

**THE LAW OF BIRTHS AND DEATHS:
BEING A STUDY OF THE VARIATION
IN THE DEGREE OF ANIMAL
FERTILITY UNDER THE INFLUENCE
OF THE ENVIRONMENT**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649626175

The Law of Births and Deaths: Being a Study of the Variation in the Degree of Animal Fertility Under the Influence of the Environment by Charles Edward Pell

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

CHARLES EDWARD PELL

**THE LAW OF BIRTHS AND DEATHS:
BEING A STUDY OF THE VARIATION
IN THE DEGREE OF ANIMAL
FERTILITY UNDER THE INFLUENCE
OF THE ENVIRONMENT**

**THE LAW OF
BIRTHS & DEATHS**

THE LAW *of* BIRTHS
and DEATHS · BEING A
STUDY OF THE VARIATION IN
THE DEGREE OF ANIMAL FER-
TILITY UNDER THE INFLUENCE
OF THE ENVIRONMENT · *By*
CHARLES EDWARD PELL

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

T. FISHER UNWIN LTD
LONDON: ADELPHI TERRACE

HB891

V4

TO VIMU
ABSTRACTS

First published in 1921

(All rights reserved)

97c

PREFACE

THIS little work, as its title suggests, is an attempt to place the problems of animal fertility and the birthrate on a more scientific footing than they have hitherto held. It endeavours to show that the decline of the birthrate cannot be explained on the hypothesis that it is due to the deliberate evasion of child-bearing; but that it can be explained as the result of a natural law the function of which is to adjust the degree of fertility to suit approximately the needs of the race.

The accepted theory cannot, by any stretch of ingenuity, be made to account for many of the most significant features of the birthrate problem. It cannot account for the vast and increasing proportion of completely sterile marriages among the intellectual classes in all countries, among the British nobility, and among the wealthy classes generally—unless, indeed, its advocates are prepared to make, without a particle of reliable evidence in its support, the remarkable assumption that anything up to 25 per cent. of these classes take the most elaborate and troublesome precautions, from the very marriage eve, to avoid having a single child. It cannot account for rises in the birthrate such as took place during the early part of last century in England and recently in Japan. It cannot account for the seasonal fluctuations of the birthrate. It ignores the fact that the use of contraceptives involves the most elaborate and troublesome precautions at a time when the parties

6 THE LAW OF BIRTHS AND DEATHS

concerned are least in the mood for such precautions, and assumes that the readiness to adopt these precautions increases in direct proportion with the absence of the need for them ; while the desire to avoid having a single heir is assumed to increase steadily with the acquisition of wealth and position which should, apparently, tend to make the arrival of an heir desirable and keenly desired.

On the other hand, all the phenomena of the fluctuating birthrate may be satisfactorily explained as the effects of a natural law, the action of which can be clearly traced among unicellular organisms, throughout the vegetable and animal kingdoms and throughout human society.

It is true that commissions have sat in Australia, France and England to investigate the problem, and that their reports have been in favour of the accepted view ; but the blight of preconceived opinions was upon all their works. The National Birthrate Commission in this country, for example, had before them ample evidence in support of the view that there has been a vast decline in fertility due to natural causes ; while the evidence upon which they based their report in favour of the opposite hypothesis is quoted in this work as providing the strongest possible confirmation of the interpretation they rejected. It is a mistake to suppose that an individual acquires as a commissioner an analytical faculty and sound judgment as to the value of evidence which he did not possess in a private capacity—that one who has shown no aptitude for grappling with a problem in the latter rôle acquires the necessary capacity as soon as he assumes the former. Fifty indifferent cooks will not make one good cook. Fifty mediocre musicians do not, when taken collectively, constitute a great artist. And to gather together forty or fifty individuals, not one of whom has shown the ability to deal with the

problem singly, is not the way to solve it. A wholly exaggerated importance is attached to the reports of commissions.

The conception that the fluctuations of the birthrate are governed by a natural law, and that luxurious conditions are unfavourable to fecundity, is not new. Saddler, in particular, in his work, *The Law of Population*, brought together a considerable body of evidence in support of this view, and quoted in its favour the testimony of Hippocrates, Herodotus, Aristotle, Bacon, Rousseau, Adam Smith and other notable men. Even before Saddler, many medical men, among others Dr. Short, Dr. Black, and Dr. Buchan, were alive to the fact that, as Bacon had put it, "Repletion is an enemy to generation," or, in Dr. Black's words, that "high refinement is an obstacle to propagation."

Saddler summarises Dr. Short's views, as set forth in his work, *New Observations, etc., on Bills of Mortality, etc.*, as follows: "He asserts over and over again, and throughout his whole work, that poor food and hard labour are conducive to prolificness, and consequently that 'the poorest and most laborious part of mankind,' to use his own words, 'are the fruitfulest.' He even carries this idea so far as to conclude that the most laborious and toilsome months of the year are the most fruitful of conceptions, and attributes the great fruitfulness of the Israelites in Egypt, as a secondary cause, to their bondage and affliction. He explains the inferior fecundity of town breeders as compared with those of the country as arising, among other things, from the more plentiful eating and drinking, and the greater idleness, which prevail in populous towns, observing that the most voluptuous, idle, effeminate and luxurious are the barrenest; and he delivers what I believe to be an