

Appendix to Chapter XIV*.

"The Weights of British Noblemen during the last Three Generations," *Nature*, January 17, 1884 (Vol. XXIX, pp. 266-268).

This rather amusing paper is not included in any list of Galton's memoirs known to me, nor were any offprints of it to be found in the *Galtoniana*. It seems to have been forgotten by Galton himself and would have certainly been overlooked by me had I not stumbled across it in reading Romanes' review of Galton's *Record of Family Faculties* and *Life History Album* in the same number of the *Journal*. Galton—whom the Goddess of Chance certainly favoured—became acquainted with the fact that an old established firm of wine and coffee merchants had been since about 1750 in the habit of weighing their customers, and that upwards of 20,000 persons, many of whom were famous in English history of the eighteenth century, had for their use or amusement sought the firm's huge

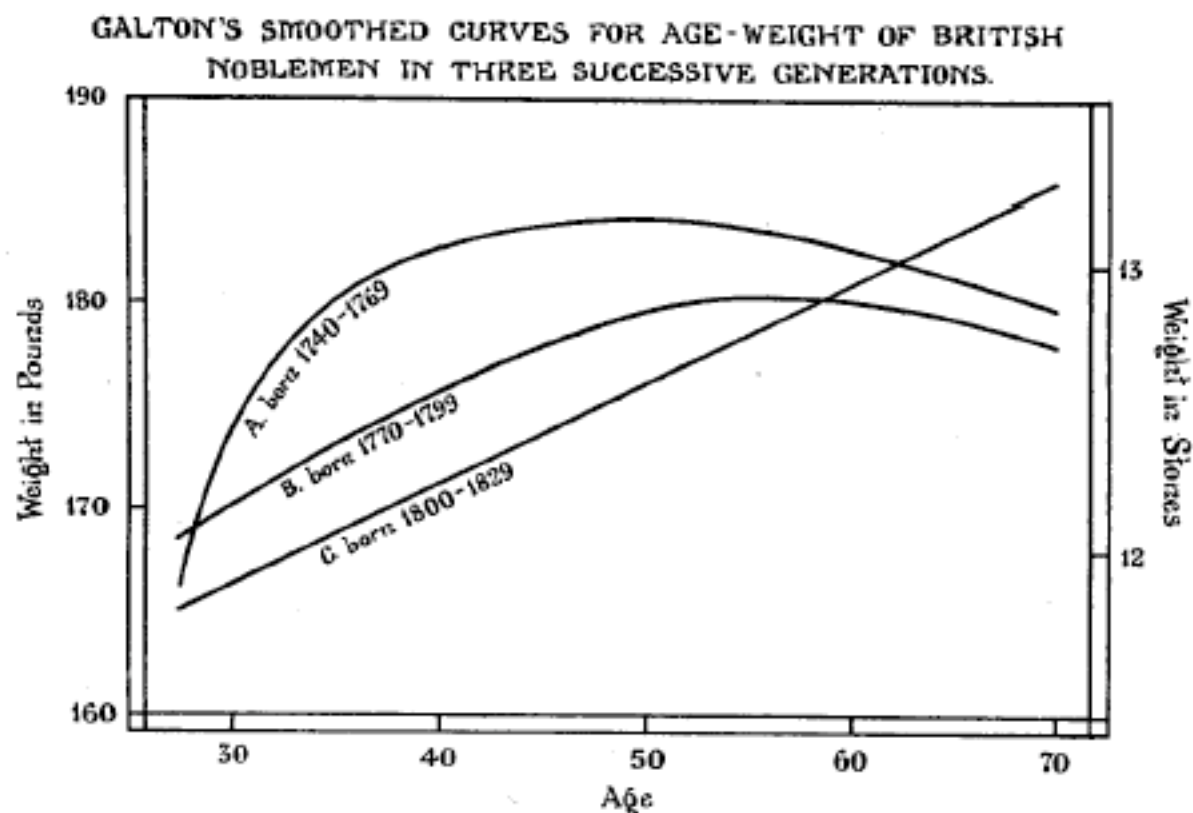


Fig. 14.

beam scales. Galton confined his attention almost entirely to noblemen as a well-rounded class, whose ages were easily ascertainable, and to their data in respect only of two characteristics, namely the degree of fluctuation in weight as exhibited by the age-weight curves of individual noblemen, and the difference in the average age-weight curves of noblemen born in the three periods 1740-1769, 1770-1799, 1800-1829. He found that the average annual fluctuation in the earlier group was about 7 lbs. and that in the latest group it was only 5 lbs. He concluded that this pointed to an

* Some notice of the following paper should have appeared in Section H of Chapter XIII (Vol. II), but its existence was then unknown to me.

irregularity in the mode of life that was greater two or three generations back than now. Further he found that the "prime" for weight was also earlier in age for the older generations, being hardly discoverable at all in those born in the first third of the nineteenth century or in the professional classes of the 'eighties. His three smoothed curves reproduced on p. 136, with the table of mean weights at each central age, indicate that noblemen of the generation which flourished about the beginning of last century attained their meridian and declined much earlier than those of the generation sixty years their juniors, or indeed than the mid-Victorian professional classes, where the culminating point was difficult to ascertain.

Galton's data were somewhat scanty as the following table will indicate, but his general conclusions appear to be justified :

Actual Mean Weights in pounds at Various Ages.

Class	Years of Age					
	27	30	40	50	60	70
Born 1740-1769	166 (13)	176 (18)	184 (24)	181 (21)	181 (18)	180 (12)
Born 1770-1799	168 (24)	171 (23)	172 (24)	184 (26)	178 (26)	178 (15)
Born 1800-1829	165 (35)	165 (44)	171 (43)	175 (37)	181 (22)	188 (7)
Mid-Victorian Professional Class	161	167	173	174	174	?

"There can be no doubt," he writes, "that the dissolute life led by the upper classes about the beginning of this century, which is so graphically described by Mr Trevelyan in his *Life of Fox*, has left its mark on their age-weight traces. It would be most interesting to collate these violent fluctuations with events in their medical histories; but, failing such information, we can only speculate on them, much as Elaine did on the dents in the shield of Launcelot, and on looking at some huge notch in the trace [for the individual], may hazard the guess, 'Ah, what a stroke of gout was there!'"

Although no great importance can be attached to Galton's results for this particular class of subject, yet the problems his paper suggests might be profitably studied on more ample material now extant. I am therefore glad to have brought to light once more this long forgotten paper.