THE AMERICAN CHILD

BY HARRISON RHODES

IN a recent ingenious and original volume on some eminent figures of the Victorian period the author at the very outset says that the difficulty in writing the history of that time is that we know too much about it.

"Ignorance," he goes on gravely to assure us, "is the first requisite of the historian — ignorance which simplifies and clarifies, which selects and omits with a placid perfection unattainable by the highest art."

These phrases are hastily borrowed to set at the head of this article, not so much because they shine more brightly than other epigrams with which the modern literary firmament is studded as because they seem to give courage to a celibate author about to put a rash pen to paper for a description of the American child.

The bachelor, unless employed in a medical capacity, knows almost nothing of the birth or extreme infancy of the personage in question. And even of that time when the child begins to prattle, and wit and wisdom cascade from its lips like pearls, the non-father is only an ill-accredited historian, unless, as Mr. Lytton Strachey says, ignorance be an equipment. It is singular how easy it is to forget stories about other people's children. In these pages can be promised none of those anecdotes of little Herbert or Eva which enrapture the parent and indeed lead him into an emotional morass from which he can never clearly see the whole race of children, the majority of which are inevitably not his own.

Here indeed has been made, almost before it was intended, the plea of the writer's competence. Child-study—a majestic term—is nowadays a leading, perhaps the leading branch of American learning, and in investigating a great subject many workers are desirable. Close observation, such as a parent can give, of the individual specimen is indispensable. But a more disengaged eye will perhaps better trace, through the nation's history, the rise of children to their present eminent position, and judge the processes by which they grasped power. The disinterested celibate may also possibly best judge the tendencies in the opposite direction, toward the resubjugation of the race of children, the ways in which they themselves are made victims of this new wide-spread science of child-culture. The American child is not merely a small individual, straight or curly haired, and agreeable or disagreeable as the case may be. He is a great and epic figure. On his small, unconscious shoulders he bears the nation's future; and as a cat may look at a queen so long as those anomalous figures decorate the world, so may a man who presumably knows little enough about children still observe them, discreetly and from a respectful distance, and believe that his contribution to the knowledge of them has its small value.

It might, too, be urged that a bachelor, even in the forties, may conceivably like children. But doting parents find it so difficult to believe in even this restrained and temperate affection that the point will not be unduly pressed.

In the early days of the Republic the child, though produced freely, had no great vogue, if one may put it that way. Children were an almost invariable accompaniment of marriage, and that they were generally liked there can be no

reasonable doubt. But no one made any great fuss about them. They were sometimes, to quote the language of the period, limbs of Satan, and this, though it distressed, puzzled no one. The doctrine of original sin still prevailed, and affectionate parents resigned themselves to beating the Evil One out of their offspring. "Spare the rod and spoil the child" was a maxim on the tenderest parental lips. Religion held out some hope of retrieving these poor, small lost ones. The early volumes of the admirable *Poole's Index to Periodical Literature* had an astonishing number of entries under the title "Conversion of Children." There were, of course, the incredible Sunday-school stories with painful heroes and heroines, convinced at a tender age of sin, but, on the whole, children appeared very little in literature. Not much was written for them and comparatively little about them. In their social aspect they were, by the grace of God and the discipline of their elders, seen but not heard. A grim picture, every one must admit. And, though under this régime many an unpromising child turned into an admirable grown-up—yet as certainly many a little one of rare gifts and promise was crushed into hopelessness by its harshness.

The pendulum has swung as far the other way now. There was, of course, an intermediate period. Little Eva in Mrs. Stowe's pages is of course a Sunday-school survival, but she was followed by Peck's Bad Boy and then those immortals, Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn. Even Henry James, who at first blush seems out of place in this *galère*, made Daisy Miller's naughty little brother famous. And a tale called *Helen's Babies* was, as late as the early 'seventies of the last century, one of the first phenomenal best-selling successes. It was the bad child's moment, the era of the *enfant terrible*. Scenting no danger and pleased with its new spirit of tolerance and humanity, the American public warmed this monster in its bosom. The child, which had been an inferior, almost inhuman creature, was now welcomed as an equal and a brother. No one saw in how few years it might become a superior and a master.

Henry James, always oversensitized as to the American child, felt early something ominous about it. In some story of a Europeanized American returning home the hero hears in a hotel, and notes with fear, "the high, firm note of a child." And there is another hotel passage of equal significance which is worth transcribing:

> Then there are long corridors defended by gusts of hot air. Down the middle swoops a pale little girl on roller-skates. "Get out of my way!" she shrieks as she passes. She has ribbons on her hair and frills on her dress. She makes the tour of the vast hotel.

Is one mistaken in detecting here the creation of a Frankenstein?

There are many possible reasons for the rise in the value of children. It is always conceivable that it may be explained on purely economic grounds. As families grow smaller, children, now more rarely produced, come to have a scarcity price put on them in the market-place of sentiment. We now vie with one another in finding expression for their worth. A poet and essayist who is even more widely read here than in her native England drove the point home when she asserted that, rather than that one child should ever die of hydrophobia, she would exterminate all the millions of dogs, pet and otherwise, of the world! Is it to be wondered that it became increasingly difficult to discipline a race so well thought of?

An English visitor in the middle 'eighties notes with grave consternation the difficulty American parents have in keeping children from swearing and from calling their parents by their given names. It would be hard to say to-day just how general swearing has become among our best children, but in any case we may be sure that if they swear it is considered part of their charm as it is of

parrots. As for calling father "Arthur" or "Woopsy," that goes without saying. And old gentlemen who in the early nineteenth century would have belched fire had they been addressed as anything but "Sir" will now fawn upon children, pleading with them to be called "Cousin Howard" or "Scootums." Anything as formal as the old modes of address seems rigid and chilling, and likely to lose to their elders that approbation by children which is now so essential to any self-respect.

The advance of the child was gradual and insidious. As no one realized the momentous nature of the change, no one noted it. Of course there were outward signs which should have warned. Children's dress, for example, which had been extremely ugly, became pretty and picturesque. The Kate Greenaway books which came with the "art revival" of the 'eighties, made children's clothes delightful and children themselves adorable. The effete continent of Europe began to send its styles. Small dashing sailors began to appear, and ravishing little girls with short socks and bare knees. It was the beginning of the end.

Books about children for children, and, more dangerous, about children for grown-ups, began to appear. Perhaps it was *Little Lord Fauntleroy* who started it. But there was, too, that enchanting volume, *The Golden Age*. The stage played its part, too. Child actresses and actors became an important feature of theatrical life; their bleating voices may still occasionally be detected, though they have grown and now assume maturer rôles. Societies for the protection of children intervened. But the public would not be balked. Dwarfs were discovered who assumed infantile rôles; closely shaven (twice on matinée days) they even assumed the parts of the unborn children in *The Blue Bird*. Once you begin to see that a little child may lead you, you are its hopeless and infatuated slave. You are, as to the young of the race, on the way to being a confirmed Barrieite or a Maeterlinckian.

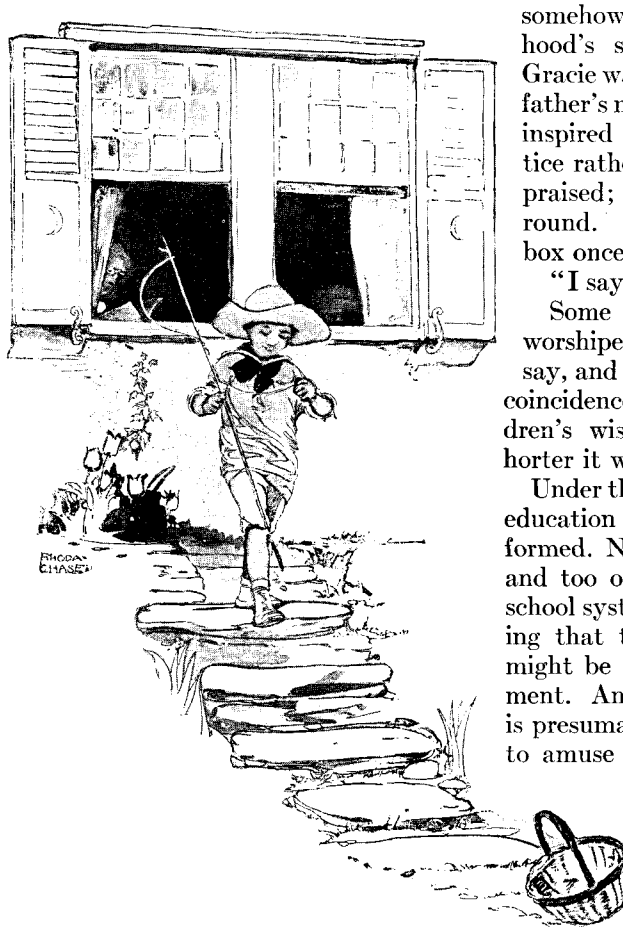
Barrie has made us see childhood anew. In the country where his children play the same dew sparkles that lay like diamonds on the grass at the world's dawn. There is no witchery like his, no such tenderness, no such foolish, lovely jokes. We break our hearts for some lost, half-forgotten Arcadia. We hear the bells that ring in some happy city where all saints and angels and little children that have died now are. And this poor world, as we listen to him, would be, so it seems, like Paradise itself, half laughter and half tears, if we could only rightly value its youngest and fairest inhabitants.

Maeterlinck, speaking another language for another civilization, does not, perhaps, ever come so intimately near to us. But he would lead us even closer to the mysteries. In his dim regions, lit by lovely unearthly lights, little children, all blond and shimmering, wait to be born. And he would have us vaguely apprehend the process by which each small wandering soul seeks out the mother who shall in divine tenderness love it.

If these two writers only are mentioned of a whole school, it is because they are the high priests. There is indeed something of the quality of a new religion in the modern exaltation of the child. Once, when men felt the need of something gentler and more merciful, there grew up in the Church the cult of the Mother of God. To-day, does not the child, sitting on his mother's knee, smile more engagingly, and seem to hint persuasively that in his innocence is the salvation of the world?

Sympathy and liking are duly and sincerely recorded here for anything that can make the world more sensible of the fragile, evanescent beauty of childhood. Yet we have a right to examine even new religions and see how their tenets are to affect our daily lives. If children are human at all it may be dangerous to burn so much incense before them, dangerous alike to them and to those who swing the censers.

Children were once thought well of chiefly because they would grow up to be men and women; nowadays men and women are valued mostly because they were once children. Growing up is only falling from a once proud estate. Children come to us trailing clouds of glory, and gifted, too—this is the curious point—with some antique instinctive wisdom more cosmic than ours, more directly drawn from the hidden divine fountains of the universe. To adepts of the new cult a child at the breakfast-table consuming its cereal nourishment sits oracularly like the Delphic priestess. A gentleman prominent in national affairs took this view of his blameless little yellow-haired daughter and gravely put to her the problems which were distracting the world.



IN THE COUNTRY NATURE STUDY PURSUES THE CHILD

"I believe so and so," he would sometimes say, "but Gracie and the chief justice of the Supreme Court think I'm wrong."

That he often *was* wrong does not, somehow, to one heretical as to childhood's supreme wisdom, prove that Gracie was as often right. Of course the father's moderation in allowing Gracie's inspired words to prove the chief justice rather than himself right must be praised; it is more often the other way round. A street preacher on a soap-box once shouted:

"I say, and God agrees with me—"

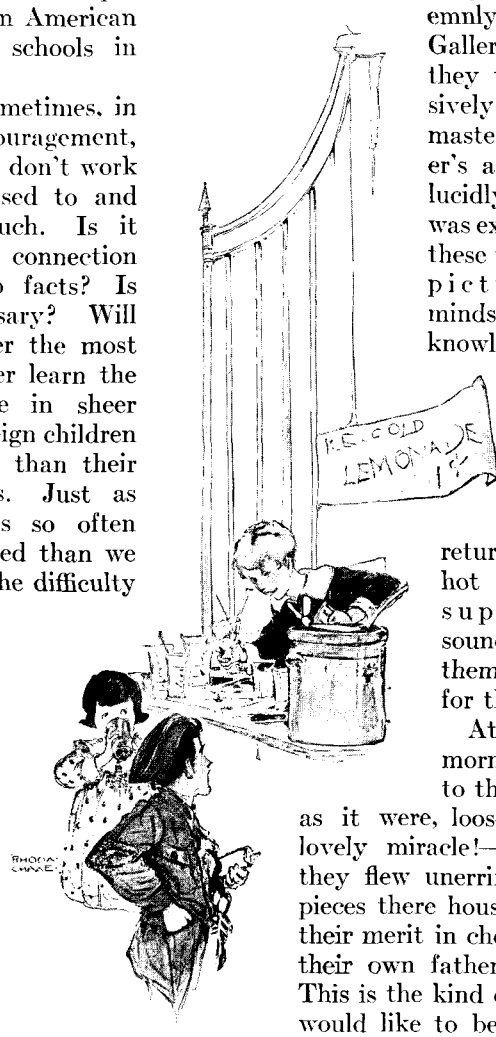
Some of the more rapturous child-worshipers seem a little like this. They say, and children agree with them; the coincidence being as sure proof of children's wisdom as to the soap-box exhorter it was of God's.

Under the influence of such sentiments education has of course been transformed. No one can doubt the harshness and too often the stupidity of the old school system, and no one can help wishing that the acquisition of knowledge might be a pleasure rather than a torment. And yet the object of education is presumably still to educate, its power to amuse being supplementary wholly, and we must deal with the fact that children in our schools do not nowadays much care to work. If things do not suit them, they strike—even New York has already seen this. From Bolshevik Russia comes almost ideal news to children. The scholars there establish the curriculum and dismiss at their pleasure unpopular teachers! They see to their own comfort, too, not only by lengthening the recess-time, but by establishing well-equipped smoking-rooms for the upper classes! Of course this last provision may not seem much to the children of New York and New Jersey, who, according to

recent astonishing revelations, are accustomed to securing their supply of cocaine fresh each day from enterprising merchants who are at hand just outside the school gates at the closing-hour. But this is only a measure of what improvements we may expect when American children take the schools in hand.

Even teachers sometimes, in moments of discouragement, admit that children don't work as hard as they used to and don't learn as much. Is it possible to trace a connection between these two facts? Is work really necessary? Will children, even under the most modern system, ever learn the multiplication table in sheer ecstasy of joy? Foreign children seem to know more than their American confrères. Just as grown-up foreigners so often seem better educated than we ourselves are. Is the difficulty that we still make lessons a little irksome, and do not trust enough to that innate excellence of the child, which would doubtless, when the time came, give him knowledge as if by miracle?

There is a singularly pleasant legend (which should be a great favorite with child-worshipers) concerning the offspring of a distinguished American authority on painting. These children, so it is alleged, passed their early years wholly art-free, unmolested by any knowledge of paintings and their value. Their ignorance was abysmal, considering whose children they were. Yet their bodies were healthy and their minds virgin soil, and their parents confident that when the time came—



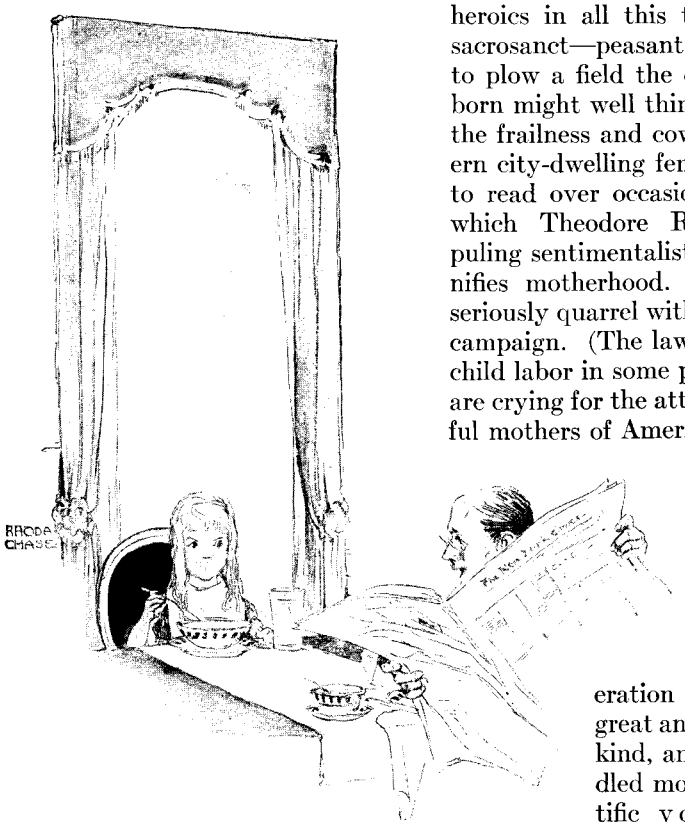
THE LUXURY TAX TAKES NO ACCOUNT OF AGE

The time at last did come. When they were fourteen and twelve, respectively, the little boy and girl were, in accordance with their parents' theories, solemnly taken to the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. There they were placed successively in front of the masterpieces of the painter's art while gently and lucidly, in simple words, it was explained to them why these were great and noble pictures. Their little minds, unsullied by art-knowledge, free from the squint which the sight of bad painting gives, were able to understand at once, to swallow art at a gulp. They returned home, where a hot bath, a wholesome supper, and a night's sound rest invigorated them and prepared them for the morrow's test.

At about eleven in the morning they were taken to the Pitti Gallery and, as it were, loosed. And then—oh, lovely miracle!—like homing doves they flew unerringly to the masterpieces there housed, and proclaimed their merit in choice English such as their own father might have used! This is the kind of a story every one would like to believe. It seems to take some practical advantage of the child's intrinsic superiority to the man, and to dispense with all annoying and expensive study.

Unfortunately for the comfort of children, few parents have the perfect faith of these just noted. The education of children, though transformed, still goes on at terrific tension. But the work now seems to be piled on the mothers rather than on the children. The most

feeble-minded mother who is capable of bearing a child must now be thoroughly familiar with all its reflexes, complexes, and inhibitions. While she is washing the dishes she must prop up the latest volume on prenatal influences against the pan. She must swim out upon a vasty ocean of science and theory. She must search her soul to know whether breakfast contained a safe blending of proteins and vitamines, and she must be sure that the union suit of underwear



TO ADEPTS OF THE NEW CULT THE CHILD IS ORACULAR LIKE A DELPHIC PRIESTESS

she has chosen for her darling puts no strain upon the dorsal muscles. With Freud in hand she must read her child's dreams as did priests of old the entrails of the sacrifices, trying to discover whether the pain in the little one's heel is there because his great-grandmother, in girlhood, dreamed of Achilles.

Such labors and such devotion immediately suggest that motherhood has now perhaps become a greater thing than childhood. May it be, after all, that the child's chief value in our American life is that it brings into being the American mother? When you see in Washington the fine building which serves as Headquarters of the National Congress of Mothers, you realize how serious a matter it is to go into the profession of child-bearing.

There is perhaps a good deal of mock heroics in all this talk of the mother sacrosanct—peasant women accustomed to plow a field the day after a child is born might well think it a confession of the frailness and cowardice of the modern city-dwelling female. Yet it is well to read over occasionally the pages in which Theodore Roosevelt, never a puling sentimentalist, ennobles and dignifies motherhood. And no one can seriously quarrel with any Better Babies campaign. (The law and practice as to child labor in some parts of the country are crying for the attention of the merciful mothers of America.) Even Malthus, a much-maligned philosopher, did not preach race suicide—only fewer, and so better, children. Indeed, to hand a better world on to a better generation is succinctly the great and holy duty of mankind, and the most bemuddled mother over her scientific volumes, however comic she may be, is never quite a figure of fun.

Nevertheless, it may be permissible to sound a warning. Scientific knowledge on the mother's part must not be allowed to rub the remaining bloom from childhood. The cabbage, even when it begins its career under a bell glass, and has its roots warmed with hot-water pipes within the soil, probably does not much mind being kept from sounding its na-

tive field-note wild. The incubator babies, too, at Coney Island or the county fair, do not concern themselves as yet with the romance and poetry of their rearing. (What a character the incubator baby, free from all sentimental memories of parents, makes for Mr. Bernard Shaw!) But most other modern children, though they be potentates, find life by no means all near-beer and skittles. They are pestered at every step by new theories learned in the child-study course for mothers.

Once upon a time there was a very beautiful little girl with golden locks who lived like a princess with her very modern and scientific father and mother in a large house upon a little hill where many wild strawberries grew. A well-meaning but unscientific grown-up guest (a wretched bachelor, of course) suggested one day, when he happened to be breakfasting alone with the little girl, whom he very much liked, that she and he should spend the morning blissfully gathering the sweet-perfumed little berries which they would eat at lunch with the thick cream which came from the nice cow in the barn. The lovely little girl said, "No, thank you," but her lip trembled. Then the foolish old bachelor again explained and urged his delightful plan, upon which the lovely little girl burst into tears and rushed from the table. The scientific mother a little later explained that by the doctor's orders the lovely little girl had never in all her life been allowed to eat any uncooked fruit!

Now the doctor may have been right; indeed, an amendment to the Constitution of the United States prohibiting the eating of raw fruit by minors may be urgently necessary. But we must learn somehow legitimately to include picking wild berries in the activities of childhood. It is humbly suggested that perhaps if the stewing of the fruit might have occurred on a brick stove which the child had helped build, over leaves and twigs she herself had gathered, something of the old glamour of wild-strawberry adventure might have clung to it still, as the grown-up had remembered it from his own boyhood.

Especially in reference to rural pleasures it is to be hoped that the children

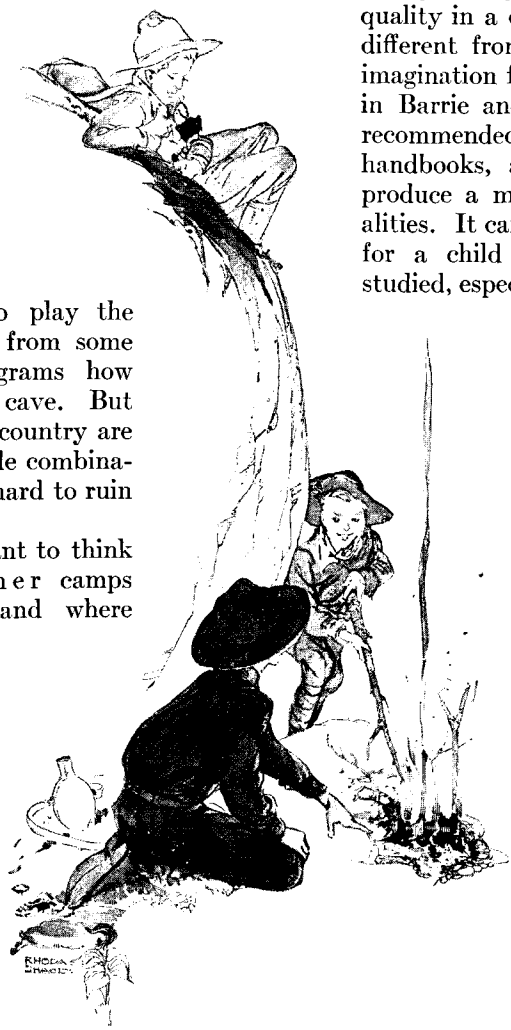
THE INSTINCT OF MOTHERHOOD IS EARLY DEVELOPED

of to-day may, when they are older, have some of the romantic memories that their elders now have. Perhaps it is only a trick of advancing age, but the swimming-hole in the brook seems to have a quality which no bathing establishment with a pool and pergola and hot and cold showers can ever have. During last autumn's war thrills one of the great metropolitan newspapers for days filled columns with letters from elderly contributors who debated about the corn-silk cigarettes of their youth, or those they made of the dried leaves of

the wild grape. It seems somehow as if the modern child's country were too well equipped.

Of course in the country nature study pursues the child. A parent or other instructor at his elbow forces him to learn how to tell the wild-flower from the birds—the phrase is by now traditional. And one suspects that, although they provide delightful Indian and cowboy suits, they even want him to learn from some handbook how to play the Sioux brave and from some recommended diagrams how to build a robber's cave. But childhood and the country are an almost invincible combination; it would be hard to ruin them.

It is very pleasant to think of all the summer camps throughout the land where boys, and girls, too, both rich and poor, may learn something of woodcraft and simple living and open-air sleeping. Nothing can be more agreeable than to see a company of Boy Scouts starting off for a week-end hike to the country, where they will camp, and catch and fry their own fish, and perhaps lie on beds of pine needles. On the whole, perhaps the modern way is just as good. And many parts of the country have a moving-picture theater fairly accessible and a soda-water fountain at hand, so that the most exacting child who is not content with the simple pleasures of field and stream may not lack its evening amusement.



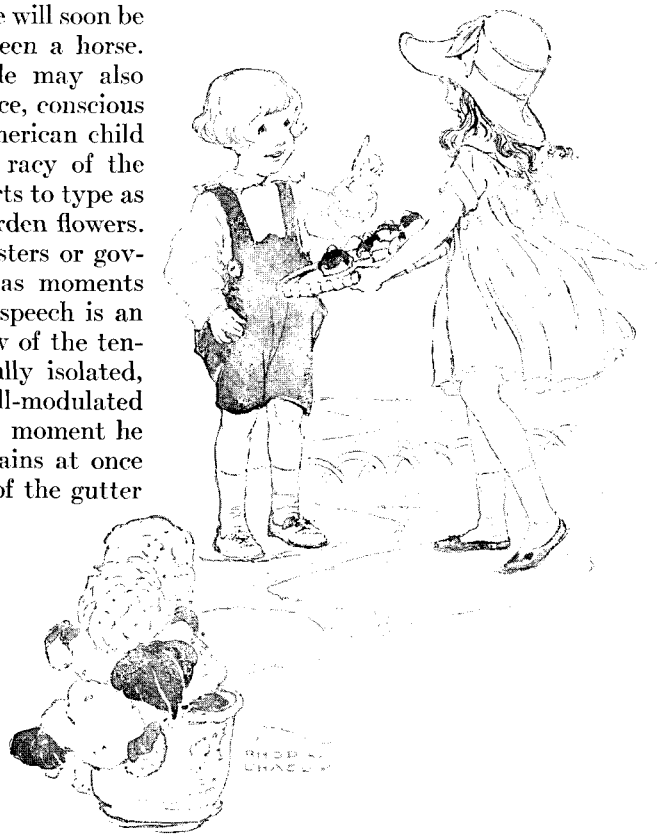
THE BOY SCOUT MOVEMENT HAS GIVEN NEW ZEST TO OLD DIVERSIONS

There is, however, quite seriously, the definite danger that all this psychic mode of educating may kill every little eccentricity, every little imaginative quality in a child which may be different from the standardized imagination for children as found in Barrie and Maeterlinck and recommended in the mothers' handbooks, and so in the end produce a monotony of personalities. It cannot be too pleasant for a child to be too closely studied, especially when it comes into the odd, delicious, happy, sad days of adolescence—it is not pleasant, when a fellow is embarked upon his first love-affair, to find mother at hand with Chapter XIII of her favorite volume on child-psychology, demanding the most awkward and embarrassing confidences, and studying her son as Fabre might an amorous insect under the microscope. In the old days children were sometimes very unhappy because no one was trying to understand them; they must nowadays be sometimes unhappy because every one is trying to. Privacy, both of person and of thoughts, may be as much their right as ours. We must be careful how we fumble with their souls.

Apprehensive grown-ups must, of course, remember that some of the simplicity and romance of their childhood has necessarily gone forever. No danger can now threaten a child equal to that of the old high bicycle. No little boy to-day can make it the goal of his ambition to drive the horse-car down the tracks in Main Street; there will soon be children who have never seen a horse. These same nervous people may also safely count on the resistance, conscious and unconscious, of the American child itself. It is amazing how racy of the soil that person is. He reverts to type as do the lower animals or garden flowers. Train him with foreign masters or governesses as you like, he has moments when he snaps back. His speech is an example. He may for a few of the tenderer years, if he is carefully isolated, be master of the low, well-modulated tones of England. But the moment he goes to school his speech gains at once the tang of the streets, or of the gutter if you wish to be emphatic. His nasal tones cut the circumambient air and his R's rasp. It is something stronger than himself, some germ that floats everywhere. Later, at college or after, he may discipline his tongue into the best manner of our own pleasant American language. But he must have sown his linguistic wild oats on the Bowery.

The American child resists manners, too, and sometimes even growing up does not alter this frame of mind. Here in America little boys shake hands and little girls courtesy very much in the way of animals trained by fear. And no American child will, of its own volition, ever say, "Good morning," or, "How d'ye do?" to any grown-up. Foreign children seem by comparison unnatural little monsters of courtesy. And the Latin languages, elegant and concise, give children speaking them an exaggerated appearance of poise and polish. There was an undue amount of clamor and shouting in a uniformed line of Venetian school-boys on their way to church, and a child of perhaps ten spoke up.

"*La calma, signori!*" he urged, with mock seriousness. "Calmness, gentlemen!"



CHILDREN'S DRESS BECAME PRETTY AND PICTURESQUE

An acid little girl of six, on the tram-car at Rome with her nurse, passed by a building where huge posters advertised an exhibition of modern painting.

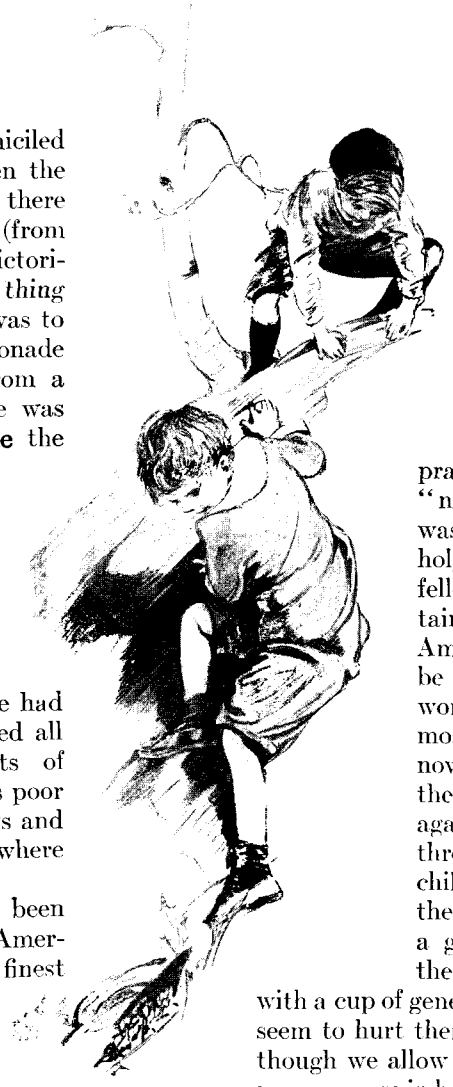
"That wouldn't interest me," remarked nurse.

"It interests others," answered the little girl, coldly.

Perhaps we may be glad that our children are more natural. There is a kind of wildness still in the American soil.

And children, who are born conservatives, have a deep-seated love for what is indigenous. They are the custodians of the American note. A little ten-year-old boy at our most fashionable seaside resort comes to mind. He was one of those millionaire babies, fabled in the Sunday supplements, reared in luxury, domiciled in palaces. And when the Fourth of July came there was a terrific scene (from which he emerged victorious) because the one thing he insisted on doing was to sell a pale, watery lemonade for a cent a glass from a small stand which he was going to erect outside the great gates of his father's place on Bellevue Avenue! Within him deep called to deep; by instinct he knew that he could not rightly grow up as an American unless he had at least once performed all the traditional rights of American boyhood, as poor boys and country boys and slum boys were everywhere performing them.

Has the statement been too long delayed that American children are the finest in the world? They are not to be held responsible for the theories and follies of their elders. They want their own way—naturally, if they can get it. They are not much concerned with their complexes. They probably do not take their art-life very seriously—little girls may enjoy dancing barefoot on the greensward, but they probably think it silly to speak of it as expressing their personalities. If they have more liberty than they once had, let us merely hope that it makes them happier. And let us start a modest catalogue of their merits.



CHILDHOOD AND THE COUNTRY ARE AN ALMOST INVINCIBLE COMBINATION

To begin with, they are probably the cleanest children in the world. We are the most bathing race since the Romans; we exceed them in the number of tubs if not in the fervor of our ablutions. St. James the Less, so the *Golden Legend* records in his praise, from childhood "never baigned" and was by this known to be holy. Even among his fellow-boys he would obtain less recognition now. American children should be the healthiest in the world. They are the most generously fed, and nowhere in the world is the battle more fierce against the germs that threaten them. Latin children may sit up with their parents and make a good meal at nine in the evening, enlivening it with a cup of generous wine. It doesn't seem to hurt them. But our darlings, though we allow them great liberty in manners, are in bed early. They resemble St. James the Less in that he never drank wine, mead, or cider. Their milk is certified and their water boiled. Their food is chosen for them according to articles by popular doctors in the women's magazines. It would be sheer perverseness on their part not to be well.

And we adore them, frankly and with-

out embarrassment. It may safely be predicted that children will never be nationalized in America, however much their bringing up by government agencies might, scientifically, be to their advantage. Free love, that goal of so many radical futures, may have to be given up just because parents, both men and women, want their children for their own. Of course everywhere in the world there are to-day women who are inclined to wish children were possible without having undignified recourse to a father, so high above all other loves does, with them, the maternal stand. We have lately on the stage seen Madame Nazimova and Miss Marie Doro go insane over this wish of the young girl, not at all to have a husband, but to have children. But American fathers, though little inclined to the miracle of motherless children, value their offspring with a spontaneity and a lack of self-consciousness which in many parts of the earth would be astonishing. In short, no one in America need apologize for making a fool of himself over children.

The American army has given us an engaging proof of this. In all the reports that came from France one of the most charming things to hear was the way our boys had made pals with the French children. The little ones adored these strange, good-natured, good-looking men, who had such a passion for washing in cold water and smelled so nice. The boys wanted to help the mothers of these children; they were not too proud to offer at once to do "chores" about the house. They made Franco-American friendship a real thing. Individuals, companies, regiments, adopted orphans. Some day they will bring them back to America, and the prettiest, sweetest sentimental comedy will be played as the French boys and girls grow up—*La Fille du Régiment* done over to suit our case.

Even in the occupied districts of Germany our army, which has been able to resist everything else, has found it hard to resist the children. Perhaps little Hans and Gretchen when they grow up may find it fairly easy to think well of us, if they are only allowed to cling to their childhood's memories of a good-looking khaki-clad American boy holding them upon his knee.

At home the war taught us something about our children. They were so sensitive to patriotism! They were so generous of their small funds and their little strength! Thousands of orphans in France have been adopted by school-children here. Across the seas go letters, and, when the postal regulations allow, shoes and clothing, sometimes sewed by little American girls' fingers. And back come gay foreign picture post-cards and words in funny childish writing that try to express the gratitude of all France. Little stands along our streets where on Saturday afternoon lemonade and rather withered nosegays are sold "for the French orphans" make you smile, and for that instant believe in international friendships and the future of the world.

Whatever his family may be, the child of foreign parents is an American. And he is the great Americanizer. The doctrine he carries home from school he imposes upon them. We may feel sorry that when they might have two languages these foreign children are willing to have only one—American. But the sturdy impulse to be real citizens of the country where they are to live is worth more than the dual ornament of tongues. Little Giovanni, who insists on being called Joe, and Ignaz, who would like to be known as Mike, we should be proud of.

Are we not proud of them—as of all American children? Do we not fill our magazines with jokes made from children's clever sayings, and cover our colored supplements with their engaging doings? (Oh, where in the snows of yester-year wanders Buster Brown?) Has any article in any magazine a chance to say even half that should be said about our darling, the American Child?

"A PORTRAIT"

BY THOMAS SULLY

THERE are few painters who matured so quickly, maintained their powers so evenly for at least a score of years, and then lost the firm grip they so unmistakably had, as did Thomas Sully, who, born in England, came to this country when a boy, began to paint seriously at twenty-five, and, leading a perfectly regular life, commenced running down-hill in his profession before half a century of his ninety years had rolled past. The truth of this becomes apparent whenever some work previously unknown is brought to one's attention, and unhesitatingly and, I may add, unerringly, you place it either before or after the period named without any actual knowledge of its painting date.

The portrait of Sarah Bringhurst Dunant (Mrs. John Stull Williams) falls within the period of Sully's best work. It goes without saying that the painter had a most attractive sitter in this young girl just budding out of childhood into the radiant glory of womanhood, in 1812, the year of her marriage. She appealed to Sully as youth and beautiful femininity always did, for he was particularly sensitive to the subtle ideality of the opposite sex, and he has fixed these evanescent qualities with a strength of handling quite notable, and enveloped them in an atmosphere of very high art, without losing any of the delicacy requisite to preserve the charm of line and of expression of the dainty original.

The color scheme, which is admirably translated on the wood, is very simple. Over her white-muslin gown she wears a crimson-velvet pelisse, faced with yellow satin which shows here and there not to be obtrusive, and her arm rests on the round top of a green-upholstered chair. The figure is relieved by a curtain of the same color as the coat, but lighter in tone, with a glimpse of cloud-flecked sky and landscape in the left distance. This, then, is one of Sully's great accomplishments and well worthy of being preserved by Mr. Wolf's rare craftsmanship.

CHARLES HENRY HART.