

SCIENCE

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DECLINING BIRTH RATE¹

It is a custom of this Section, I believe, for the retiring vice-president to select for his address a subject of national interest in the field of social economy. He is expected to avoid narrow and technical discussion of specialties but he may properly summarize the important works of other investigators in specialized fields to show their trend and bearing and he may also point out the direction which further research should take. These requirements of the occasion are all the more necessary now in view of the circumstances under which we are living. We are going through a period of serious conflict. Our nation is at present engaged in concentrating its resources of men, of materials and, above all, of thought, to make itself felt in the world struggle for preserving civilization. This is no time for trivialities or for small detail. Under these conditions, the Section on Social and Economic Science of the American Association may be expected to have a message of national import. It would be inexcusable to take your time and attention for anything but a topic of the widest practical significance in the present national emergency.

With these considerations in mind, I have chosen as the subject of this address the significance of our declining birth rate. I have done so with considerable hesitancy because of the difficulty of the subject and the importance of its present lesson. I

¹ Address of the retiring vice-president and chairman of Section I, Social and Economic Science, American Association for Advancement of Science, Pittsburgh, December 29, 1917.

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