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Population Problems, by Edward B. Reuter

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Population Problems, by Edward B. Reuter. 1923. J. B. Lippincott & Co.: Philadelphia. Pages xvii, 338. Price \$2.00.

This is a book of real interest and value to the general reader although it is hard to see any especial legal side to the questions and problems involved. Surely this matter of how many people there are to be in the world is of the first importance. The great Malthus called our attention to the ultimate danger of getting more people on the earth than we can feed and suggested that some plan of curtailing the population would have to be adopted in the future. Undoubtedly we have had several plans of curtailing the population already. In India they have plagues and snakes to kill the people off and in spite of these aids they seem to have greater density of population than their wealth can support in a standard of living compatible with modern civilization. In China they got rid of their excess numbers in much the same way. European countries it seems have unconsciously employed war as an important factor in keeping down the population, while peoples in different parts of the world have used birth control to a considerable extent.

Professor Reuter's book gives a careful and perhaps reasonably impartial discussion of the many phases of eugenics problems. He points out that certain families have undoubtedly given an extraordinary number of able men and women to the world and that this result cannot be totally explained without attributing part of it to heredity. He also gives the usual instances of feeble-minded families that have produced practically no descendants of merit and have cost the country millions of dollars in the care of their defectives. Professor Reuter seems to discourage our hopes in fixing upon certain classes as the right ones to produce the people of the future. Thus he does not think that the rich necessarily have the best children and should be the only ones allowed to reproduce. He feels the same way about the educated classes and does not conclude that on purely scientific grounds the poor and the ignorant should be excluded.

In reading the book perhaps one is somewhat discouraged by the absence of any general conclusions to the problems discussed. This may be dis-

couraging but one suspects that it is also wise. It seems that our leaders in animal husbandry are not entirely sure of the best way to breed hogs, and certain it is that the factors in securing the superior race of men are far more difficult to subject to practicable and workable formulae.