Special Schools Subcommittee of the Birmingham Education Committee, and Miss Dendy was Honorary Secretary of the Lancashire and Cheshire Association for the Permanent Care of the Feeble-minded, and founder of the Permanent Care Institution at Sandlebridge near Birmingham. These ladies worked actively to discover children of low intelligence in schools and get them transferred to the Sandlebridge Institution where they would be segregated for life. Both Miss Dendy and Mrs. Pinsent joined the Eugenics Education Society shortly after it was founded. The National Association for the Care and Protection of the Feeble-minded was well represented on the *Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded* of 1909; Commissioners included the general secretary of the Society and Mrs. Pinsent, and also the general secretary of the Charity Organization Society, Mr. C. S. Loch.²¹

A popular summary of the findings of the Royal Commission appeared in 1909;²² it was brought out jointly by the Eugenics Education Society and the National Association for the Care and Protection of the Feeble-Minded. It pointed out that the feeble-minded were excellent objects of charity. Their numbers would not be increased by generosity to them. Instead they would be diminished by taking the feeble-minded into institutions where they would be unable to breed and would "no longer swell the pauper class with their feeble-minded progeny."²³ The two societies joined together to draft a bill for the compulsory segregation of

¹⁹ E. Sayer, reported in *Daily Mail*, 30 September 1908.

²⁰ Kathleen Jones, *Mental Health and Social Policy, 1845-1959*, (London: Routledge and Paul, 1960), pp. 43-60, 186-187, 196.

²¹ *Great Britain, Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-minded* (8 vols.), Report, Volume VIII, C. d. 4202 (London: H.M.S.O., 1908).

²² [Mrs. Walter Slater], *The Problem of the Feeble-minded: An Abstract of the Report of the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-minded* with an introduction by the Rt. Hon. Sir Edward Fry and contributions by Sir Francis Galton F.R.S., the Rev. W. R. Inge, D.D., Professor Pigou and Miss Mary Dendy (London: King, 1909).

²³ A. C. Pigou, "The Economic Aspect of the Problem," in [Slater], *Problem of the Feeble-minded*, pp. 97-101 esp. p. 99.

the feeble-minded and they organized a political lobby to press the Government to consider it.²⁴ The campaign was a success; in 1914 the Mental Deficiency Act came into force, providing for the compulsory segregation of the certifiably feeble-minded.²⁵

The Fabian Society shared in the general concern of the educated upper class with pauperism. Beatrice Webb's leadership of the Minority Commissioners was the first step in that Society's campaign to "break up the Poor Law and abolish the workhouse,"²⁶ and to establish a "definite Standard Minimum of the conditions of civilized life"²⁷—a series of national minimal standards for wages, health, housing, child nurture, and employment. Separate authorities concerned with each of these were to search out cases whose living conditions fell below these minima and support them. Under the Poor Law, a single authority gave relief only to those who were already destitute and only within the workhouse.

The Minority Commissioners developed the National Committee to Promote the Break Up of the Poor Law,²⁸ which in turn became the National Committee for the Prevention of Destitution.²⁹ The campaign was managed mainly by Sidney and Beatrice Webb, writing, organizing local propaganda committees and lectures all over the country, and themselves touring and lecturing. They were in Edinburgh in October 1910. Mrs. Webb spoke on "sickness as a cause of destitution" and "unemployment as a disease of society" and Sidney Webb spoke on "child neglect as a cause of destitution" and "the Minority Report proposals for the prevention of destitution."³⁰

The Majority Report too, gave rise to an Association to promote its proposals; among its members were many of the active members of the Charity Organization Society, including its secretary, C. S. Loch, Professor Bernard Bosanquet and his wife, Helen Dendy, and Octavia Hill. The president of this new National Poor Law Reform Association was Lord George Hamilton, who had been the chairman of the original Royal Commission.³¹

²⁴ *Eugen. Ed. Soc., Council Minute Book* (Oct. 1909-Dec. 1912), p. 26.

²⁵ See Jones, *Mental Health*, for an account of this campaign.

²⁶ [B. Webb], "Break up the Poor Law and Abolish the Workhouse."

²⁷ B. Webb, "Preface," in *The Case for the National Minimum* (London: National Committee for the Prevention of Destitution, 1913), p. iii.

²⁸ "The Crusade," *Crusade Against Destitution*, 1910, 1: 1-2.

²⁹ The members and program of both National Committees were the same; the change of name took place in June 1910: see inside front covers of *Crusade Against Destitution*, 1910, 1: 113.

³⁰ "Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Webb's lecture tour in Scotland," *Crusade Against Destitution*, 1910, 1: 113.

³¹ "Our opponents: formation of a National Association," *Crusade Against Destitution*, 1910, 1: 16.

The Eugenics Education Society's interest in pauperism and destitution was the heart of its program. Very soon after it was founded, the Society arranged lectures for its members on both the Majority and Minority Reports; by C. S. Loch for the Majority³² and by Sidney Webb for the Minority.³³ The eugenicists did not object to the socialist nature of the Webb's welfare proposals but they thought that they did not get at the most basic cause of destitution—the inherited defect, the lesion of the germ-cell that the Zurich geneticist Forel had called *Blastophthoria*. That, they believed, was the true cause of the character weakness that led to drunkenness, venereal disease, large families, criminality—to pauperism.³⁴ The Majority Report claimed that pauperism was caused by lack of character and the Minority Report that it was a social disease. The Eugenics Society thought that lack of character *and* the economic problem were biological: pauperism was an inherited defect. In 1909 the Society set up a committee to "consider the eugenic aspects of Poor Law reform." The *Eugenics Review* devoted a whole issue to the theme and the committee's report appeared in it:

That element in pauperism which represents and transmits original defect, . . . almost wholly neglected in the recommendations of the Commission, is the one we wish to be taken into consideration . . . [the defective] affords the chief burden on the public purse. He is not the man that responds to a call upon manly independence or stands ready to take a place made available through the labour exchange. He was born without manly independence . . . he does not respond because there is nothing in him to respond. His mainspring came into the world broken. His reproductive instinct however remains intact.³⁵

The status of industrial employment was too high for him to aspire to. His degenerate tendencies

. . . do not manifest in transmission a single set of characteristics but a great multiplicity of forms. A single family stock produces paupers, feeble-minded, alcoholics and certain types of criminals. If an investigation could be carried out on a sufficiently large scale we believe that the greater proportion of undesirables

³² C. S. Loch, "Eugenics and the Poor Law: the Majority Report," *Eugen. Rev.*, 1910-11, 2: 229-232.

³³ S. Webb, "Eugenics and the Poor Law: the Minority Report," *Eugen. Rev.*, 1910-11, 2: 233-237 and reprinted in *Eugen. Rev.*, 1968, 60: 71-75, (References are to this reprint) and in approximately the same form in S. and B. Webb, *The Prevention of Destitution* (London: National Committee for the Prevention of Destitution, 1911).

³⁴ [M. Crackanthorpe], "Presidential Address, 1910," in *Eugen. Ed. Soc., Second Annual Report* (1909-1910) pp. 1-16, esp. pp. 10-16.

³⁵ [J. W. Slaughter], "Report of the Committee Appointed to Consider the Eugenic Aspect of Poor Law Reform, Section I, 'The Eugenic Principle in Poor Law Administration,'" *Eugen. Rev.*, 1910, 2: 167-177, esp. p. 173.

would be found connected by a network of relationships. A few thousand family stocks probably provide this burden . . .³⁶

The eugenic solution for pauperism was the same as that for feeble-mindedness; in fact, the Committee tended not to differentiate them. The solution was that the Poor Law Guardians must have legal powers of detention. The old Poor Law principle of "less eligibility" had to be reversed: the paupers should *not* be made to elect to get out of the workhouse if they could. They should be kept there in detention like the feeble-minded and their prolific breeding brought to an end.

The *Crusade Against Destitution*, the organ of the Fabian Society's campaign to "break up the Poor Law," had carried an advertisement for this special number of the *Eugenics Review*,³⁷ but it was treated rather critically in the following issue of the *Crusade*. The reviewer wrote:

We are very fully conscious of the great importance of the eugenic standpoint in connection with the problems of destitution, especially as regards the feeble-minded. Moreover, there can be no question that the present Poor Law, like many forms of charity, has a definitely anti-eugenic influence, because on the whole it tends to subsidize the reproduction only of the lowest social types, i.e., those who cannot be deterred by the "taint" attaching to Poor Law relief and who regard the Workhouse as a free maternity hospital where their infants can be born and if necessary brought up.³⁸

The reviewer approved of the eugenicist argument, including, as this quotation shows, its class-centered position on the "lowest social types" whose reproduction was undeservedly being subsidized. We are reminded of the labor historian Hobsbawm's presentation of the Fabians as a group drawn from a new salaried managerial middle class, including a large proportion of educated women. By 1906, only 34 out of 1060 members were workers, a composition reflected in the writing in the *Crusade*.³⁹ The *Crusade's* articles were written by middle-class writers, for a middle-class readership. This is particularly clear in the stories dramatizing the struggle of the lower class with destitution and disease for the sympathetic middle-class reader. He or she was a reader who was assumed to experience these things only vicariously.⁴⁰

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

³⁷ Advertisement for *Eugen. Rev.*, Oct. 1910, 2; no. 3 inside back cover of *Crusade Against Destitution*, Nov. 1910, 1, no. 10.

³⁸ "F. S. S.," "Eugenics and pauperism," *Crusade Against Destitution*, 1910, 1: 131-132.

³⁹ "The Fabians reconsidered" in E. J. Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labour* (London: Weidenfeld, 1964), pp. 250-271.

⁴⁰ See, for example, "In a Spike (by a Poor Law Medical Officer)," *Crusade Against Destitution*, 1910, 1: 121-122, or "The margin of existence," *Ibid.*, 1: 132-136.

But the *Crusade's* reviewer did not approve of the Eugenics Society's reduction of all the diverse causes of destitution to the single underlying cause of an inherited defect; neither did he approve of the Society's research methods. The pauper pedigrees collected to demonstrate the inheritance of pauperism all came from workhouse records; there was no comparative material from any other source. The reviewer angrily quoted the phrases about the "typical dependent" whose "mainspring came into the world broken"; these words demonstrate, he said, that the whole question was simply begged at the outset.

The Eugenics Society's pauper pedigrees might be criticized, but the *Crusade* itself published editorially material of a very similar kind on the problem of the feeble-minded, including a "typical pedigree." As the editorial writer said, the recommendations of the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-minded had been "adopted in their entirety by both the Majority and the Minority Commissioners, and the subject thus passed practically out of the range of controversy."⁴¹ The *Crusade* reflected this consensus on the feeble-minded by publishing two articles, "The feeble-minded: a problem in eugenics" by Dr. C. W. Saleeby,⁴² and "What has been and is being done for the feeble-minded" by Miss A. H. P. Kirby, Secretary of the National Association for the Feeble-minded.⁴³ Both of the authors had been members of the Eugenics Education Society from the beginning, and both served on its Council. The eugenic consensus on the feeble-minded was also reflected in the papers on feeble-mindedness given at the National Conference on the Prevention of Destitution of 1911 where E. J. Lidbetter, General Relieving Officer of the Bethnal Green Workhouse, put the eugenic point of view in a nutshell:

. . . it is the view of the [Eugenics] Society that destitution, so far as it is represented by pauperism (and there is no other standard) is to a large extent confined to a special and degenerate class.⁴⁴

and after quoting again that the pauper "was born without manly independence . . . he came into the world with his mainspring broken," Lidbetter makes his point:

⁴¹ Editorial: "The problem of the feeble-minded," *Crusade Against Destitution*, 1911, 2: 25-27.

⁴² C. W. Saleeby, "The feeble-minded: a problem in eugenics," *Crusade Against Destitution*, 1911, 2: 27-29.

⁴³ A. H. P. Kirby, "What has been and is being done for the feeble-minded," *Crusade Against Destitution*, 1911, 2: 30-32.

⁴⁴ E. J. Lidbetter, "Eugenics and the Prevention of Destitution" in *Report of the Proceedings*, p. 623.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 626.

To what length is the community prepared to go in its defence against these classes? It is clear that for some of them the only measure is that suggested by the Eugenics Society—namely, detention and segregation.⁴⁵

To prove the point that the pauper class was just a few thousand inter-related families which passed on pauperism as a heritable defect, the Eugenics Society set up a Research Committee, with Lidbetter as a member, to collect and correlate pauper family histories and to display them in the form of large interconnected pedigrees.⁴⁶ These eugenic pedigrees (Figs. 1, 2) are peculiar to the Eugenics Education Society and its Research Committee. They are not meant to show any particular pattern of inheritance. There is no insistence on mendelism, that is, no attempt to trace a whole pauper kindred back to a single defective individual—the “vulgar mendelism” of the American eugenicists—and there is no question of race. The pedigrees show a network of relationships, the biological connections within a social class, the Residuum of the Charity Organization Society’s economists. They are a kind of qualitative population genetics. One complex pedigree can stand for a whole in-breeding caste. As Leonard Darwin wrote, they were “like rivers flowing steadily on wide fronts, carrying on their surfaces patches of refuse.”⁴⁷ (Fig. 3)

Feeble-mindedness was only one of the forms of the basic defect that produced this hereditary pauper class; the others included those causes of pauperism cited by the Leeds Relieving Officer to the Royal Commission. But the hereditary disease of pauperism was not a disease of society, as the Webbs had called it; it was a disease of the individual. Although it was inherited, the Society’s writing showed that the victim was felt to be personally responsible for it. Dr. Slaughter, commenting on the pedigrees for the Society’s Poor Law Committee, wrote

Several broad features are at once discernible. First among these is the fact that one pauper family has a tendency to marry into other pauper families. In this way half a dozen or more pauper families may be related to each other. Secondly, the evidence is clear that successive generations of the same family contain a due proportion of paupers. This points to the conclusion that pauperism is due to inherent defects which are hereditarily transmitted. Thirdly, the experience of the Committee is quite clear that the paupers whom they have seen and examined

⁴⁶ For a discussion of E. J. Lidbetter and the Research Committee of the Eugenics Education Society, see P. M. H. Mazumdar, *Eugenicists, Marxists and the Science of Human Genetics: A History of Human Genetics in Britain, 1900-1950* (in press 1979).

⁴⁷ L. Darwin, Introduction to E. J. Lidbetter, *Heredity and the Social Problem Group* (London: Arnold, 1933), Vol. I, (no more appeared).

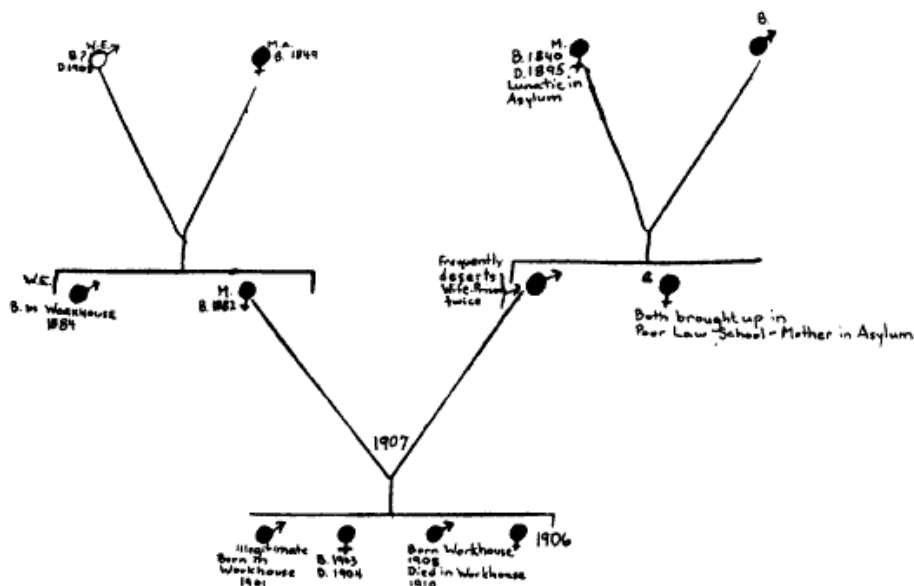


Figure 1. Pauper pedigree showing a three-generation family with paupers on both sides and in all three generations. From E. J. Lidbetter, "Some examples of Poor Law eugenics," *Eugen. Rev.*, 1910-11, 2: 218, Chart 8. (As published except for lettering; symbols as for Fig. 2).

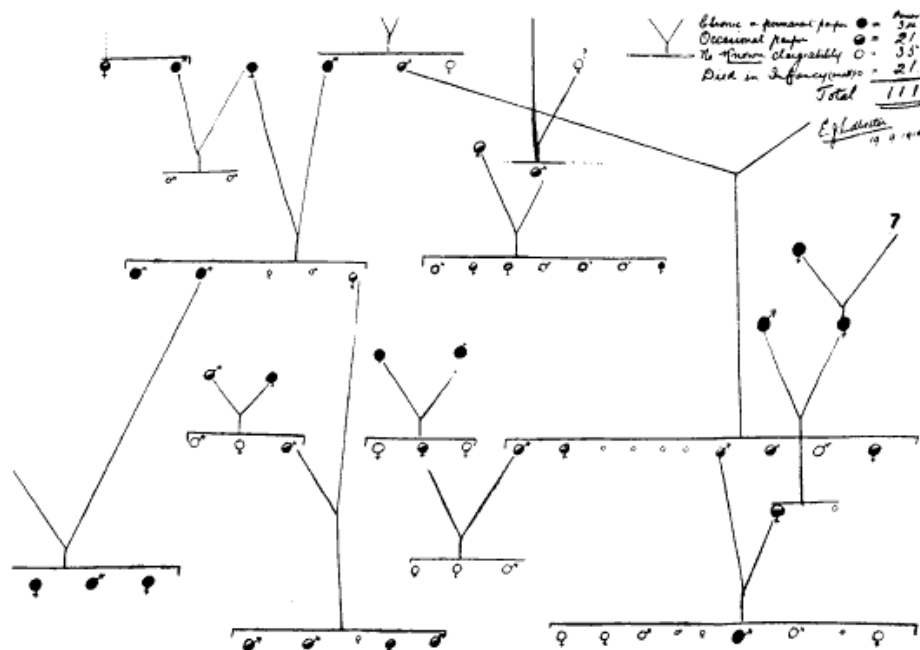


Figure 2. Pauper pedigree showing complicated interrelationships between pauper families over many generations. Detail from E. J. Lidbetter, "Some examples of Poor Law Eugenics," *Eugen. Rev.*, 1910-11, 2: opposite p. 228.

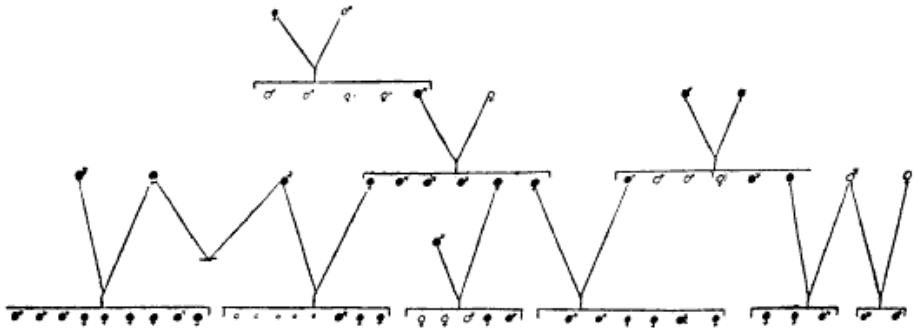


Figure 3. Pauper pedigree showing what Leonard Darwin called "rivers flowing on broad fronts, carrying patches of refuse on their surface." From E. J. Lidbetter, "Some examples of Poor Law eugenics," *Eugen. Rev.*, 1910-11, 2: 225, Chart 2. (As published except that Lidbetter's lettering has been omitted. Symbols as for Fig. 2).

individually are characterized by some obvious vice or defect such as drunkenness, theft, persistent laziness or tubercular diathesis, mental deficiency, deliberate moral obliquity or general weakness of character, manifested by want of initiative or energy or stamina and an inclination to attribute their misfortune to their own too great goodness and generally bad luck.

. . . There is no doubt that there exists a hereditary class of persons who will not make any attempt to work or to continue in work so long as charitable funds even of small amounts are forthcoming . . .

When we find it possible to trace four generations of paupers there can be little doubt as to the hereditary transmission of these defects. More perhaps than anything else such a fact speaks forcibly as to the real nature of pauperism.⁴⁸

This paper suggests that the eugenics movement in Britain was part of a larger movement: the attempt by the upper middle class to understand the urban poor, and to try to control them. Each of the societies had its own solution—the Charity Organization Society, the Moral Education League, the Society for the Care and Control of the Feeble-minded and the Fabian Society. The Eugenics Education Society felt that its explanation undercut all of them; at bottom, the problem lay in the germ plasm shared by these few thousand families of the Residuum. It could be solved through the Poor Law and compulsory segregation in the workhouse. This paper points out that all these societies together, sharing their problem, were interrelated as were the pauper families. The social activists of the educated upper middle class formed a group broadly dedicated to the problem of getting rid of another entire class, the class they called the Residuum.

⁴⁸ "Report of the Committee . . . of Poor Law Reform," p. 187.