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PRESENT TENDENCIES OF CLASS DIFFERENTIATION.*

I.

THE class structure of English society has, within the past hundred years, undergone considerable alteration. The clearly marked lines of demarcation between the different classes have disappeared. New classes have come into existence. The conception of the class idea has changed. The divine grading of society into super-imposed stations of life, the division between gentle and common blood, the legal regulation of dress and social customs, and the attitude of respect to one's "betters"—all these views and rules have been profoundly modified. The present paper attempts to indicate the nature of these alterations and to state some of the present tendencies of this important but little studied social feature.

In the main, the changes have been produced by two factors. The first is the economic development of society: the second is the movement towards democracy.

Ever a potent force in human affairs, the economic factor to-day dominates society. The discovery and application of steam and electricity, the development of transit, trade and manufacture, the growth of the credit system, etc.—these powers and their organisation have produced a movement which sweeps forward with a force at present beyond human control. In general it tends towards the advantage of the human race, though at times it occasions situations, conditions, and occupations which no human being desires. When in conflict with art, politics, and even ethics, it is these latter which have to give way. Agreement is, however, more frequent than conflict.

Four results of economic development need to be noticed in connection with the present subject. First, the large number and varied nature of occupations which have been occasioned. Secondly, the scope for development and rise in position within a single occupation. Thirdly, the demand for economic ability—

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which has been created. By this expression is meant ability which has a wage value. Fourthly, the formation of large towns.

In connection with the second factor, the movement towards democracy, four results also need to be noticed. First, the change in the conception of the State, which may be now regarded as an organisation formed by its members for the protection, the service, and the development of its members. Secondly, the spread of the feeling of fellowship between individuals in virtue of this common membership, and the development of the sense of corporate responsibility. Thirdly, the development of an elaborate system of education. For this, however, the economic factor is to a large degree responsible. Fourthly, the development of local government, which this factor has largely influenced, more particularly in the direction of provision of libraries, parks, playing fields, etc.

II.

These eight points have affected the old class structure in three directions.

1. *The destruction of the old basis of determining class.* Formerly the family determined the class. Children belonged to the class of their parents, and with few exceptions remained in that class all their lives. This was possible so long as two conditions were fulfilled: first, that marriage only took place between members of the same class; second, that each class had its separate group of occupations. It is this second condition which has broken down. When new occupations came into existence difficulties arose. Custom, the old authority to determine the matter, ceased to operate. Old occupations have developed and changed in status. Education and scholarships have enabled the clever children of poor parents to command posts hitherto reserved for the children of another class. A similar invasion of privileged occupations has been occasioned by the children of those in many of the new or "increased in status" occupations. For these children the best education has become available, and holding their own with the children of the privileged class, they take up many of their occupations. Landed estates, politics, the Bar, the Army, the Universities, the Church, etc.—these have ceased to be close occupations. Moreover, some of the important business and other new posts are now sought after by the children of former privileged classes. It has thus become an impossibility to determine class on the old basis.

2. *The alteration of the class grouping.* The old class grouping consisted of three divisions—the labouring or working class; the shopkeeping or respectable class; the gentry. To the last were added as an appendage the professions, which provided occupa-

tions for the younger sons of the gentry and the sons of professional men. The professional man was almost always a blood relation of the landed gentry.

This class grouping became disturbed. The labouring class has swollen and is now divided into several groups, while its intellectual children pass on into professions or business. The shopkeeping class has developed enormously and created new posts of substantial importance. The professional appendage has become its own class and has also developed largely, more particularly in its educational, scientific, clerical, and medical occupations. It has not added greatly to the importance of its occupations, but it has vastly increased their number. It has also extended its scope downwards and includes a number of inferior posts. In addition to these changes industry, commerce and finance have created two new large classes—the manufacturer, merchant, shipper, financier, broker and managing director, etc., and their subsidiary army of clerical and other posts. Owing to the prominence to-day of economic development the former of these classes has become the most wealthy and the most important in society. Administration, central and local, is also responsible for a large number of occupations whose head posts demand a high degree of intellectual ability.

The gentry, on the other hand, have tended to diminish as a class. The landed proprietor is a numerically small class. The privileged occupations are no longer privileged, with the exception of a few in connection with the Court. Many of the members of this class have become absorbed in other groups as the necessity for earning a living has become more pressing. Burke's *Peerage* is still compiled, but even this is less studied as men tend to be honoured rather for their own position than for that of their relatives.

3. *The change of the normal environment.* Formerly the bulk of the people lived in the country. Social life was grouped round the village or the small town. Large towns were very abnormal. The social unit was thus small: everybody was known: their careers were public: every action was observed. This made the old class grouping easy to maintain. To-day, however, scarcely one-third of the people live in such an environment and even this proportion is steadily diminishing. The normal unit is the large town. Two-thirds of the people live in urban districts, nearly one half of the total population living in 50 large towns, each with a population of over 50,000.

III.

The old class structure has thus broken down, but class structure exists in the English society of to-day. This now demands consideration. The following appear to be the main features.

1. *The present class structure is based upon different standards of life.* There may be said to be in theory two standards of life—the standard of simple necessities, and the standard of refined and educated necessities. The former can be secured for an average family on about 25/- a week; the latter on about £600 a year.

People do not, however, fall exactly into these two groups, receiving these two sets of wages and living at these two theoretic standards. Instead we find a considerable degree of variation. These varying standards tend to fall into seven groups, a brief description of which may be given. Such brevity is obviously unsatisfactory. A few salient features, indicative of the general character of the class, alone can be stated. Exceptions can be made to each statement.

A. The Loafer. *Standard*—18/- a week; *Housing*—slum, cellar dwelling or single room, no proper furniture; *Occupation*—irregular labour, or drinks a higher wage.

B. Low-skilled labour. *Standard*—25/- a week; *Housing*—four-roomed house: scanty but sufficient furniture; *Occupation*—low-skilled labour: lowest type clerk, shop assistant, etc.; *Social customs*—some change clothes and put on collar in evening; *Ability*—general intelligence rather low; need to be told.

C. Artizan. *Standard*—45/-; *Housing*—five-roomed house, with parlour: homely but comfortable furniture; *Occupations*¹—very varied: skilled labourers, foremen, petty officers, clerks, smaller officials, etc.; *Social customs*—table set for meals: married children visit parents on Sundays; *Ability*—technical skill; a very fair general intelligence; shrewd at times; a simple mind, not following a connected argument; laborious procedure at business meetings.

D. Smaller Shopkeeper and clerk. *Standard*—£3 a week; *Housing*—above shop or £25 to £30 a year; *Occupation*—very varied; clerks, shopkeepers and tradesmen, commercial travellers, printers, engineers, etc., elementary school teachers, a few ministers; *Social customs*—furnish their houses; entertain visitors; some have a young servant; *Ability*—varied; either a high degree of technical skill; or a little capital and managing a business; shrewd in small matters; read magazines; express superficial opinions freely upon all subjects; *Education*—elementary school; in some cases a technical career.

E. Smaller Business Class. *Standard*—£300 a year; *House*—£48; *Occupation*—various forms of business; the smaller manufacturer and professional man; *Social customs*—visiting; cards; some dine late; *Ability*—business management or clerical

1. In this and the following classes the names and occupations of residents in streets are given in directories. A street of houses of similar rental may be taken and a perusal of the directory reveals the occupations of the inhabitants.

skill, with steadiness and trustworthiness and some conscious refinement of manner; readers; interested popularly in scientific and public affairs: *Education*—grammar school.

F. Professional and Administrative Class. *Standard*—£600 a year: *House*—£60—£80: *Occupation*—heads of business firms, professional men, administrative posts: *Education*—secondary or public school, university generally.

G. The Rich. *Standard*—£2,000 and upwards: *Occupation*—heads of firms, manufacturers, a few salaried posts: *Education*—public school, university.

Of these groups, the first three (A, B, C) represent the development of the old working class and tend to centre round the simpler of the two theoretic standards. A. represents the refuse of a race; C. is a solid, independent and valuable class in society. Groups E, F, G represent the fluctuation round the second theoretic standard. E. possesses the elements of refinement; provincialisms in speech are avoided, its sons are selected as clerks, etc., in good class businesses, e.g., banking, insurance. F. enables the expression of the full degree of cultured life. G. enables the satisfaction of luxurious habits.

The only available figures bearing upon the numerical extent of these different classes seem to be those of Mr. Chiozza Money.¹ These are given below and relate to the year 1903-4:—

Persons with incomes of less than £160 a year and their families ²	-	-	-	-	-	38,000,000
Persons with incomes						
of between	-	£160 and £400	3,035,000			
" "	"	£400 and £500	265,000			
" "	"	£500 and £600	145,000			
" "	"	£600 and £700	65,000			
Unplaced	-	-	-	-	-	240,000
						<hr/> 3,750,000
Persons with incomes of £700 and over	-	-	-	-	-	1,250,000
						<hr/> 43,000,000

Classes A, B, C, D represent therefore the great bulk of the population.

In comparison with the old class structure several differences are observed. In the older class structure the margins of each class were rigidly marked in order to secure exclusion. In the

1. "Riches and Poverty," pages 35 and 42.

2. Reckoning five persons to the family.

present class structure each class tends to be grouped round a central standard; the margins are vague and classes overlap. Formerly change of class was rare. To-day individuals usually remain in the group in which they were born, but passage into other groups in both directions is common. Modern class structure thus tends to represent the result of a sifting process. Data are not available for an accurate estimation of the extent to which such passage takes place, but I have endeavoured to obtain some evidence in this direction.

i. In the case of one family I have been able to obtain an accurate record of the variation in occupation and standard of its members for two generations.

The first generation :—

A farmer (E) had 6 sons: farmer (E, dropped in status to D); doctor (F); paymaster in navy (F); secretary (E, imprisoned for fraud, afterwards small shopkeeper D); clerk (E); clerk (E).

The second generation having sons :—

The first son, farmer (E and D) had 2 sons: shop-assistant (C, dismissed for theft, subsequently policeman C); farm bailiff (D). The second son, doctor (F) had 2 sons: doctor (F), solicitor (E). The fifth son, secretary (E, and small shopkeeper D) had 3 sons: clerk (D); school caretaker (C); painter's labourer (B). The sixth son, clerk (E) had 4 sons: clerk (E); clerk (E, afterwards university lecturer (F); clerk (E); clerk (E).

This shows the following variation from an E individual: 1st generation (6 sons)—2 F's, 3 E's, 1 D. 2nd generation (10 sons)—2 F's, 4 E's, 2 D's, 1 C, 1 B. Three passages occur (2 down, 1 up). In the first generation the first son, a farmer E, dropped in position, though the occupation was not altered, and his sons obviously took the lower positions C and D. In the first generation the fourth son dropped from E to D, and his sons became D, C and B, tending thus to drop further. In the second generation a son of the sixth son rises from E to F.

It will be noticed that the sons often (in 5 cases out of 18) do not start in the same class as their parents, thus:—

An F father had sons 1 F, 1 E.

An E father had sons 5 E, 1 F.

An E father had sons 4 E.

A D father had sons 1 D, 1 C.

A D father had sons 1 D, 1 C, 1 B.

ii. From twenty-one members of a large working-men's club I obtained the names of the occupations of their fathers and their brothers. In four cases the occupation was of too vague a nature

to indicate the group with any certainty. Approximately, however, the following grouping may be made. None of the members were drawn from the A class.

3 D parents have	11 sons:	7 D,	4 C,	— B
9 C parents have	29 sons:	4 D,	18 C,	7 B
9 B parents have	27 sons:	3 D,	7 C,	17 B
21	68	14	29	24

How far passage has taken place the returns do not show. The variation is considerable both up and down. No rise has taken place into the E class. No fall is recorded into the A class, though several must, I think, have taken place.

iii. Through the courtesy of the members of the staff of a university, to whom I take this belated opportunity of expressing my considerable indebtedness, I have been enabled to obtain corresponding particulars.

5 C parents have	11 sons:	1 C,	3 D,	1 E,	6 F
4 D parents have	11 sons:	— C,	4 D,	3 E,	4 F
21 E parents have	70 sons:	— C,	4 D,	49 E,	17 F
55 F parents have	162 sons:	— C,	— D,	6 E,	156 F
85	254	1	11	59	183

Thus: of the 85 members of the staff from whom particulars were obtained 5 had parents in the C class, 4 in the D class, 21 in the E class, and 55 in the F class. The extent of passage is not recorded. Probably several members of the F class should be in G.

2. *The economic ability of the individual tends to be the determining factor of class.* This is to some extent brought out by the above figures. The eight results mentioned at the commencement of the article have facilitated this method of class determination. The power of economic development has created a vigorous demand for economic ability and, by the attractiveness of its reward in the shape of wealth, has secured the main energies of the people. The number and varying nature of the posts created have provided scope for economic ability to express itself. The barriers which prevented the upward passage of ability or upheld the unable person have steadily tended to disappear. Lastly, the ability which people possess has, through the development of education, been enabled to be ascertained.

It would, of course, be untrue to say that modern class structure is determined entirely by this factor. Wealth, for instance, is obtained by other means than those of economic ability. It may be inherited, but this applies to comparatively few cases. The organisation of labour is not perfect. The education system is not complete. Birth position is still a factor. Misfortunes occur. It is, however, none the less true in the main, and the tendency for it to be the determining factor is increasing.

The term "economic ability" was stated earlier as that ability which earned a wage. It is not, however, a single quality which is found in different individuals in a varying degree; it is a comprehensive term including many forms of ability. Physical characteristics, personal manner, character, no less than mental qualities, may be of economic value. These different forms of ability are demanded in different occupations.

It is of interest to note that different forms of ability receive a very varying rate of reward. To-day, those forms of ability included in the term business capacity secure the greatest return. Intellectual ability, too, is steadily increasing in economic importance. Moral qualities are of secondary value, of use only in certain occupations.

It is important to bear in mind, when considering the relation of ability in general to economic ability, that the occupations of to-day increasingly tend to render each form of ability of economic value. The corollary of this latter point is no less important. The person without economic ability, who is thus tending to become the person without ability, becomes less and less able to find a place in human society. Inefficiency is becoming a serious problem. The era of the rejection of the inefficient has begun. Modern social legislation and proposed legislation bears evidence of this.

Two more points of interest may be alluded to: (i) The more complex the organisation of society becomes, the greater the ability needed in the top posts. Society has become an organisation capable of supporting extremely varied forms of ability, but it is increasingly dependent for its existence upon the high forms of ability. (ii) It is frequently stated that if equal chances of opportunity and of education be afforded human individuals would tend towards an elevated equality of position. The evidence of present class structure presented above reveals nothing to justify such a statement. Considerable variation of ability exists even in members of the same family. Further, now that the extent of the ability is becoming revealed, the scantiness of the amount which many individuals possess is also becoming obvious. With reference to mental ability the frequency with which children leave school without getting beyond Standard IV. affords valuable evidence. With reference to character and energy, personal

experience of some twelve years of social work amongst children and adults of the A, B, C and D classes has led me to the conclusion that in numerous cases the cause of the inefficiency was not due to the fact that the strength of character, resource, self-reliance, etc., had not been developed or had been thwarted, but that the innate capacity of the individual for development was extremely limited. Several other social workers and officials with whom the matter has been discussed have reached the same conclusion. In general we are an artizan-standard people, with simple tastes and low degrees of ability. Higher degrees of ability in different directions occur freely, but tend to be abnormal.

3. *The large town has become the normal environment of the human individual.* The growing proportion of town dwellers and the change to town from country as the normal human environment was alluded to earlier. It is necessary, however, to point out how the formation of the large town has facilitated the present class structure. (i) A town consists not so much of families as of individuals. Each member of the family tends to go his or her own way, and to be considered on his or her individual merits. (ii) Individuals have much greater scope in a large town with regard to their occupation, both as to nature and to possibility of advancement. (iii) The town tends to be built in class districts and thus facilitates a class standard. (iv) Its effect upon marriage is referred to below.

4. *Marriage receives an added importance and more equal mating is facilitated.* If ability be inherited the fact of marriage taking place between members of the same class is important. It will mean the supply of further ability of that class. Classes are numerically so large, and the forms of ability which occur in the same class so varied, that merely class intermarriage would occasion only very general results. Members of the same class, however, tend to be drawn together by common interests, similarity of occupation, common tastes and common personal characteristics. These enable a closer degree of correspondence in the selection. The economic development of women as wage earners has made similarity of occupation a much greater selective factor.

I have been able to secure some evidence as to the nature of the occupations of people who intermarry, by going through the marriage registers of two churches popular for marriage purposes, and taking out the occupations of bridegroom and bride¹ and of the fathers of the bridegroom and bride. They shew the following results :—

1. From sentimental motives the occupation of the bride was but rarely asked. This would have added to the value of the record.

Occupations of man, man's father, and wife's father, identical	13
Occupations of man and wife's father, identical - - -	13
Occupations of man's father and wife's father, identical -	9
Occupations of man and wife's father same class (excluding above) - - - - -	72
Occupations of man and wife's father different class -	24
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	131

Mention must be made of the influence of the town. The large town has increased the opportunities for more accurate selection. In a town the group of similarly interested individuals is large and thus opportunity is afforded for a greater range of selection. A town also affords more opportunities for the expression of common interests and for the drawing together of similarly interested people.

An interesting point arises under this heading in connection with the passage of an individual from one class to another. He or she can either marry from the new class, in which case the children start more evenly from the higher class; or the marriage may be with an old playmate from the former class, in which case the children tend to start slightly prejudiced. In this connection it is interesting to note that frequently it is a single form of ability which determines the alteration of class. Apart from this factor the individual prefers and would use the former class standard.

F. G. D'AETH.
