

awakened to the fact that intellectually the naughty playmates were considerably ahead of the good little boy. For the first time common sense scored a distinct triumph over excessive parental love; the governess who had been unable to handle her self-willed pupil was dismissed, and the boy was sent to school.

There he has been painfully gaining the discipline—the lessons in self-mastery—that should have been given him in the nursery. Lately he has profited much by reason of business interests that took his parents to Europe for many months, and put him more completely under the control of the school authorities. But he still is lamentably arrogant and selfish; he still finds it difficult to get along with other boys. Whether his schoolmates will take the trouble to help him overcome the handicap of his early rearing is questionable; and however this may be, it is scarcely likely that the character defects unnecessarily acquired during his childhood will be wholly rooted out.

Now, this boy's case is by no means exceptional. Rather, it is typical of the plight of most "only children," who, no matter what their advantages of birth, too often reach manhood and womanhood sadly handicapped and markedly inferior to other children. In a vague way, to be sure, parents with only one child have long realized that they are confronted with special problems in child training; but there is abundant proof that in the great majority of instances they signally fail to grasp these problems clearly and work them out satisfactorily.

Every-day observation supports this statement, and it is confirmed by the findings of modern medical, psychological, and sociological investigation. Statistically its most impressive corroboration is forthcoming from the results of a census of "only children" undertaken a few years ago by the psychological department of Clark University in consequence of certain suggestive indications noticed in the responses received to a questionnaire on peculiar and exceptional children.

Of the one thousand children described

in these responses, it was observed that forty-six were specifically mentioned as being "only children," although none of the queries in the questionnaire asked directly or indirectly about such children. The presumption was that a number of the remainder were also of the only child class; but even if such were not the case, the total of forty-six was surprisingly high, since, according to reliable vital statistics, the average progeny of fertile marriages is six, with an only child average of one out of every thirteen fertile marriages; that is, a proportion of one only child to every seventy-eight children, as contrasted with the proportion of one in fewer than every twenty-two of the "peculiar" children described in the questionnaire reports.

Moreover, on dividing these reports into three groups based on the "advantageous," "neutral," and "disadvantageous" character of the peculiarities mentioned, it was found that while considerably less than half of the total number of children fell into the disadvantageous group, two thirds of the "only children" had to be put in it. Naturally this suggested the desirability of a special investigation with reference to the only child, and accordingly a second questionnaire was issued, with queries relating to age, sex, nationality, health, amusements, intellectual ability, moral traits, etc. In this way, from school-teachers and other disinterested observers definite information was obtained as to nearly four hundred "only children"—information which, as finally tabulated and analyzed by the director of the investigation, Mr. E. W. Bohannon, is of great significance to the parents of every only child, and to all interested in individual and racial improvement.

The age average of those whose age was given—nearly three hundred—was twelve years, including about sixty ranging in age from seventeen to thirty-five. About four fifths were of American parentage, while the proportion with regard to sex was, roughly speaking, one third male and two thirds female, a disparity

doubtless attributable in part to the circumstances of the investigation. About one hundred were said not to be in good health, and another hundred to be in outright bad health. In one hundred and thirty-three out of two hundred and fifty-eight cases the temperament was described as "nervous." Precocity was another often-mentioned trait; but on the average the beginning of school-life was from a year and a half to two years later than is usual, and in the performance of school-work the questionnaire responses also revealed a marked inferiority on the part of many "only children."

In their social relations only eighty were reported as "normal," while one hundred and thirty-four out of a total of two hundred and sixty-nine got along badly with other children, usually because they were unwilling, or did not know how, to make concessions, and were stubbornly set on having their own way. Of two hundred and forty-five in attendance at school, more than one hundred were recorded as not being normally interested in active games, sixty-two of these scarcely playing at all.

"If left to their own devices," Mr. Bohannon infers from the reports on the inactive sixty-two, "they are pretty sure to be found in the school-room with their teachers at intermission. A number of the boys prefer to play with the girls at strictly girls' games, such as keeping house with dolls, and generally come to be called girl-boys."

Effeminacy, in fact, is a frequent characteristic of the male only child, and was noted in case after case described in the replies to the questionnaire. Selfishness was set down as the dominant trait in ninety-four "only children" of both sexes, and many others were described as being unusually bad-tempered, vain, naughty, or untruthful.

These depressing findings have since been confirmed by other investigators, some of whom have contributed specially to our knowledge of the state of the only child in adult life. Thus the well-known English psychologist Havelock Ellis,

studying the life-histories of four hundred eminent men and women, found the astonishingly low percentage of 6.9 for only children, indicating unmistakably the persistence of the intellectual inferiority brought out by the Bohannon questionnaire. There would also seem to be no doubt that egotism and social inadaptability characterize the adult only child no less than the immature one.

"In later life," affirms the American neurologist A. A. Brill, who has made a special study of the only child from both a medical and a psychological point of view, "he is extremely conceited, jealous, and envious. He begrudges the happiness of friends and acquaintances, and he is therefore shunned and disliked." Besides which, speaking from wide experience as a practising specialist in New York, Doctor Brill insists that the only child, at any age of life, is peculiarly liable to fall a victim to hysteria, neurasthenia, and other serious functional nervous and mental maladies; and his belief, as I happen to know from their personal statements to me, is shared by other observant neurologists, such as Doctors James J. Putnam and I. H. Coriat of Boston.

This is a point of special interest, for the reason that recent medical research has made it certain that the maladies in question are one and all rooted in faulty habits of thought, usually resultant from errors of training in childhood. Chief among these errors, according to all modern neurologists, is an upbringing which tends to develop excessive occupation with thoughts of self. But this is precisely the kind of upbringing given the majority of "only children." Here again the Bohannon investigation affords impressive evidence. One of the queries included in the questionnaire bore on the treatment accorded the only child when at home, and it is indeed significant that in about seventy-five per cent. of the replies received it was stated that the policy of the parents was one of extreme indulgence.

"Had her own way in everything,"  
 "Her parents gratify her every whim,"  
 "She is surrounded by adults who indulge