

## ➤➤ Brood of Folly ◀◀

ONE day last winter a prosperous young printer in an Eastern village saw in his newspaper the picture of a six-months-old illegitimate baby whose mother was in jail in a nearby city on the charge of having abandoned the little girl in a hallway. The mother was only twenty-one, out of work, and had found the burden of unmarried motherhood too much to bear.

"Look!" said the young man to his mother, a school trustee of the village and a prominent clubwoman, "That's a fine baby. Imagine anyone deserting a baby like that."

Then it suddenly struck him that he knew the baby's mother, that she was a girl he had met at a party the month before. He and his mother talked the situation over, and the result of their conversation was that the young man visited the girl in her cell, proposed marriage to her, with adoption of the baby, and was accepted. The next day when the girl was arraigned, she was paroled into the young printer's custody, and he took her home to his mother, who welcomed her as a daughter. A few days later they were married, and the little girl, who will probably never know that her mother's husband is her stepfather and not her father, was legally adopted. Nobody mentioned the baby's real father, and nobody seems interested in his identity or whereabouts.

If the population of this country were exclusively or largely made up of persons like the printer and his mother, one might well believe that our social attitude toward illegitimacy had been profoundly changed during the past generation or two. Certainly it is changing, for thirty years or so ago it is doubtful whether, outside of bohemian circles in large cities, any American mother of a grown son could conceivably have welcomed to her home and heart a daughter-in-law already provided with a baby and never before provided with a husband.

But an unprejudiced survey of the inhabitants of our Zeniths and Gopher Prairies shows that a considerable residue remains of the traditional distrust and persecution of a woman rash or unfor-

By MIRIAM ALLEN DE FORD

tunate enough to be facing life as an unwed mother. Dr. Ben Reitman, whose experience has been gained in metropolitan cities and chiefly on the outcast fringe of society, is premature in claiming that women "have learned that a girl is not 'untouchable' if she has had a child without the sanction of the church and the state." In the majority of American towns and social circles, she is still, if not "untouchable," at least untouched by the respectable, and fair prey for the adventurous.

We may be approaching, but we have by no means reached, the advanced position of other modern and ancient nations toward illegitimacy. In Egypt during the Old Empire, Briffault tells us in "The Mothers," there were no illegitimate children—"as a consequence of the matrilineal rule of descent . . . a child born out of wedlock enjoyed the same civil rights as one born in marriage." This was true also of the Lycians, an Hellenic people of Asia Minor. "As

in Egypt, birth out of wedlock did not constitute illegitimacy and entailed no civil disability." The matrilineal system was again the cause.

But even in nations of today, not matrilineal in social system, illegitimacy may be regarded much more leniently than it is in America or Great Britain. In Soviet Russia, as is well known, it makes no difference to the child whether its parents were married. Russia, however, being a special instance in this as in every other respect, we may learn from Denmark, Norway and

Sweden more of our own probable viewpoint in the not too distant future. A few years ago it was estimated that every fourth child in Copenhagen was illegitimate, with the rate for all Denmark not far behind; every seventh child in Sweden, and every thirteenth child in Norway. These were not the products of slums and poverty; illegitimacy in the Scandinavian countries is largely a matter of the middle and upper classes. Partly this is due to the customary postponement of marriage until the establishment of a sound financial position; partly to the difficulty of divorce until recent

years; but partly also to the growth of the surely civilized feeling that marriage or non-marriage is a private affair of the two persons concerned, and that if a woman thinks—as an American unmarried mother said to me twenty years ago—"it's so nice to have a baby without the nuisance of a husband," that, too, is her own business.

Her own business, that is, so long as she does not mind saddling the child with what is still a heavy social stigma, and so long also as the baby's livelihood is provided for, without the contingency of a miraculous village printer to come to the rescue. In all the Scandinavian countries, as in Russia with the "alimenta" system, there are generous and strictly enforced laws covering the support of illegitimate children. The father is as responsible for his spurious as for his legal offspring, and the child is entitled to bear the father's name.

If, as some prevalent conditions seem to indicate, we are beginning to approach both the high rate of illegitimacy existing in Scandinavia, and the tolerant social acceptance of this phenomenon also characteristic of these countries, we also shall have to pass and enforce such laws as these. Illegitimate children are by no means so well protected by law in a good many of our states today, and they are frequently discriminated against in statutes relating to the support or legal rights of children. The lack of such laws has led to the very inadequate relief of foundling hospitals, most of the inmates of which are illegitimate children whose mothers could not and whose fathers did not have to support them.

LIONEL BRITTON, in his "Love and Hunger," says bitterly of the London Foundling Hospital: "Half-way down Guilford Street is the Foundling Hospital. That is for the love-children. Thrown away because they were too expensive to keep, or because they were not proper, or because they came through lack of knowledge and were inconvenient. The bourgeoisie, whose social organization had made it impossible for the child and the mother to be together, built the stone walls and took it in. Do for cannon-fodder."

The principal reason, maternal devotion being what it is, was usually that the babies "were too expensive to keep"—both too expensive to support, and too expensive by jeopardizing by their presence the mother's means of livelihood. Mrs. Charles A. Hawkins, president of



"There are no illegitimate children—only illegitimate parents."

the San Francisco Babies' Aid, reminiscing about the foundation of that institution in 1862, tells how "a laundry basket suspended from a doorknob was society's only solution for the foundling baby in the days when the social code condemned the unmarried mother to hopeless ostracism. . . The Foundling Asylum was always overcrowded and consequently the death-rate was very high."

It is always very high in such cases. And, as I have said, babies are still being virtually condemned to death in many states today by the lack of laws governing the support of all children, whatever their birth. Even when the mother finds herself, later on, able to care for her child, she has often been forced by earlier circumstances to lose it forever. The 1931 California legislature defeated a bill, backed by the State Department of Social Welfare, which would have permitted an unmarried mother, on proof of ability to support the child, to reclaim a baby adopted during the mother's minority. Minors, as one assemblyman remarked, are not held to their contracts thus strictly in any other province. Even in Minnesota, most prevalently Scandinavian of the states in population, a bill was introduced into the last legislature which provided for a state bonus of \$100 for every child born—in lawful wedlock. No illegitimate babies need apply, however well equipped they may be, physically and mentally, to contribute to the prosperity and glory of Minnesota—and though a neighboring state once had a famous governor who was a foundling, and therefore probably illegitimate. People are less intolerant in the lands from which so many Minnesotans come.

Also (despite the failure of the forementioned Jones Bill), in the state to which many Minnesotans go! Recently, in Los Angeles, Judge Leon R. Yankwich, confronted by an unmarried mother who asked nothing of the court except that her six-months-old child be declared legitimate, immediately granted the request, quoting meanwhile that very sensible saying: "There are no illegitimate children. There are only illegitimate parents."

There is, of course, necessity for pru-

dence in passing laws providing for paternal support of illegitimate children. Even in Russia it is doubtless not unknown for a girl to apply for "alimenta," not from the real father of her child, but from some other man who cannot dis-

prove paternity, and whom she does not like so well or who is better able to care for the infant. Even under our own present laws, unscrupulous women occasionally take advantage of such a situation. In a recent California case, a woman sued a county supervisor for support of her two-year-old daughter, and dragged the case through two courts before the man could

prove that he had been out of the state during the period when he might have become the father of the child. Then the mother confessed that a poor man whom she loved was the real father, and that she had simply been attempting to "shake down" the wealthy middleaged supervisor. Such cases, however, are rare, and it should be easy to guard against them in framing the relevant statutes.

So far, of course, such excessive rates of illegitimacy as those cited from the Scandinavian countries obtain hardly anywhere in the United States. Our highest rate is in South Carolina, 84 per 1,000—which, to be sure, means one out of every twelve of the population, white and black—but this grades down perceptibly till we get to Wyoming, where only one person out of every 143 is illegitimate. It is interesting, however, to remark that South Carolina, where our highest illegitimacy rates prevail, also is the only state absolutely without provision for divorce.

The more we study illegitimacy statistics, the more difficult it becomes to account for their vagaries on any grounds whatever—race, religion, social class, education, or anything else. Illegitimacy

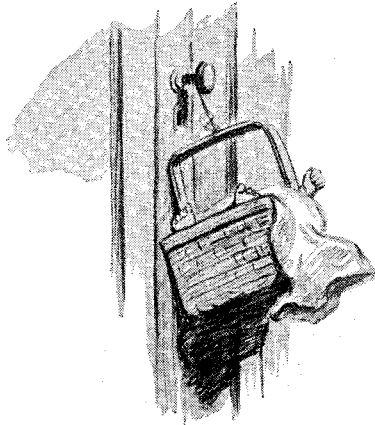
rises during wars, of course; it is claimed that the American soldiers in the Philippines at the beginning of this century left about 200,000 half-Filipino children behind them when they returned to the United States. But it is also high, as we have seen, in countries like the Scandinavian nations, which have not been harassed by war for many years. It is high in countries where there is a large amount of illiteracy, but it is also high in other countries where illiteracy is rare. Ireland has often been cited, with its low rate, as an example of the chastening effect of Roman Catholicism, but social statistics show how little the prevalent religion of a nation determines its rate of illegitimacy.

Any prophecies as to the growth or decline of illegitimacy in this or any other nation must be taken with several grains of salt, since there are no sure foundations on which such speculations may be founded. Nevertheless, a close attention to newspaper records, common conversation, and other such indicia of the trend of majority opinion shows very plainly that the American attitude toward both the unmarried mother and her "fatherless" child has changed appreciably from the days when death in a snowdrift was their kindest fate. Already there is an archaic ring, reminiscent of

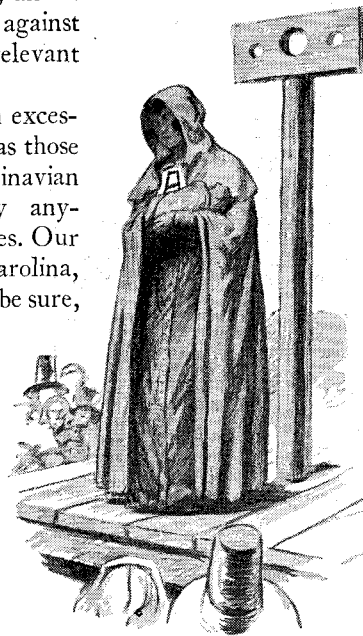
"Hazel Kirk" and "East Lynne," in such exclamations as that of the hero of Sarah Salt's "Strange Combat": "Sin! It was sin to have a baby. . . . It was only a baby they minded." And even here, it will be noted that it is the unmarried father, not the mother, who protests thus. A quarter century ago, moreover, such comedies as "The Bachelor Father" and "It's a Wise Child" could never have become successes, and could scarcely have been written, simply because they would not then have reflected any recognized social attitude. We are gradually regarding the phenom-

enon of illegitimacy realistically instead of sentimentally and emotionally, which indicates that our illegitimacy rate is sufficiently on the rise to make an illegitimate child or an unwed mother less of a sensation and more of a matter of course.

(Continued on Page 62)



"A laundry basket suspended from a doorknob was society's only solution for a foundling baby in the days when the social code condemned the unmarried mother to social ostracism."



"That fanatical persecution-mania which branded Hester Prynne with the scarlet 'A,' still flares up occasionally from its embers."





### DECOROUS DRINKING

The fiction has arisen that short cruises are noisy drinking bouts. Some may be, but certainly not all. Drinks may be had on foreign ships, but not all Americans try to drink a big ship dry. This cruise bar is quiet enough—and coëducational.

## ⇒ Cruises to Nowhere ⇐

### *A New Idea in de Luxe Travel*

By HENRY F. PRINGLE

IT WAS, obviously, sheer sentimentality and quite unimportant, but there was something faintly depressing about the moment—exactly 11:30 o'clock on a humid August night—when the S. S. *Aquitania* of the Cunard Line dropped her lines and began the first, almost imperceptible progress into the river. The huge pier was no different, unless it was that the crowd on hand to watch the sailing was sparse. The usual flags fluttered where the first-class gangplank had been. The arc lights flared. The somewhat mysterious official, who always stands at the river end of the pier, was holding the red lantern aloft to warn river traffic out of the way. The fussy tugs puffed and wheezed as they pulled the ship into the stream and turned her about just as it seemed certain that she would crash into the wharfs on the Jersey side.

From a point forward on the boat deck—the landsman at sea is easy to identify by his strained endeavors to say “forward” and “aft” and to identify “port” from “starboard”—the scene must have been precisely as at every midnight sailing. The incredible backdrop of the Singer tower, the Woolworth Building, and the new Empire State Building with its golden wand of light, crept down to the water's edge. The glow of Broadway hung over the region of Times Square. The river was oily and black and dirty, a foil for the clean sea that lay ahead.

Yet something was lacking. You thought of the scene—was it in McFee's *Command* or in his *Casuals of the Sea*?—when that ship slipped down the river toward Liverpool and crossed the path of a ferry. A member of her crew looked down from on high toward the men with their derby hats and their brief-

cases who were bound for stuffy offices. He looked down and was proud, because he belonged to a race apart. He was going somewhere, the horizon loomed. One is entitled, perhaps, to a vicarious share in that elation, when standing on the deck of the *Aquitania* as the ship moves out to sea. This time it was lacking. Her whistle had sounded its usual warning—that deep, poignant, almost unbearable warning—which in the daytime is hardly heard but which at night echoes across the city. This time its meaning was gone, for the *Aquitania* was not, as a ship should be, going anywhere. Technically, of course, she was bound for Halifax, and the phrase evolved to describe these week-end cruises, “Cruise to Nowhere,” is inaccurate.

But who wants to go to Halifax? This, as I said, is sentimentality; unfair and not a little absurd. I went below to A deck and found the stewards extraordinarily cheerful in anticipation of the extra gratuities which the week-end would bring. For the slump has had a disastrous effect on shipping and the reduction in passenger lists has caused many a British sailor's sweetheart, waiting more or less faithfully in the East End, to mourn the days of Coolidge prosperity.

LET us rout melancholy with a statistic or two. It has always been the custom for ocean liners to remain in port for from four to six days between crossings. The *Aquitania*, for example, might arrive in New York on a Friday morning. She would not sail until Tuesday. In this interim, most of the costs of operation continued. Under British maritime law the crews are hired for a round trip at Liverpool, and their wages continue

whether the vessel is at sea or at dock. The insurance must be paid. The wharfage charges are high. This did not matter in the happy days when Wall Street brokers fought for the Prince of Wales suite and threatened to transfer to the French Line unless they got it. The first and second class cabins were comfortably crowded, at least during the summer months. The tourist third, a class created when the immigration business dropped off, overflowed with a mixture of ukuleles, mandolins, college boys and girls and jazz bands. Then the passenger receipts dropped severely, and tariffs from cargo also fell off.

It is uncertain just who, in this crisis, evolved the thought of the week-end tour. Ralph Dellevie, president of National Tours and a young man with a great deal of experience in such matters, is undoubtedly entitled to part of the credit. Some official of the Cunard Line, unfortunately unidentified, had a hand in the plans. The first idea was to announce a “Cruise to Nowhere.” The ship would simply leave port, steam out twelve miles, open her bar and return after four or five days of leisurely sailing. Prospective passengers, however, explained with a degree of embarrassment that this was not possible. Their friends, they said, asked them where they were going on a vessel unhampered by prohibition laws, and snickered knowingly at the reply that no port would be touched. Thereupon, the decision was made to announce an objective. In cold weather it would be Bermuda or Nassau. In warm weather the cruise would be northerly, in the direction of Nova Scotia. Applications for reservations then came in increasing numbers. The *Mauretania* made the first Cunard run on April 24. Since then, one or another of the large