MAGAZINE SECTION THREE

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The Real Extent of Our Race Suicide

Uncle Sam Finds a Decrease of One Per Cent in Children Every Ten Years.

NO FALSE alarmist was President Roosevelt when he raised his voice against the danger of race suicide. A careful study of statistics recently completed by the government Bureau of Census bears him out.

Since the early years of the last century the proportion of children in the United States, it is ascertained by the investigation, has decreased almost uninterruptedly at the average rate of about 1 per cent. in a decade. Of late years the percentage of decrease has been growing.

In 1800, children under 10 years of age constituted more than one-third the entire population of the country; at the end of the century they were less than one-fourth.

When the last census was taken, in 1900, the proportion of white children under 5 years of age was found to be about three-fifths of what it was in 1830. There had been a steady decrease, except during the decade of 1850-1860.

North Dakota and Indian Territory had the largest proportion of children in 1900; while California and the District of Columbia had the smallest. Rural districts of the nation were raising one-third more children than the cities.

Since 1890 the proportion of negro children has decreased more rapidly than those of white persons. Foreign-born parents, it is found, contributed more freely to Uncle Sam's asset of population than natives.

And what is the cause of this decrease in the proportion of births? Increase in the cost of living is given as one cause. Moreover, young women are becoming imbued with the idea that marriage and motherhood are not the chief objects in life; they regard housework, so the investigators conclude, as a sort of domestic slavery, than to endure which they prefer to earn their own livelihood.

These facts have been presented to the Department of Commerce and Labor in a statistical discussion prepared by Professor Walter F. Willcox, of Cornell University, special agent for the Census Bureau. The study is based upon age and sex figures contained in the twelfth and preceding censuses.

A COMPLETE set of vital statistics has never been taken in America. Some States compile fairly accurate figures upon the birth rate, while others make little or no attempt in that direction.

As an actual fact, the birth rate in the United States, past or present, is unknown.

Professor Willcox, however, has delved into census reports for the entire century just passed, and has brought to light an important and instructive mass of information.

As the best available substitute for an accurate birth rate during the latter half of the nineteenth century, the professor has taken the ratio of living children under 5 years of age to each 1000 women of the years wherein it is possible for them to be mothers.

The proportion of children under 10 years of age to the entire population is ascertained from census reports reaching back to 1800.

Throughout the entire country, then, there were figures giving the number of children under 10 years of age upon which to base an investigation. After 1850, figures were also given for children under 5 years. Since that date, too, it has been possible to ascertain, for each decade, the number of women who were within the age limits of motherhood.

When the census of 1800 was taken, children under 10 years of age constituted 33.5 per cent. of the total population. During the century this proportion dropped almost steadily, until at its close the number of such little ones was only 23.7 per cent.

Between 1840 and 1850, and between 1880 and 1890, the greatest decreases in the relative proportion occurred. It is believed that this fact was due to the enormous tide of immigration during those periods, when the adult population of the country increased with leaps and bounds.

The next largest decrease, during the decade from 1860 to 1870, is attributed largely to direct and indirect effects of the Civil War, although defects in the collecting of the census in the latter year may be somewhat responsible for the showing.

Taking up statistics concerning children under 5 years of age during the last half of the nineteenth century, it is learned that in 1900 there were only three-fourths as many living little ones to each group of 1000 possible mothers as in 1860.

In 1860, the number was 634; in 1870, 572; in 1880, 559; in 1890, 485; in 1900, 474.

As an example of the manner in which the ratio of children under 5 years of age of the white population has decreased since 1830, the following figures are given: In 1830 the percentage was 18; in 1840, 17.4; in 1850, 14.8; in 1860, 15.3; in 1870, 14.1; in 1880, 13.4; in 1890, 12, and in 1900, 11.9 per cent.

For every 1000 women, the number of children under 5 years decreased 62 from 1860 to 1870; 13 from 1870 to 1880; 74 from 1880 to 1890, and 11 from 1890 to 1900. Between 1850 and 1860 it increased 8. The decreases of the other decades were not nearly uniform, but invariably the balance was to be found on the wrong side of the population ledger.

Figures vary somewhat in different sections of the country. In the North and West the population of children increased during the decade of 1850 to 1860, and decreased steadily after the latter date. The decline has been less marked in the Southern States.

The facts presented in this connection, it must be borne in mind, are based upon the ratio of children under 5 years of age to each 1000 women within the age limits of motherhood.

According to the figures for 1900, New England, next to the District of Columbia, made the smallest contribution to the nation's population; and in that section Massachusetts presented the most meagre showing of all.

All of the New England States had fewer than 400 children to 1000 women. In the same class, however, were New York, Ohio and California.

With between 400 and 500 each were New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Colorado, Nevada, Washington and Oregon. This chain forms a belt across practically the centre of the country, from ocean to ocean, broken only by Ohio, with a lower average, and Utah, with a higher.

The States having between 500 and 600 children to each 1000 women are the two Virginias, Kentucky, Tennessee, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Nebraska, Wyoming, Montana, Florida and Louisiana and Arizona Territory.

With more than 600 each are all the Southern States, except those already named, together with the two Dakotas, Idaho, Utah, New Mexico, Indian Territory and Oklahoma.

For the entire country the average is 471 to 1000 women. From Maine to California a band of States, broken only by Kansas and Utah, is to be found having a proportion below this average. On the South, from Virginia to Arizona, and on the North, from Wisconsin to Idaho, this band is flanked by States and Territories averaging more than 500.

In the District of Columbia, the lowest in proportion, children under 5 years of age number hardly more than 25 per cent. the number of possible mothers; while in North Dakota and the Indian Territory they amount to more than two-thirds.

Ten years before, in 1890, the minimum was in the District of Columbia and New Hampshire, while maximum credit was held by North Dakota and Idaho.

In 1880 the largest proportions were in Utah and Idaho; in 1870, Utah and Washington; in 1860 and 1850, Utah and Oregon.

At each of these four censuses New Hampshire was one of the two States with the smallest proportion, the others being Massachusetts at two censuses and Rhode Island at two.

Only in 1890 and 1900 did the District of Columbia take lowest rank for the number of its children. This may be due to the fact that most of the population of the District is in the city of Washington, and everywhere cities add to the number of children less rapidly than the rural districts.

It was shown in 1900 that to every 1000 women the District of Columbia had 165 fewer children than Maryland, that it was 283 behind Virginia and 334 behind West Virginia—all practically contiguous territory.

Figures for six States stretching across the centre of the land show a striking decrease within fifty years in the number of children under 5 years of age proportioned to each 1000 women.

In 1900, compared with 1850, Maryland had 166 fewer children; Kentucky, 206; Michigan, 227; Ohio, 277; Illinois, 309, and Indiana, 340.

"The decrease in the proportion of children between 1890 and 1900 in the country as a whole," writes Professor Willcox, "was due mainly to the controlling influence of changes west of the Alleghanies.

"In all the States of the Atlantic divisions from Maine to North Carolina, inclusive, except Delaware, Maryland and the District of Columbia, the proportion of children was greater in 1900 than in 1890.

"But almost everywhere else in the country the reverse was true, the exceptions—Oklahoma, New Mexico, Montana and Nevada—hardly breaking the uniformity of the rule.

"The increase of children in every State of the North Atlantic division, 1890 to 1900, was probably a result of the heavy immigration of 1880 to 1890, and of the high birth rate among the immigrants shortly after their arrival."

In 1890 the number of children under 5 years of age to each 1000 native women was 475, while it was 666 to foreign women, a difference of 191 in favor of the latter. Ten years later the difference had increased to 248, as the number was 462 children for native women and 710 for foreign-born women.

That the births of children are not so numerous in the cities as in the rural districts is amply demonstrated. According to the last census the proportion of children in cities, for the United States as a whole, was about two-thirds the proportion in the country districts.

There was little difference, in the North, between the proportions for city and country, but in the South the city proportion was scarcely more than half that of the country. In the West the ratio of proportion for city and country was between these two extremes.

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