

The Midwife.

EUGENICS AND OBSTETRICS.*

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1. Among the agencies under social control which impair the racial qualities of future generations, an important place is taken by the science of medicine, especially by obstetrics. For the increase of obstetrics increases the incapacity for bearing children of future generations.
2. The great difference in the capacity for bearing children between the primitive and civilised races depends only in part on the lessened fitness of the latter due to the increase of skilled assistance.
3. Incapacity for bearing children can be acquired; it develops, however, abundantly on the grounds of a congenital predisposition.
4. In so far as the latter is the case, obstetrics contributes towards the diffusion of this incapacity.
5. The most serious obstacles to delivery are effected by deformities of the pelvis, in at least 90 per cent. of which heredity plays a part. In this connection, rickets, the predisposition to which is inherited, takes the foremost place.
6. German medical statistics make it appear probable that incapacity to bear children is on the increase.
7. Medical help in childbirth brings, undoubtedly, numerical advantage to the race, but it endangers the quality of the race in other ways than through the fostering of unfitness for bearing.
8. The danger of the increase of incapacity for bearing through the increase of assistance in childbirth can be combatted :—
 - (a) Through the renunciation of descendants by women unfitted to bear children.
 - (b) Through an energetic campaign against rickets, to which only the predisposition can be inherited.
 - (c) Through the permeation of obstetrics with the spirit of eugenics, so that the obstetrician no longer proceeds according to a settled rule (living mother and living child), but in each separate case takes into consideration the interests of the race.

* The abstract of a paper presented at the first International Eugenics Congress, London, 1912.

IRON IN THE FŒTAL LIVER AT BIRTH.

Dr. Hugh Ashby, writing in the *Lancet* on the Relation of Iron to Anæmia in Infancy and Childhood, points out what a large amount of iron is stored up in fœtal liver at birth. He writes :—

The liver is the organ that has most to do with the storage and with the metabolism of iron. The liver in intra-uterine life receives a very good blood-supply by means of the branches of the umbilical vein carrying arterial blood from the placenta. At birth, the liver forms from 4 to 5 per cent. of the body weight, which is twice the corresponding weight in the adult ($2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the body weight). It seems that the liver performs a similar storage function with regard to iron as it does with fats and carbohydrates. When the iron is needed it is given up by the liver into the blood again, and used to make new hæmoglobin and red blood corpuscles. The absorption of iron from the intestine is, however, regulated by the demand, so that rarely are larger amounts than normal found in the liver, which fact my analysis bears out. In some diseases, such as pernicious anæmia, hypertrophic cirrhosis of the liver, there is a large amount of iron found in the liver which has been derived from the blood.

The liver has also other functions in connection with this iron. Together with spleen, it separates the iron from effete iron-containing pigment, which it stores in the form of a loose compound. The liver also transforms this iron into an organic compound, ferratin, which is ready for assimilation by young red blood cells, and is given out as it is required to make new hæmoglobin.

When iron is given to a patient, much the greater quantity is excreted again in the fæces, but at times it appears as if large quantities are kept in the body. Thus a patient with an ileo-cæcal fistula was given 416 mg. of iron citrate in two days, but only 338 mg. ever appeared in the fæces at the fistula.

IRON STORED IN THE LIVER OF THE FŒTUS AND INFANT.

As the liver has such a large blood-supply and is such a large organ in proportion to the body in infancy, it is not surprising that it

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