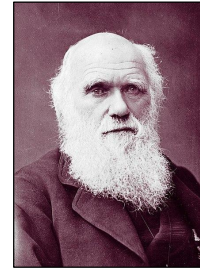


Letter to Heinrich Fick¹
Charles Darwin, July 26, 1872



Dear Sir

I am much obliged for your kindness in having sent me your essay², which I have read with very great interest. Your view of the daughters of short-lived parents inheriting property at an early age, and thus getting married with its consequences, is an original and quite new idea to me. — So would have been what you say about soldiers, had I not read an article published about a year ago by a German (name forgotten just at present³) who takes nearly the same view with yours, and thus accounts for great military nations having had a short existence.

I much wish that you would sometimes take occasion to discuss an allied point, if it holds good on the continent,—namely the rule insisted on by all our Trades-Unions, that all workmen,—the good and bad, the strong and weak,—should all work for the same number of hours and receive the same wages. The unions are also opposed to piece-work,—in short to all competition.

I fear that Cooperative Societies, which many look at as the main hope for the future, likewise exclude competition⁴. This seems to me a great evil for the future progress of mankind. — Nevertheless under any system, temperate and frugal workmen will have an advantage and leave more offspring than the drunken and reckless.—

With my best thanks for the interest which I have received from your Essay, and with my respect, I remain, Dear Sir

Yours faithfully

Ch. Darwin

¹ Heinrich Fick (1822-1895), Swiss jurist and professor in Zürich.

² Heinrich Fick, "Einfluss der Naturwissenschaft auf das Recht", *Jahrbücher für Nationalökonomie und Statistik* 18, 1872. Fick argued that national vigour was sapped by policies that required strong young men to serve in the military but exempted the weak, who then gained a selective advantage in the struggle for existence. To counter this he suggested that marriage restrictions be placed on those ineligible for military service. Fick also believed that socioeconomic equality would benefit the weak and lead to degeneration.

³ Identified as Hermann Eberhard Richter, *Die Zukunft der Soldatenvölker*, Dresden: Hellmuth Henkler, 1871.

⁴ The Trade Union Act of 1871 had legalised trade unions for the first time in Britain. From 1863, British co-operative societies began to come together to form the Co-operative Wholesale Society, which, by means of bulk purchases, provided cheaper goods to its members.