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# Sterilization for Human Betterment, by E. S. Gosney and Paul Popenoe

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## STERILIZATION FOR HUMAN BETTERMENT

Justice Holmes, in sustaining the validity of the Virginia law providing for sterilization of mental defectives, made the comment that three generations of imbeciles are enough. The woman seeking to prevent what she alleged to be a denial of the equal protection of the law, was the daughter of a feeble-minded mother, and the mother of an illegitimate feeble-minded child. One might infer that Justice Holmes was of the opinion that three generations of imbeciles are *more* than enough.

The book is a publication of the Human Betterment Foundation. It treats intelligently, fearlessly and yet unoffensively, this modern, economic and eugenic problem. It discusses history and effect of voluntary and involuntary sterilization, gives statistics of results obtained in California over a period of twenty years, and furnishes appendices of various information upon the general subject.

Indiana, long a leader in this movement, enacted a sterilization law in 1907 which was held unconstitutional, and in 1927 the legislature again passed a similar act. Dr. McSharpe, physician at the Indiana State Reformatory, was an authority in this field, and is credited with being one of the first to use the present method of male sterilization. Dr. Samuel E. Smith, formerly Provost of Indiana University Medical School, was a recognized authority and was instrumental in bringing about the enactment of the 1927 law.

The book is in no sense a legal treatise, but is a short comprehensible statement of the arguments in favor of sterilization for human betterment.

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\**Sterilization for Human Betterment*, by E. S. Gosney and Paul Popenoe. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1929. pp. v, 202.