

SIR,—“The facts that have to be faced,” to which Mr. Lockhart-Mummery alludes in his letter in your issue of November 23rd, are largely a result of legislative interference with the processes of nature. To eradicate any evil it is first of all necessary to consider and deal with the aetiological factors concerned. In bygone days it was quite customary for candidates at political elections to influence electors by gifts of money out of their own pockets, but is not the bribery and corruption much worse when electors are influenced by promises depending on the transference to them of money from the pockets of other people? It is manifest that such a system must result in the development of a habit of thought which is lacking in natural justice.

At a discussion on the question of sterilization recently I was struck by the fact that the main contention of those opposing it appeared to be that in the present state of our knowledge regarding the facts of heredity such a procedure was an unwarrantable interference with an individual's right to propagate his species; no mention was made of the capability of an individual for parenthood—namely, the capacity to bring up and provide for children, without which the offspring must become a charge on others. Why? Because under our present sociological system the child of the degenerate must be given opportunities almost equal to those personally provided for his children by the self-reliant parent.

With regard to the facts of heredity, surely the gradual development of a national character is a proved fact, dependent, largely, on transmitted familial characteristics the result of generations of suitable blending. The evils we are now trying to combat are the result of interference with natural justice, and instead of considering and dealing with the causes thereof we are simply perpetuating and intensifying them. There are some things which cannot be done—for instance, a substance cannot be dissolved in a medium in which it is insoluble without entirely altering the character of that substance. So, if by artificial means the environment and habit of thought of a being is altered then the character will change. It is well to remember, however, that “*Naturam expellas furca, tamen usque recurret.*”—I am, etc.,

Stafford, Nov. 30th.

B. H. SHAW, M.D.

Birth Control in Modern Life

SIR,—While I welcome Dr. Murphy's effort to “call a spade a spade” (*Journal*, November 30th), she does not enlighten us as to how—if there be any “virginal” brides among us these days—the insertion of a pessary is possible. Her opinion of the reception given to babies “born on the district,” apparently diametrically opposite to that of Sir Walter Langdon-Brown, is in my experience as true as his, the only difference being in point of time. Sir Walter's observation was doubtless made on leaving a case at the end of the puerperium, when the mother contemplated getting up to face hard facts, whereas Dr. Murphy recalls the song of praise and thanksgiving so universally rendered by mothers during the first few days of the puerperium, when every mother welcomes, not necessarily her child, but the release from pregnancy and labour.

On this subject of birth control *versus* self-control, does the Bishop of St. Albans seriously contend that a happily married couple, with even so huge a family as four children, should confine their intercourse to four periods of, say, six months during the whole of their married life? If, on the other hand, he advocates that vicious practice of coitus interruptus, he would have us a nation of neurasthenics in no time, again as the result of the “frustration of the biological ends of Nature.”—I am, etc.,

Porlock, Dec. 1st.

J. F. P. FORSTER.

Recording of Vote by Invalids

SIR,—During the recent General Election I had several patients who, being unfit to leave their homes, yet did so at considerable risk of aggravating their condition, in order to record their vote; and many more prudent ones who remained at home, and were thus disfranchised.

I suggest that our medical members in Parliament should be asked to press for the removal of this injustice, and to urge that duly certificated invalids be permitted to record their votes otherwise than by personal attendance.—I am, etc.,

Barnet, Herts, Nov. 26th.

S. VATCHER, M.D.

Obituary

ERNEST WILLIAM WHITE, C.B.E., M.B.

Emeritus Professor of Psychological Medicine, King's College, London

We regret to record the death, on November 28th, of Dr. E. W. White, who had been professor of psychological medicine at King's College, London, from 1890 to 1910. He was 84 when he died at his home in Shrewsbury.

The second son of Richard White of Norwich, Ernest William White was educated at King Edward VI School at Bury St. Edmunds, and received his professional training at King's College, London, where he won three scholarships, and was a gold medallist in anatomy. In 1872 he obtained the diploma M.R.C.S., and in the following year the L.S.A. He graduated M.B.Lond. in 1883, and a few months later became M.R.C.P. From 1878 to 1887 he was senior assistant medical officer of the Kent Mental Hospital at Chartham, after which he was resident physician-superintendent of the City of London Mental Hospital at Dartford until 1905. During this time he was elected professor of psychological medicine at King's College, London. In the war he served as consultant in mental diseases to the Western Command; he was promoted to lieutenant-colonel in 1917, and was created C.B.E. in 1920. He was a consultant to the War Office from 1919 to 1921.

Professor White joined the British Medical Association in 1884, and twenty years later was a vice-president of the Section of Psychological Medicine when the Association met at Oxford. He was a representative at the Annual Meetings at Toronto in 1906 and at Exeter in 1907. He was president of the Royal Medico-Psychological Association from 1903 to 1904. He was the author of numerous contributions to medical periodicals, including more particularly the *British Medical Journal* and the *Journal of Mental Science*. Since 1906 he had been chairman of Bailbrook House, Bath, and of Fensanton, London, both mental hospitals. He took great interest in farming, and was president of the Shropshire Chamber of Agriculture in 1922 and the following year. In his younger days he had been a cricketer and a cyclist, and he continued to shoot and fish from middle age.

Dr. JOHN MACDONALD BROWN, who died in London on November 18th at the age of 78, had previously been in practice at Leamington and later in Upper Berkeley Street, London. Born in Dunfermline, he had been a student in the University of Edinburgh, where he held a Grierson bursary, and at the London Hospital. In 1880 he graduated M.B., C.M.Ed., and three years later obtained the diplomas F.R.C.S.Eng. and F.R.C.S.Ed. He proceeded M.D. in 1890 with honours. His earlier appointments included those of lecturer in anatomy at Surgeons' Hall, Edinburgh; examiner in anatomy for the Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburgh, and the University of Aberdeen; and senior assistant surgeon to the North-West London Hospital. Dr. Brown had