It happened one day that an atheist and a man were standing together on a doorstep; and the atheist said, "It is raining." To which the man replied, "What is raining?"; which question was the beginning of a violent quarrel and a lasting friendship. I will not touch upon any heads of the dispute, which doubtless included Jupiter Pluvius, the Neuter Gender, Pantheism, Noah’s Ark, Mackintoshes, and the Passive Mood; but I will record the one point upon which the two persons emerged in some agreement. It was that there is such a thing as an atheistic literary style; that materialism may appear in the mere diction of a man, though he be speaking of clocks or cats or anything quite remote from theology. The mark of the atheistic style is that it instinctively chooses the word which suggests that things are dead things; that things have no souls. Thus they will not speak of waging war, which means willing it; they speak of the "outbreak of war," as if all the guns blew up without the men touching them. Thus those Socialists that are atheist will not call their international sympathy, sympathy; they will call it "solidarity," as if the poor men of France and Ger-
many were physically stuck together like dates in a grocer's shop. The same Marxian Socialists are accused of cursing the Capitalists inordinately; but the truth is that they let the Capitalists off much too easily. For instead of saying that employers pay less wages, which might pin the employers to some moral responsibility, they insist on talking about the "rise and fall" of wages; as if a vast silver sea of sixpences and shillings was always going up and down automatically like the real sea at Margate. Thus they will not speak of reform, but of development; and they spoil their one honest and virile phrase, "the class war," by talking of it as no one in his wits can talk of a war, predicting its finish and final result as one calculates the coming of Christmas Day or the taxes. Thus, lastly (as we shall see touching our special subject-matter here) the atheist style in letters always avoids talking of love or lust, which are things alive, and calls marriage or concubinage "the relations of the sexes"; as if a man and a woman were two wooden objects standing in a certain angle and attitude to each other, like a table and a chair.

Now the same anarchic mystery that clings round the phrase, "il pleut," clings round the phrase, "il faut." In English it is generally represented by the passive mood in grammar, and the Eugenists and their like deal especially in it; they are as passive in their statements as they are active in their experiments. Their sentences always enter tail first, and have no
subject, like animals without heads. It is never "the doctor should cut off this leg" or "the policeman should collar that man." It is always "Such limbs should be amputated," or "Such men should be under restraint." Hamlet said, "I should have fattened all the region kites with this slave's offal." The Eugenist would say, "The region kites should, if possible, be fattened; and the offal of this slave is available for the dietetic experiment." Lady Macbeth said, "Give me the daggers; I'll let his bowels out." The Eugenist would say, "In such cases the bowels should, etc." Do not blame me for the repulsiveness of the comparisons. I have searched English literature for the most decent parallels to Eugenist language.

The formless god that broods over the East is called "Om." The formless god who has begun to brood over the West is called "On." But here we must make a distinction. The impersonal word on is French, and the French have a right to use it, because they are a democracy. And when a Frenchman says "one" he does not mean himself, but the normal citizen. He does not mean merely "one," but one and all. "On n'a que sa parole" does not mean "Noblesse oblige," or "I am the Duke of Billingsgate and must keep my word." It means: "One has a sense of honour as one has a backbone: every man, rich or poor, should feel honourable"; and this, whether possible or no, is the purest ambition of the republic. But when the Eugenists say, "Conditions
must be altered” or “Ancestry should be investigated,” or what not, it seems clear that they do not mean that the democracy must do it, whatever else they may mean. They do not mean that any man not evidently mad may be trusted with these tests and re-arrangements, as the French democratic system trusts such a man with a vote or a farm or the control of a family. That would mean that Jones and Brown, being both ordinary men, would set about arranging each other’s marriages. And this state of affairs would seem a little elaborate, and it might occur even to the Eugenic mind that if Jones and Brown are quite capable of arranging each other’s marriages, it is just possible that they might be capable of arranging their own.

This dilemma, which applies in so simple a case, applies equally to any wide and sweeping system of Eugenist voting; for though it is true that the community can judge more dispassionately than a man can judge in his own case, this particular question of the choice of a wife is so full of disputable shades in every conceivable case, that it is surely obvious that almost any democracy would simply vote the thing out of the sphere of voting, as they would any proposal of police interference in the choice of walking weather or of children’s names. I should not like to be the politician who should propose a particular instance of Eugenics to be voted on by the French people. Democracy dismissed, it is here hardly needful to consider the other old models. Modern scientists
will not say that George III., in his lucid intervals, should settle who is mad; or that the aristocracy that introduced gout shall supervise diet.

I hold it clear, therefore, if anything is clear about the business, that the Eugenists do not merely mean that the mass of common men should settle each other’s marriages between them; the question remains, therefore, whom they do instinctively trust when they say that this or that ought to be done. What is this flying and evanescent authority that vanishes wherever we seek to fix it? Who is the man who is the lost subject that governs the Eugenist’s verb? In a large number of cases I think we can simply say that the individual Eugenist means himself, and nobody else. Indeed one Eugenist, Mr. A. H. Huth, actually had a sense of humour, and admitted this. He thinks a great deal of good could be done with a surgical knife, if we would only turn him loose with one. And this may be true. A great deal of good could be done with a loaded revolver, in the hands of a judicious student of human nature. But it is imperative that the Eugenist should perceive that on that principle we can never get beyond a perfect balance of different sympathies and antipathies. I mean that I should differ from Dr. Saleeby or Dr. Karl Pearson not only in a vast majority of individual cases, but in a vast majority of cases in which they would be bound to admit that such a difference was natural and reasonable. The chief victim of these famous doctors would be a yet more famous
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doctor: that eminent though unpopular practitioner, Dr. Fell.

To show that such rational and serious differences do exist, I will take one instance from that Bill which proposed to protect families and the public generally from the burden of feeble-minded persons. Now, even if I could share the Eugenic contempt for human rights, even if I could start gaily on the Eugenic campaign, I should not begin by removing feeble-minded persons. I have known as many families in as many classes as most men; and I cannot remember meeting any very monstrous human suffering arising out of the presence of such insufficient and negative types. There seem to be comparatively few of them; and those few by no means the worst burdens upon domestic happiness. I do not hear of them often; I do not hear of them doing much more harm than good; and in the few cases I know well they are not only regarded with human affection, but can be put to certain limited forms of human use. Even if I were a Eugenist, then I should not personally elect to waste my time locking up the feeble-minded. The people I should lock up would be the strong-minded. I have known hardly any cases of mere mental weakness making a family a failure; I have known eight or nine cases of violent and exaggerated force of character making a family a hell. If the strong-minded could be segregated it would quite certainly be better for their friends and families. And if there is really anything in heredity, it would be better for
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posterity too. For the kind of egoist I mean is a madman in a much more plausible sense than the mere harmless "deficient"; and to hand on the horrors of his anarchic and insatiable temperament is a much graver responsibility than to leave a mere inheritance of childishness. I would not arrest such tyrants, because I think that even moral tyranny in a few homes is better than a medical tyranny turning the state into a madhouse. I would not segregate them, because I respect a man's free-will and his front-door and his right to be tried by his peers. But since free-will is believed by Eugenists no more than by Calvinists, since front-doors are respected by Eugenists no more than by house-breakers, and since the Habeas Corpus is about as sacred to Eugenists as it would be to King John, why do not they bring light and peace into so many human homes by removing a demoniac from each of them? Why do not the promoters of the Feeble-Minded Bill call at the many grand houses in town or country where such nightmares notoriously are? Why do they not knock at the door and take the bad squire away? Why do they not ring the bell and remove the dipsomaniac prize-fighter? I do not know; and there is only one reason I can think of, which must remain a matter of speculation. When I was at school, the kind of boy who liked teasing half-wits was not the sort that stood up to bullies.

That, however it may be, does not concern my argument. I mention the case of the strong-minded variety of the monstrous merely to give one out of
the hundred cases of the instant divergence of individual opinions the moment we begin to discuss who is fit or unfit to propagate. If Dr. Saleeby and I were setting out on a segregating trip together, we should separate at the very door; and if he had a thousand doctors with him, they would all go different ways. Everyone who has known as many kind and capable doctors as I have, knows that the ablest and sanest of them have a tendency to possess some little hobby or half-discovery of their own, as that oranges are bad for children, or that trees are dangerous in gardens, or that many more people ought to wear spectacles. It is asking too much of human nature to expect them not to cherish such scraps of originality in a hard, dull, and often heroic trade. But the inevitable result of it, as exercised by the individual Saleebys, would be that each man would have his favourite kind of idiot. Each doctor would be mad on his own madman. One would have his eye on devotional curates; another would wander about collecting obstreperous majors; a third would be the terror of animal-loving spinsters, who would flee with all their cats and dogs before him. Short of sheer literal anarchy, therefore, it seems plain that the Eugenist must find some authority other than his own implied personality. He must, once and for all, learn the lesson which is hardest for him and me and for all our fallen race—the fact that he is only himself.

We now pass from mere individual men who obviously cannot be trusted, even if they are individual
medical men, with such despotism over their neighbours; and we come to consider whether the Eugenists have at all clearly traced any more imaginable public authority, any apparatus of great experts or great examinations to which such risks of tyranny could be trusted. They are not very precise about this either; indeed, the great difficulty I have throughout in considering what are the Eugenist’s proposals is that they do not seem to know themselves. Some philosophic attitude which I cannot myself connect with human reason seems to make them actually proud of the dimness of their definitions and the uncompleteness of their plans. The Eugenic optimism seems to partake generally of the nature of that dazzled and confused confidence, so common in private theatricals, that it will be all right on the night. They have all the ancient despotism, but none of the ancient dogmatism. If they are ready to reproduce the secrecies and cruelties of the Inquisition, at least we cannot accuse them of offending us with any of that close and complicated thought, that arid and exact logic which narrowed the minds of the Middle Ages; they have discovered how to combine the hardening of the heart with a sympathetic softening of the head. Nevertheless, there is one large, though vague, idea of the Eugenists, which is an idea, and which we reach when we reach this problem of a more general supervision.

It was best presented perhaps by the distinguished doctor who wrote the article on these matters in that
composite book which Mr. Wells edited, and called "The Great State." He said the doctor should no longer be a mere plasterer of paltry maladies, but should be, in his own words, "the health adviser of the community." The same can be expressed with even more point and simplicity in the proverb that prevention is better than cure. Commenting on this, I said that it amounted to treating all people who are well as if they were ill. This the writer admitted to be true, only adding that everyone is ill. To which I rejoin that if everyone is ill the health adviser is ill too, and therefore cannot know how to cure that minimum of illness. This is the fundamental fallacy in the whole business of preventive medicine. Prevention is not better than cure. Cutting off a man's head is not better than curing his headache; it is not even better than failing to cure it. And it is the same if a man is in revolt, even a morbid revolt. Taking the heart out of him by slavery is not better than leaving the heart in him, even if you leave it a broken heart. Prevention is not only not better than cure; prevention is even worse than disease. Prevention means being an invalid for life, with the extra exasperation of being quite well. I will ask God, but certainly not man, to prevent me in all my doings. But the decisive and discussable form of this is well summed up in that phrase about the health adviser of society. I am sure that those who speak thus have something in their minds larger and more illuminating than the other two propositions we have con-
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cidered. They do not mean that all citizens should decide, which would mean merely the present vague and dubious balance. They do not mean that all medical men should decide, which would mean a much more unbalanced balance. They mean that a few men might be found who had a consistent scheme and vision of a healthy nation, as Napoleon had a consistent scheme and vision of an army. It is cold anarchy to say that all men are to meddle in all men's marriages. It is cold anarchy to say that any doctor may seize and segregate anyone he likes. But it is not anarchy to say that a few great hygienists might enclose or limit the life of all citizens, as nurses do with a family of children. It is not anarchy, it is tyranny; but tyranny is a workable thing. When we ask by what process such men could be certainly chosen, we are back again on the old dilemma of despotism, which means a man, or democracy which means men, or aristocracy which means favouritism. But as a vision the thing is plausible and even rational. It is rational, and it is wrong.

It is wrong, quite apart from the suggestion that an expert on health cannot be chosen. It is wrong because an expert on health cannot exist. An expert on disease can exist, for the very reason we have already considered in the case of madness, because experts can only arise out of exceptional things. A parallel with any of the other learned professions will make the point plain. If I am prosecuted for trespass, I will ask my solicitor which of the local lanes I am
forbidden to walk in. But if my solicitor, having gained my case, were so elated that he insisted on settling what lanes I should walk in; if he asked me to let him map out all my country walks, because he was the perambulatory adviser of the community—then that solicitor would solicit in vain. If he will insist on walking behind me through woodland ways, pointing out with his walking-stick likely avenues and attractive short-cuts, I shall turn on him with passion, saying: "Sir, I pay you to know one particular puzzle in Latin and Norman-French, which they call the law of England; and you do know the law of England. I have never had any earthly reason to suppose that you know England. If you did, you would leave a man alone when he was looking at it."

As are the limits of the lawyer's special knowledge about walking, so are the limits of the doctor's. If I fall over the stump of a tree and break my leg, as is likely enough, I shall say to the lawyer, "Please go and fetch the doctor." I shall do it because the doctor really has a larger knowledge of a narrower area. There are only a certain number of ways in which a leg can be broken; I know none of them, and he knows all of them. There is such a thing as being a specialist in broken legs. There is no such thing as being a specialist in legs. When unbroken, legs are a matter of taste. If the doctor has really mended my leg, he may merit a colossal equestrian statue on the top of an eternal tower of brass. But if the doctor has really mended my leg
he has no more rights over it. He must not come and teach me how to walk; because he and I learnt that in the same school, the nursery. And there is no more abstract likelihood of the doctor walking more elegantly than I do than there is of the barber or the bishop or the burglar walking more elegantly than I do. There cannot be a general specialist; the specialist can have no kind of authority, unless he has avowedly limited his range. There cannot be such a thing as the health adviser of the community, because there cannot be such a thing as one who specialises in the universe.

Thus when Dr. Saleeby says that a young man about to be married should be obliged to produce his health-book as he does his bank-book, the expression is neat; but it does not convey the real respects in which the two things agree, and in which they differ. To begin with, of course, there is a great deal too much of the bank-book for the sanity of our commonwealth; and it is highly probable that the health-book, as conducted in modern conditions, would rapidly become as timid, as snobbish, and as sterile as the money side of marriage has become. In the moral atmosphere of modernity the poor and the honest would probably get as much the worst of it if we fought with health-books as they do when we fight with bank-books. But that is a more general matter; the real point is in the difference between the two. The difference is in this vital fact: that a monied man generally thinks about money, whereas
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a healthy man does not think about health. If the strong young man cannot produce his health-book, it is for the perfectly simple reason that he has not got one. He can mention some extraordinary malady he has; but every man of honour is expected to do that now, whatever may be the decision that follows on the knowledge.

Health is simply Nature, and no naturalist ought to have the impudence to understand it. Health, one may say, is God; and no agnostic has any right to claim His acquaintance. For God must mean, among other things, that mystical and multitudinous balance of all things, by which they are at least able to stand up straight and endure; and any scientist who pretends to have exhausted this subject of ultimate sanity, I will call the lowest of religious fanatics. I will allow him to understand the madman, for the madman is an exception. But if he says he understands the sane man, then he says he has the secret of the Creator. For whenever you and I feel fully sane, we are quite incapable of naming the elements that make up that mysterious simplicity. We can no more analyse such peace in the soul than we can conceive in our heads the whole enormous and dizzy equilibrium by which, out of suns roaring like infernos and heavens toppling like precipices, He has hanged the world upon nothing.

We conclude, therefore, that unless Eugenic activity be restricted to monstrous things like mania, there is no constituted or constitutable authority that
can really over-rule men in a matter in which they are so largely on a level. In the matter of fundamental human rights, nothing can be above Man, except God. An institution claiming to come from God might have such authority; but this is the last claim the Eugenists are likely to make. One caste or one profession seeking to rule men in such matters is like a man's right eye claiming to rule him, or his left leg to run away with him. It is madness. We now pass on to consider whether there is really anything in the way of Eugenics to be done, with such cheerfulness as we may possess after discovering that there is nobody to do it.