

**THE BIRTH CONTROL. SMALL OR
LARGE FAMILIES: BIRTH
CONTROL FROM THE MORAL,
RACIAL AND EUGENIC
STANDPOINT**

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SMALL OR LARGE FAMILIES

BIRTH CONTROL
FROM THE MORAL, RACIAL AND
EUGENIC STANDPOINT

BY

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**I. BIRTH CONTROL FROM THE
INDIVIDUAL, RACIAL AND
MORAL STANDPOINT**

II. BIRTH CONTROL AND WAR

BY

C. V. DRYSDALE

BIRTH CONTROL FROM THE INDIVIDUAL,
RACIAL AND MORAL STANDPOINT

"The artificial sterilisation of matrimony is the most revolutionary discovery of the nineteenth century."

Such is the dictum of one who will be recognised by most people as entitled to speak with authority on the subject of social revolutions—Mr. George Bernard Shaw. The claim is a startling one, but no one who has studied the matter at all thoroughly can doubt that, if it errs, it does so on the side of moderation. Whether regarded quantitatively as a reform of wide-spread adoption, biologically as a new epoch in human evolution, or ethically as the commencement of a new era of moral progress or decadence, it may fairly be questioned whether any reform

in the history of humanity is comparable with it.

Although certain crude methods of prevention of conception have been known from Roman and much earlier times, it was not until the French Revolution made the first great breach in the barriers of ecclesiastical and conventional ideas of morality that they became at all generally adopted in any modern civilised nation. Even then the new ideas did not appreciably extend beyond France, and the real beginning of the modern era of family limitation and falling birth-rates dates from 1876 when the legal proceedings commenced against the Knowlton pamphlet, "Fruits of Philosophy," which Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant afterwards so brilliantly defended. The effect of this trial was immediately registered on the birth-rates of the majority of the countries of Europe (which had been exhibiting before the trial stationary or slowly rising birth-rates) and the very next year

showed the commencement of that decline in the birth-rate which has continued to this day without intermission in all but three or four countries in Europe. In England and Wales, which is fairly typical of the Western European countries, the birth-rate rose from 32.3 per 1,000 in 1853 to 36.4 in 1876, from which it has almost uniformly declined to about 24 per thousand just before the war.

As regards the whole of Europe, there seems reason to believe that the birth-rate has fallen from about 39.5 in 1876 to 34.5 or less at the present time. This means that on the present European population of about 470 millions there are now about 2½ million fewer births annually than there would have been if the decline had not set in, while over the whole 40 years from 1876 to the present time, 50 to 60 million fewer children have been born in Europe than would have been born if the birth-rate of 1876 had been maintained. This is for Europe alone, and there have