

well with the values that are chiefly sought after in this country. No strong father image is compatible with our politics or our economics. We seek the opportunity to prove that we are as good as the next person, and we do not find comfort in following an authoritarian voice—in the state or in the home, from the landowner or the priest—which will issue a command from on high. We learn as children to measure ourselves against Johnny next door, or against Mildred, whose mother our mother knows in church, and this prepares us for living in a society with strongly egalitarian ideals. We do not learn the necessity of submitting to unquestioned commands as the children of many countries do. The family in the United States has become democratic.

THESE free-choice and non-authoritarian aspects of the family, along with its privacy and potential leisure, evidence only a few of the many ways in which it has become consistent with major emphases in our national life. They seem to be quite well fitted to the role the family must play in a culture like that of the United States. This does not mean, however, that Americans capitalize to their own advantage upon all these consistently contrived arrangements which are institutionalized in the family as we know it. At the beginning of this essay two subjects were left for later discussion—now well our society protects the family from dangerous overstrain, and how well as human beings with special insights and blind spots we are able to get all the satisfactions we might out of our version of the home. These two subjects cannot be omitted.

In spite of all our American sentiment about the home and the family, we do not show great concern about buttressing it against catastrophe. Any well-considered national program must have regard for the children; if they are housed and fed below a certain minimum, if their health is not attended to, the nation suffers in the next generation. The lack of a tolerable economic floor under the family is especially crucial in a society like that of the United States, where competition is so thoroughly relied upon as an incentive and where so few families have anything but the weekly pay envelope to use for food and doctors' bills. When factories close, when inflation comes, the family gets little consideration in the United States. Especially in economic crises it gets the little end of the horn. Today the necessity of providing tens of thousands of new homes is of the greatest importance for healthy family life in the United States, but

adequate housing programs are notoriously unsupported. Sickness insurance, too, which would provide preventive care as well as relieve the family budget of all expenses in a crisis, needs high priority in a national program.

There is another very different difficulty which threatens the family. We have seen how as an institution it is particularly tailored to American ways of living. But the very best suit of clothes may be badly worn by a careless and irresponsible person. So, too, people may abuse a home well designed to suit them. It is no less true of marriage and the family. These exist as institutions remarkably well adjusted to American life. But many Americans are miserably unable to achieve happiness within them.

It is of course easy to say that a culture like that of the United States, which allows individuals so much free choice among alternatives, is asking a great deal of human beings. In social life, as in literature, some of the finest human achievements have been within restrictions as rigid as those of the sonnet form. Our American culture is more like a sprawling novel where every page may deal with a new encounter and with a special

choice. We ask a great deal of individuals when we give them such wide latitude and so little respected authority. But the United States is built on the premise that this is possible, and if ever we as a people decide otherwise our nation will change beyond recognition. We shall have lost the very thing we have been trying to build in this country.

It must not be imagined that this craving for individual freedom is what prevents Americans from enjoying the family as much as it might be enjoyed. In so far as the family is an overheavy economic burden on some wage earners, a more careful welfare program could take care of this complaint. Certainly women and children have a freedom in the American family which is hard to match elsewhere in the world, and from all portents this will probably increase rather than diminish.

The crucial difficulty in American happiness in marriage, is, rather, a certain blind spot which is especially fostered in our privileged United States. An extreme instance of this was mentioned in connection with the million of idle, middle-aged wives in this country. These are women who as a group are well set up and favored beyond any such great numbers of women in any other part of the world. But privilege to them is separate from responsibility. Comparatively few of them feel that it is compatible with their status to do responsible work in which they have had experience in their own households and which must now be done outside their homes, and few take the initiative in getting the training they would need in jobs which they can see need to be done.

It is not only the middle-aged woman who accepts privilege without a sense of obligation. In marriage, the right of both men and women to choose their mates freely is a privilege which carries with it, if they are to live happily, an accompanying conviction that when things go wrong it is doubly their obligation—to themselves as well as to their spouses—to deal tolerantly. Perhaps a young man realizes that his wife is more petulant than he knew; exactly because he chose her, however, she is "a poor thing; but [his] own." Privileged as he was to choose her, he has a corresponding responsibility.

It is the same with children. In the United States the reason for having children is not, as it is in most of the world, the perpetuation of the family line down many generations. In most countries people have children because there must be someone to till the piece of land in the village where the family has lived for centuries, there must be an heir to inherit the

Winged Words

By Carl Binger

WORDS are winged birds,
With feathered tip they dip the
rippled surface of our thought,
Or with a circling, mirrored eye,
Upon the inward mind they spy,
To plummet down on darting wish,
And seize upon the gasping fish.

Eager, painted, humming words,
That sip the drop of honey from the
lip;
Olive branched dove,
Cooing of peace and love.

Words that squawk,
Night-heron like, or quawk;
Words that peck and cackle,
Greedy vulgar grackle.

Warbling words like cheerio
The song of red-eyed vireo;
Smeared and bloody words of vultures,
That fatten on decaying cultures.

Searching, silent, solitary words,
From the throats of lonesome birds,
Marbled Godwit stepping from his
reedy cover
To start a flight of ring-necked plover;
Or gliding Sheerwater,
Who sails and sweeps above unfathomed deeps.

Hof, or there must be a son to perform the ancestral rites. In our atomistic American families these motivations seldom arise. We have children, not because our parents are sitting in judgment, not because of the necessity of having an heir, but because we personally want them—whether as company in the home or to show our friends we can have them. It is a privileged phrasing of parenthood, and if it is to bring us happiness it implies an acceptance of responsibility. Nothing is all pleasure in this life, and bringing up two or three noisy children in our small urban apartments is no exception to the rule. But with us it is based on choice—far more than it is elsewhere in the world—and we can only make the most of a choice if we follow it through wholeheartedly in all its implications.

It is partly because of this blind spot in the American family, this walling off of privilege from responsibility and tolerance, that we so often ask of life an average happiness—as if it could be presented to us on a platter. Full normal happiness only comes to men and women who give as well as take—who, in this instance, give themselves warmly to their family life, and do not merely arrogate to themselves the rights they are so freely allowed in our society. In the United States, if happiness proves impossible they can get a divorce; but, until they have made this decision, they can capitalize on their privileges only if they bind around their arms the motto "Privilege has its obligations."

The family in the United States is an institution remarkably adapted to our treasured way of life. The changes that are occurring in it do not mean that it is decaying and needs to be saved. It offers a long array of privileges. It needs more consideration in political tax-supported programs, by means of which many difficulties that beset it could be eradicated. Finally, Americans, in order to get the maximum happiness out of such a free institution as the family in the United States, need to parallel their privileges with an awakening responsibility. It is hard to live up to being so privileged as we are in the United States, but it is not impossible.

Ruth Benedict, at the time of her death last September, was associate professor of anthropology at Columbia. She was author of "Patterns of Culture," "Race: Science and Politics," and other books. This essay will be published by Harper in February as part of a symposium on "The Family: Its Functions and Destiny," Volume V of the Science of Culture Series, edited by Ruth Nanda Anshen.

The Film Forum

FILMS ON MUSIC

The Saturday Review's Weekly Guide to Selected 16mm. Sound Films.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *In this and a following FILM FORUM we survey a selection of music films of unusual merit. There is, however, an urgent need for better coordination of 16mm. musical films with the teaching curriculum (SRL, Aug. 14), and for an overall plan designed to use the resources of sight and sound in the service of music.*

ORCHESTRAL INSTRUMENTS OF THE ORCHESTRA

Available from British Information Services. Consult SRL for nearest source. (20 min.) May be purchased or rented.

This is the first film to be directed by a conductor—Muir Mathieson, permanent conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra, whose name is familiar to all who remember credit titles of British feature films. It offers an excellent introduction to orchestra music appreciation; Dr. Malcolm Sargent acts as commentator as he explains each instrument, the sounds it gives, and the family to which it belongs. These groups (i.e. strings, woodwinds, etc.) are then combined and blended to get the full effect of the score. Dr. Sargent mounts the podium and conducts the London Philharmonic in Benjamin Britten's "Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Purcell," composed especially for this film.

TORONTO SYMPHONY NO. 1

Available from National Film Board of Canada. Consult SRL for nearest source. (12 min.) May be purchased or rented.

Sir Ernest MacMillan conducts the Toronto Symphony Orchestra in three modern compositions: Benjamin's "Jamaican Rhumba," MacMillan's "A St. Malo," and Kabalevsky's "Colas Breugnon." Interesting camera studies supplement music.

TORONTO SYMPHONY NO. 2

Available as above. (10 min.)

In this reel MacMillan directs the third movement of Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony in B Minor.

HYMN OF THE NATIONS

Produced by the OWI. Consult SRL for nearest distributor. (30 min.) May be purchased or rented.

If this film did nothing but present the excellent camera studies of Arturo Toscanini, it would be a remarkable film. The greatest living conductor, together with his NBC Symphony Orchestra, interprets Giuseppe Verdi's "Hymn of the Nations." The picture was produced in honor of the liberation of Italy; for this worthy cause Toscanini allowed himself to be filmed at work. In addition to one of the best re-

corded musical sound tracks, the film traces the conductor's life and his part in the anti-Fascist movement.

ADDITIONAL SOURCES:

The National Music Camp at Ann Arbor, Mich., has produced four films which they distribute without charge. They are: "Exploring Talent at Interlaken (25 min.; color)," "Electronic Aids in Music Teaching" (25 min.; color), "Symphony of Young America" (22 min.), and "Youth Builds a Symphony" (25 min.). The Chicago Tribune Public Service Office has a free film on the 1943 Chicago Music Festival; it is called "Music for Americans" and it runs eighteen minutes. The American Telephone & Telegraph Corporation has filmed two of its radio programs (SRL Aug. 28), "Rehearsal" and "The Telephone Hour."

INSTRUMENTAL (PIANO)

PADEREWSKI

Distributed by Official Films, 25 West 45 St., N. Y. 19, N. Y. May be purchased or rented.

Unlike Shakespeare's somber admonition that the good is oft interred with their bones, here is a specific instance in which the good that a man did lives after him. Paderewski made only one screen appearance, and the selections he played have been edited for 16mm. users. They have been divided into three reels: (1) Chopin's "Polonaise," (2) Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata" and Paderewski's "Minuet in G," and (3) Liszt's "Hungarian Rhapsody." Each about ten minutes.

MYRA HESS

Available from British Information Services. Consult SRL for nearest source. (10 min.)

Beethoven's Sonata in F Minor, the "Appassionata," becomes a personal thing in the hands of Myra Hess. This film presents more than a perfect rendition of a difficult piece—only the camera is capable of capturing the effort which seems wrung from her very soul as her fingers appear to improvise effortlessly.

JOSE ITURBI

Distributed by Official Films. See above.

Before Señor Iturbi joined MGM and made the classics interesting to the millions, he made two short films (each about ten minutes) for those who wanted to study his technique. In the first he plays Albeniz's "Sevilla" and Chopin's "Fantasie Impromptu"; in the second he plays three pieces for the harpsichord by Rameau, and on the piano Liszt's "Hungarian Rhapsody No. 11."

—RAYMOND SPOTTISWOODE.

For information about the purchase or rental of any films, please write to Film Department, The Saturday Review, 25 West 45 Street, New York 19, N. Y.