

The Mind of a Child

BY EDWARD S. MARTIN

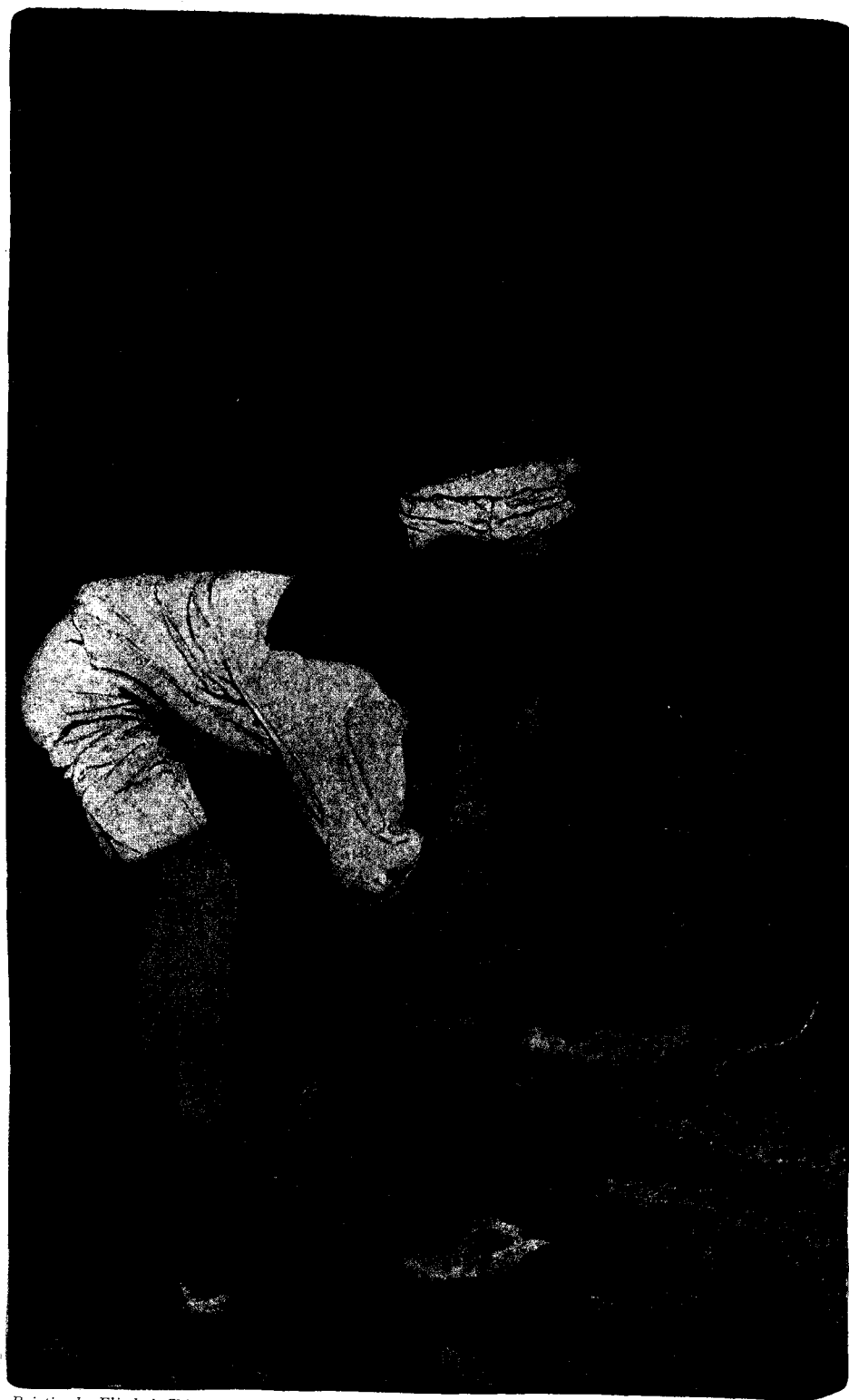
MILTIADES BENTON says that when he has worked long enough and accomplished all the duties of maintenance that are pressing, and is very tired, he expects to get some kind of a job to cooperate with small children in the pursuit of happiness. I don't know where he expects to find this employment. A place as toy-mender to a child's hospital might suit him. Or by the time he is ready to rest he may have grandchildren enough to afford him suitable society. His aspiration, whether he fulfils it or not, is a sound and natural one, entirely proper to a man of soldierly spirit, who wants, not only to earn a place on the retired list, but to like the place when he gets it. Moreover, it shows his capacity to appreciate that as childhood is the door through which we come into the workaday world of matter of fact, so it remains always a door through which those to whom it opens can escape for a time out of this world and into another country.

That childhood is such a door must be one reason for the softening of spirit that often comes at the end of a hard day from the mere sight of children, or, better still, from the touch and talk of them. The littler they are, the better, because farther removed from the world that is ours, and deeper placed in their own world. A good baby radiates peace. Every one who is rightly constituted smiles at the sight of it. Children playing in the street soothe the mind, provided it is a suitable street where trolley-cars do not run nor automobiles ravage. That the street is a good place for children can hardly be maintained, but there are many streets in great cities which are good places to observe them, because there are so many children to be seen, and an experience based on observations made in the most populous streets of New York is that children, even in an environment so far from ideal, appear

to much better advantage than a reasonable person would expect. They are busy, they are cheerful, as a rule they seem to be kind to one another. They are not bored, and unless the weather is insufferable, or they are sick, they are not depressed. With a pavement to play on and plenty of playmates most of them are happy, and are cheering in the impression they make upon a sympathetic observer. That is because of the wonderful power children have to make their own world and live in it. They do not see with grown-up eyes, nor judge by grown-up standards. They have no large experience of life and places out of which to make comparisons. The place where they are and which they know, be it street and tenement, farm or palace—that is the world to them, and they accept it without questioning and get what they can out of it.

What philosophers! What heroes! Is it strange that the attitude of an unperverted child should be the Christian ideal?

The great merit of children as companions lies in the breadth of their tolerations. They are easy to please, agreeable to most propositions, and not very critical. The very pith of successful companionship is a consensus of desires. It is not hard to get children to do what you want them to if you are ready to do it with them. With fairly good leadership they are ready for almost any adventure, provided they have not tried it before and condemned it. But they have not tried very many things, and have condemned very few. None of the natural objections of grown-ups to suggested adventures have weight with them. They are not afraid of crowds, or rain, or of being bored, or of getting tired. They are not daunted beforehand by details, nor have they obstinate preferences as to methods and routes. They do not "know better"; that



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PLAYTHINGS

is one of their delightfulest traits. There are such a lot of grown-ups whose "know-betters" one has to humor or get around if there is to be any fun. Children will trust you, and that is one of the most gratifying compliments possible. You can have your own way about things if you are judicious in choosing it, and can follow out your own whims and exercise an undisputed judgment. Being judicious about choosing your own way consists in finding out what the children want to do, or will probably like to do, and doing as nearly that thing as circumstances and the limitations of childhood's strength and the compunctions of grown-up judgment will permit.

And in the company of children you have relief from considering what will pay. The things that they do and prefer to do, do not pay as a rule except in the doing of them. Children can be helpful and be happy in helpfulness and profit by it. There is useful work that children can do that is good for them to do—details of farm-work in the country, details of housework anywhere. So to help their elders is profitable, especially when the elders are worth helping. But the business of making children useful may so easily be overdone, that the restraint of it is a constant subject of legislation, or of efforts to get legislation, all over the country, and after proper laws are made it still requires incessant watchfulness to keep them enforced. The great business of a child is to grow up, gathering due development of mind and character as well as of body while it is about it. The value of a child's labor is insignificant compared with the value of its time if wisely bestowed in growing up.

There are a thousand profitable things that children, even very small ones, can do if they are put to it. They can be made horribly useful, under compulsion, from the time they are about seven years old. By no means let any such mischance befall them. Be wary of setting tasks for them. Their instinctive preference for play that is untainted by material profit is sound and fit to be respected. Let them make scrap-books, scrap-books that take hours and days in the making and that are good for nothing when made. Our modern world

abounds enormously in excellent scrap-book material. The advertising sections of the magazines yield illimitable spoil to the scissors and paste-pot of childhood, and incidentally bring developing minds into close and rapturous touch with contemporary people and contemporary merchandise. To get them in touch with nature there are few things so good as a running brook. Ever so small a brook will do if only it runs, for every running stream is water-power, and that is a live playmate, that can be dammed, diverted, and waded in day after day and week after week. And in the winter it freezes and in the spring it has floods. It came from somewhere and it goes somewhere, and it can be followed both ways. It is hard to beat a brook as a plaything for children.

And the sea is another great plaything for children who have it, and flowers are things of great delight to grow, to pick, to paint, or to imitate in paper. The scrap-books will find their way back to the paper-mill, the brook will run on forever, unimproved by the children, the flowers will wither, and the sea will wipe out the sand forts; but from all these playtime employments and associations the child will get a benefit that never will perish.

Out of school the most important business of young children is play, and the busier they are about it the better. Lucky for them if a large part of their early lives is spent away from the great cities, with their cramped quarters, and air that is too much used to be good for young lungs.

Happily the material things that are most important to childhood are neither dear nor scarce. Simple food is fairly abundant in this country. Outside of the largest cities clean air is easily come by. The necessary clothes are cheap, and elementary education is within the reach of almost all American children. The advantage of association with wise and stimulating elders is the rarest of all the advantages that children profit by. Wise elders who are qualified to train the mind of a child are pretty scarce. The next best thing is the elder who is wise enough to respect the child's mind, and give it a chance to develop in a sympathetic atmosphere by its own natural processes.

Wainwright and the Little Gods

BY MARGARET CAMERON

STILL ruminating, as he had been all the afternoon, upon his adventure of the morning, Wainwright betook himself rather earlier than usual to the suburb where resided his friends Mr. and Mrs. Robert Howard, whose guest he was.

As he entered the door he heard Mrs. Howard's distressed voice at the telephone in the upper hall.

"But I tell you I *must* have some one! I have a dinner on. . . . I say I am giving a dinner to-night. . . . No, not a large dinner, but a *very* important one. . . . What? . . . No, no! She won't do at all! I have no time to instruct anybody! I must have a thoroughly trained, competent waitress *immediately*. . . . What? . . . Can't you send me *any one*? . . . Oh *de-ear!*" She ended with an unmistakable sob.

Wainwright mounted the steps three at a time, to find his hostess in a disconsolate, weeping heap at the top.

"What's the matter, Lady Bob?"

"Matter? *Everything's* the matter! The fish is too large and the birds are too small! The mayonnaise curdled—we had to make it all over!—and the rolls haven't come yet! The florist sent the wrong flowers, the water has been turned off nearly all day, I've been to the city once and down-town three times, and now—at this hour!—Ilma has lost her temper and departed, just because I told her that she really must not wear her hair to-night in the outlandish fashion she has been affecting lately! Oh, Clif, she's *gone!*"

"Gone! Not your waitress!"

"Yes, my waitress! Guests coming in two hours, and nobody to serve! I've telephoned and telephoned, and there isn't a trained waitress to be had. Bob was so anxious that everything should be just right to-night, and I've tried so hard, and—oh, what *am* I going to do!" Again tears seemed imminent.

"Hold hard, there! Let's think. You can't borrow a maid in the neighborhood?"

"No. I tried that first. Mrs. Chalmers has guests herself, and Mrs. Ford's girl has gone to the city. It's her day off. And there are no others that I'd trust."

"You've tried all the intelligence offices?"

"Every one."

"Well, why not get along without a waitress? We can pass things ourselves, in good old country fashion."

"You don't know Beverly Brown!"

"Who's he, that he shouldn't pass the butter?"

"He's—Beverly Brown, and he'd rather break all ten of the commandments into small smithereens than bend one of his pet conventions. He never makes any allowance for other people's emergencies, and is incapable of understanding that any one can differ from him on a social question and still be within the pale. His hobby is genealogy and his fetish is family. And he never passed the butter in his life!"

"H'm! His horizon must be—limited!"

"It is; though he's clever, in a way. He's taken a fancy to Rob, and I haven't shocked him out of it—yet. You know, he's interested in the new company—in fact, he's a very important director—and Rob wants to convert him to his policy before he goes away. He's going to Cuba, or South America, or somewhere next week. So we planned this dinner—and it's Rob's last chance. Mr. Brown is most easily approached by way of his palate,—and you know yourself we have a good cook."

"I do that!"

"The funny thing about her is that she belongs here, in this little town. But everything has gone wrong all day, and now that wretched Ilma! He'll be irritated and argumentative, and he'll disagree with every single thing Rob