

# Life History of the Wolf Girl

**WOLF CHILD AND HUMAN CHILD.**

By Arnold Gesell. New York: Harper & Bros, 1941. 107 pp. \$2.

Reviewed by GOODWIN WATSON

SO long as people debate the contributions of heredity and environment—and no termination is in sight—they will be referring to the children who grew up like wolves.

A generation ago the psychological giants like Cattell, Thorndike, and Gesell were very sure that instincts biologically inherited set the patterns of human development. Children, they maintained, walked erect not because parents taught them to toddle, but as a result of sheer maturation. It was believed instinctive to convey food to the mouth with hands, to prefer day rather than night for roaming, to cover nakedness, and to seek out companionship with other human beings.

On an October evening, in 1920, the Reverend J. A. L. Singh, and a man of Kora race called Chunarem, waited on a high, concealed platform to see a Man-Ghost reported to run in the jungle. "Close after the (mother wolf and her) cubs came the 'ghost'—a hideous-looking being—hand, foot, and body like a human being but the head was a big ball of something covering the shoulders and the upper portion of the bust, leaving only a sharp contour of the face available and it was human. Close at its heels came another awful creature exactly like the first, but smaller in size. Their eyes were bright and piercing, unlike human eyes." So the missionary in his diary—now in the process of being edited by Professor R. M. Zingg of Denver University—describes his first sight of "The Wolf Children of Midnapore."

Professor Gesell has sketched in a little book which can be read in an hour the story of Kamala and Amala—foster children of a wolf pack—from birth until their untimely deaths. Amala was about eighteen months old when recaptured and she lived less

than a year in the missionary orphanage. Kamala must have been about eight when she faced the bitter transition from her right and comfortable life in the jungle to the uncanny hardships of civilization. She died of uraemia in 1929, at the age of about seventeen.

The Singh diary, if we may judge from the choice bits Gesell has quoted, must be fascinating. In a quaint solemn style, the most incredible happenings are recorded with faithful accuracy. Its full publication will be awaited with keen interest.

To the narrative Dr. Gesell has furnished a background out of his years of observation of the normal growth of children. He attempts to reconstruct the experience of Kamala and to fill in some of the many blanks in the record. He compares her development with that which might have been expected in a human environment. "At the age of thirteen years her behavior picture presented a striking psychological resemblance to that of an eighteen-months-old child." At seventeen, Kamala had attained a level of language and social behavior fairly comparable to that of most children between three and four years of age. This retardation seems to have been wholly the result of living in a cave with wolves instead of in a hut with people. Dr. Gesell finds good reason to believe that Kamala was born a normal infant, and that no illness had impaired her central nervous system. Probably if wolves could have set intelligence quotients in terms of their culture, Kamala at the age of eight would have surpassed every other human being.

Environmentalists have been winning most of the encounters during the past decade, but they have had no other evidence so compelling as the experiences of the wolf-children. Even those "instincts" of walking, talking, feeding by hand, day activity, dress, and gregarious response which seemed so securely grounded in human nature, must be reinterpreted when we learn that a normal child, under other circumstances, will run on all fours, see better in darkness, howl in the dead of night, lap up her food, tear off any clothing, and growl ferociously or even bite when other human beings approach.

The power of habit is evident throughout the tale, but nowhere more clearly than in Professor Gesell's own effort to conclude that his traditional view of human growth as determined by natural maturation needs no modification in the light of this extraordinary observation.



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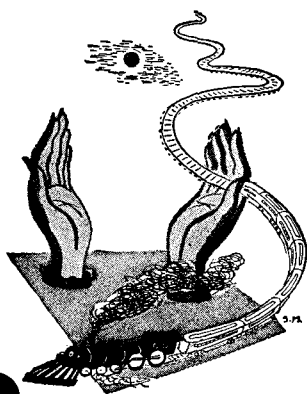
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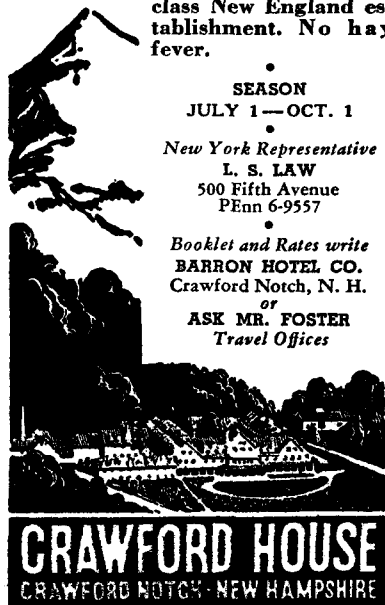
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## TRADE WINDS

**F**EW books are being published this month, and those members of the SRL staff who are not on vacation and who have not been off getting married seem to have chosen, as their favorite topics of conversation, the chances of the Russians, the incredible batting spree of Joe DiMaggio, and the speed with which "Berlin Diary" is being bought throughout the country.

☞ This last movement is richly deserved. William Shirer's book contains every element of human interest in addition to being perhaps the most revealing book on or about contemporary Germany. Which reminds us of another book which does for Russia what "Berlin Diary" does for Germany. It is Louis Fischer's "Men and Politics." Suggestion for any reading vacationist: take along both books.

★ ★

☞ Just in case any of our readers are interested: Miss Loveman is visiting in Joplin, Missouri; Mr. Canby is roughing it in the hills of Connecticut; Bill Benét is honeymooning along the coast of some Massachusetts town, and Miss Spector, of the advertising department, motored up to New Haven and got herself married to a leading attorney of the same city. So all in all—best wishes.

★ ★

☞ The John Day Company can take it. Soon after publication of Frederic F. Van de Water's "The Reluctant Republic," the reviewers and critics suggested that the book ought to have an index. Presto!—no sooner said than the John Day people prepared it for the next edition.

★ ★

☞ James Burnham is getting credit for having more or less predicted the present Russo-German war in his book, "The Managerial Revolution," written last winter and now a strong seller. While one recent commentator suggested that the new war is "hard on the theory of the managerial revolution," the record shows this war actually follows from the theory set forth in Mr. Burnham's book. The publishers call attention to the final pages of Chapter XIV of the book, in which Mr. Burnham says that there is now reason to expect Russia to split into a far eastern and western section, with European Russia subordinated to the European center; and that the process "will presumably include war, one or more of the managerial wars of tomorrow."

☞ Bargain Note: The Cambridge Modern History is now only \$19.50. We think this item of sufficient news importance to merit free advertisement. This great historical work in 13 volumes should grace the libraries of all students of history. We are informed by the Macmillan Company that this offer is made possible because of the advantageous rate of exchange between England and United States.

☞ First there was the sale of a hundred million Little Blue Books; then Random House recently announced a ten-million total sale of The Modern Library titles; and now we hear from Walter J. Black, sponsor of the new Classics Club, that he has sold his millionth copy of the collected works of Shakespeare. Runner-up to Shakespeare in popularity among books sold at odd prices such as 89 cents apiece are deMaupassant, Dickens, Tolstoi, Balzac, Poe, Emerson, Hawthorne, and Zola. According to Mr. Black, men, not women, purchase most literary masterpieces.

★ ★

☞ Richard Harding Davis rides again! Away back in 1906 the famous war correspondent included in his book, "Real Soldiers of Fortune," a chapter on Winston Churchill, at that time fighting in the Boer War. Davis was much impressed with young Churchill and in a letter to his mother he tells of the relief of the British besieged in Ladysmith: "The incoming army had had fourteen days hard fighting at the end of three month's campaigning, but were robust and tanned, ragged and caked with mud. As they came in they cheered and the garrison tried to cheer back, but it was like a whisper.

"Winston Churchill and I stood in front of Gen. White and cried for an hour . . . (You) saw only the side of it that was before you, the starving garrison relieved by men who had lost almost one out of every three in trying to help them."

☞ Now comes Scribners with this chapter in book form and titled "Young Winston Churchill." The illustrations are particularly interesting; there are many photographs of Mr. Churchill as one of Davis's soldiers of fortune.

★ ★

From Richard Armour, who says,

### IT'S A CRIME

I know no book  
Which in the place of  
I'd not prefer one  
On "The Strange Case of—."

LOUIS GREENFIELD.