

Registering Human Pedigrees

How Kansas Develops Fitter Families;
A Remarkable Experiment in Eugenics

By Arthur Capper, U. S. Senator from Kansas



Mrs. Mary T. Watts,
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THE average American family of today is the result of haphazard mating. Men and women marry with little scientific thought as to their physical and mental fitness for bearing and rearing children. When the children come they too often are brought up in the same haphazard fashion in which their parents chose each other. Is it any wonder that the number of mentally and physically unfit increases?

For years, American farmers and breeders have used scientific methods in the development of their livestock. Millions of dollars are spent every year at local, state and national fairs and livestock shows in judging and scoring the blue blood of the livestock world. The standards of breeding have been raised steadily through the years.

But what have we done for American children and their parents in encouraging periodical physical and mental examinations, the keeping of family records, and the use of scientific standards in choosing the parents of future generations? We have done much, but as yet our accomplishments cannot compare with what has been done for the lower orders of creation. It is unthinkable that the breeding of the human race should be placed on the unfeeling basis applied to livestock, but is there not much legitimate, unobjectionable work to be done in judging and scoring families not only on their present mental and physical condition but on the blood, training and achievements back of them?

The answer to this well may be found in the "Fitter Families" contest conducted annually at the Kansas Free Fair under the direction of the two women who originated the "Better Babies" contests which have become so popular all over the country—Dr. Florence Brown Sherbon, of the University of Kansas, and Mrs. Mary Terrill Watts, of Audubon, Iowa.

Their work with babies convinced them that to do the maximum amount of good, the entire family must be brought before the judges. The opportunity came in 1920 with the invitation by the secretary of the Kansas Free Fair at Topeka to "put on some stunt" during fair week. The con-



The Eugenics Building at the Kansas Free Fair, where families are judged and registered. Seated in the center is a "fitter family" surrounded by examiners

test, with the motto, "Fitter Families for Future Firesides," was decided on and an entire building was turned over to them at the fair.

"It can't be done," declared some. "You can get the baby for examination and scoring for he can't help himself, but when you ask for the entire family they just won't come."

But results proved these assertions wrong. In three years 75 families—a total of approximately 300 persons—have been examined and scored, and fully twice that number turned away. Professional men

by a dentist and an eye, ear, nose and throat specialist.

The fact that families return for a second, and even a third examination, shows the parents are genuinely interested in rearing young men and women who are physically, mentally and morally fit to assume the future of the nation. A tremendous forward step has been taken in Kansas, and there is no doubt that from its comparatively small beginning the movement will spread to large proportions.

No growing boy or girl or young man and woman can fail to be impressed and influenced by these lessons, so vividly presented, on the value of clean living, healthy bodies and fully-equipped minds. The germ of eugenic thought has been planted and will bear fruit when marriage time comes, and in the training of future children.

But Kansas is only one of the 48 states of our nation. Numerous interstate marriages occur daily, and marriage as a whole is one of the big problems of today. Uniform state and national marriage laws promise to do much toward solving this problem, but we must rely upon education as the greatest force for obtaining the maximum benefit from such laws.

Sweeping reforms cannot be accomplished overnight. Only through conscientious, painstaking work can the standards of the American family be raised.

There should be no thought of eliminating sentiment from the choice of mates and the bringing forth of children, but the future generations can be trained to give these matters the serious consideration they deserve, instead of following the blind sexual impulses which so often control marriage.

THREE years ago a "Fitter Families" contest—involving the scientific registry, judging and scoring of husbands, wives and their children—was put on as a "stunt" at the Kansas Free Fair.

Next month this startling experiment in eugenics will be a center of nation-wide interest when the Kansas Fair opens. The movement which began in a small way is meeting with tremendous national approval.

Will the scientific judging of families raise the standards of human breeding, just as live stock shows now are improving our herds? Read Senator Capper's answer and see what you think about it.

and women have given their services gladly. A staff of 18 men and women handle the examinations and tests.

The examination and tests occupy approximately three hours of each individual's time. When completed, the results justify the effort, for the 12 pages of the record contain a complete statement of the known history and the present mental and physical condition of the entire family. The history blank bears a full account of the health, education and achievement of every



Dr. Florence B. Sherbon,
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member of a family. Another sheet of the record shows the results of the intelligence test, and an examination by a psychiatric specialist of the nerve reflexes, emotional and intellectual responses. A thorough structural examination is made, including strength tests and measurements. The medical record gives the results of a complete physical and organic examination, with blood pressure, hemoglobin blood test and the Wasserman blood test. Every member of the family is examined