

The Number One Son

By GRANVILLE HICKS

ERNEST HEMINGWAY was, as the genealogists say, the second child and first son of Dr. Clarence E. and Grace Hall Hemingway of Oak Park, Illinois. In all, the Hemingways had six children, Leicester, the sixth child and second son, being sixteen years younger than Ernest. Last spring Leicester published "My Brother, Ernest Hemingway," which Carlos Baker (*SR*, March 3) called "the best extant life" of the novelist. Now Marcelline Hemingway Sanford, Ernest's senior by little more than a year, has published "At the Hemingways" (Little, Brown, \$4.95).

Some of the most interesting passages in Leicester's book concern the Hemingway family and the kind of life Ernest led as a boy, but he knew about the early years only what he had been told, whereas Mrs. Sanford was so close to her brother in age—and in other ways, too—that to look through her eyes is almost like looking through his. We have known in a general way what sort of background Ernest Hemingway had, but Mrs. Sanford takes us inside the large, comfortable, respectable, perfectly Victorian home in Oak Park.

Dr. Hemingway, who came from a sound New England family, grew up in comfort but not in affluence, and he worked hard for his medical education. From the beginning, as his daughter emphasizes, he was an extremely conscientious man, never sparing himself in the pursuit of what he regarded as his duty. He was a devout Congregationalist, and a foe of alcohol, tobacco, dancing, card playing, and profanity. Unceasingly active himself, he hated idleness in others. With his children he was strict, but he gave himself to them unsparingly, teaching them to shoot and to swim and instructing them in the ways of nature. Although by contemporary standards he seems a formidable figure, he was in many important ways a good father.

Grace Hemingway came from a family of considerable means, and her daughter calls her "somewhat pampered." She had gone to Europe twice with her parents and had spent summers at fashionable resorts. She had a talent for music, and had had voice training in New York. Indeed, she was encouraged by her teacher to believe

that she could have a career in opera, and she never let anyone forget that she had given this up to marry the doctor. After their marriage, she was able, by her singing and by teaching music, to earn a good deal more than her husband. She had no aptitude for domestic tasks, and, with two or three servants in the house, she did not need to have. She was a strong woman who, when it served her purpose or pleased her fancy, could pretend to be weak, and she had her ways of getting out of a situation that she did not care for. She developed an impressive presence, and in some of the photographs she looks regal. After her father died and left her money, she built a fifteen-room house embodying her ideas of comfort and gentility. One of her favorite books was "John Halifax, Gentleman."

Growing up in such a home, Ernest Hemingway was what he could scarcely fail to be—a good boy. He was an excellent student; Leicester says that he got mostly A's; and as he grew older, he took part in all sorts of school activities—athletics, dramatics, the school paper. His father believed that children should learn to work, and enforced his theory by providing meager allowances, so that Ernest mowed lawns and shoveled snow and carried papers. Against their father's judgment, the children were sent to dancing school, Ernest among them. Both he and Marcelline were active in the young people's society of the Congregational Church. He was no sissy; he was a reasonably good athlete, and he loved hunting and fishing.

As every reader of the Nick Adams stories knows, life at the Hemingways was not always so placid as it seemed on the surface. Hemingway saw flaws in both his father and mother, and he had moments of revolt. But Mrs. Sanford makes no mistake in titling her book "The Years of Innocence." As Philip Young pointed out some years ago in his stimulating little book on Hemingway, the loss of innocence was Hemingway's first great theme.

The final loss of innocence came, of course, with the war. Mrs. Sanford writes about him after his return: "But Ernest wasn't the same old friend and

playmate I had known. Though much less than a year had passed since he had gone to Europe—and only a year and a half since we had graduated from high school together—a lifetime of new experiences, war, death, agony, new people, a new language and love had crowded into Ernest's life." He had come home a hero, and he liked that, but his sister realized that all was not well with him. Not only was he in pain as a result of the wounds received in Italy; he was often depressed and restless. "For Ernest," Mrs. Sanford says, "it must have been something like being put in a box with the cover nailed down to come home to conventional, suburban Oak Park living, after his own vivid experiences."



If, however, he had simply been bored, he could have got away easily enough, but he didn't and that was what bothered his mother and father. He didn't want a job, didn't want to go to college, didn't want to do anything. He was a man without a purpose, and nothing could seem more immoral to his parents. Just after his twenty-first birthday his mother wrote him a letter in which she told him to get a job or get out of the house. According to Mrs. Sanford, Ernest resented the ultimatum, but it was the greatest favor his mother could have done him, not because it led to his getting a job, though it did do that, but because it made it possible for him to break away from his family for all time.

Mrs. Sanford wisely devotes most of her book to the years when she and her brother were living in the same house, but she does write briefly about his relations with his parents in the Twenties, when they were often shocked and hurt by what he wrote, and she tells of Dr. Hemingway's suicide and of Mrs. Hemingway's life thereafter. This is the story of a family, told with considerable candor and a large degree of insight. It is an interesting story in its own right, but it is important because the family was Ernest Hemingway's. Much of his life after his mother's ultimatum was lived in violent defiance of the precepts and conventions to which his parents adhered, but his upbringing had more than a negative influence. Where did he acquire the will to succeed if not from his parents? The Hemingway who strove for excellence in everything he attempted, who could talk of beating Stendhal and taking on Tolstoy, was the Hemingway who had been brought up in the Victorian household in Oak Park.

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The Most Trusted Man in the World

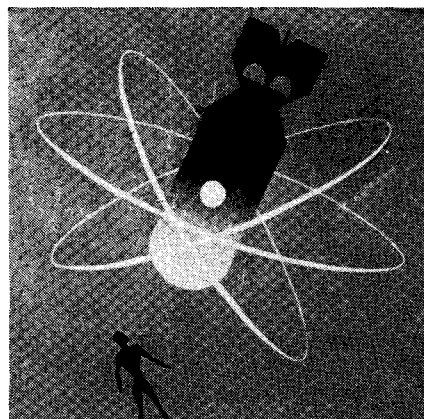
THE MOST trusted man in the world is Nikita Khrushchev. Who trusts him? Americans, mostly. For years the United States has been pursuing those policies that have had the curious effect of placing the safety and future of every American in the hands of the Soviet leader.

The United States didn't do this deliberately. Actually, we thought we were fashioning the policies that would give us security. We thought that if we could only devise enough instruments of massive devastation we could be confident that no one would dare attack us. After all, we had just come through a major war begun by aggressor nations. We decided that we would never again allow ourselves to be in a position of inferior military power. Accordingly, we turned a large part of our national inventiveness, energy, and resources into the making of the most colossal destructive capacity the world has ever known.

The only trouble with this policy was that it didn't meet the problem. We tried to fit revolutionary new weapons into conventional methods and ideas of achieving security, and it didn't work. For nuclear weapons were not merely a superior form of attack; they were instruments of obliteration supremely suited to the habits, impulses, and ambitions of an aggressor state. They offered a potential aggressor the lure of a massive, lightning-fast surprise attack, one that might wipe out the retaliatory power of the intended victim as part of the act of total destruction. Inter-

continental ballistic missiles and space satellites were to enlarge on these possibilities. What we conceived to be a deterrent was actually a powerful incentive to a potential enemy to hit first.

The result today is that the United States is trusting Mr. Khrushchev to be guided entirely by rational considerations. He now has at his ready command the means to put an end to American history. He has the bombs, the launching pads, and the missiles to convert the United States into a pile of radioactive rubble. We are trusting him to take the dreadful consequences of such a move into account. We are trusting him not to have the mind of the typical dictator-aggressor in history—a mind fixed on ambition and opportunity, minimizing the risks involved in reckless action. We are trusting him to place a higher value on the lives of the people he represents than on personal ambitions or a mystic sense of destiny that accepts



massive sacrifices as an essential part of achieving ultimate goals.

We are trusting him not to be misled by strange objects that may pass across his radar screens, precipitating a quick judgment that an attack on him has begun and causing him to press the buttons that will release a pulverizing attack on the United States.

We are trusting him to select his military personnel with the most painstaking care, for modern nuclear military capability requires that many hundreds of men be in a position to begin atomic war. Every submarine equipped with rocket-launching devices; every plane carrying nuclear weapons; every missile station—all these can be activated by human beings. The United States has scrupulously set up safeguards against impulsive decision by any of the many men who have access to our own apocalyptic switchboards. We are trusting Mr. Khrushchev to do the same.

We are trusting him not to press too hard or too far on specific issues between us—such as Berlin or Laos or Cuba or the Middle East. For then it would become necessary for us to react sharply, which could produce an even stronger counterreaction beyond the point of control.

In short, it is not true that the United States does not trust Nikita Khrushchev, or that Nikita Khrushchev does not trust the United States. Each trusts the other to a greater extent than ever two peoples have trusted each other before. In fact, the question of trust in any of the negotiations at Geneva or elsewhere is miniscule alongside the massive mutual trust involved in the present situation where there are no agreements at all.

The central question today is unchanged from what it was at the end of the war in 1945: How can we create a situation of true security—one that does not give the power of instantaneous life and death over any nation to any man or group of men? The more we ponder this question, the greater the realization that military might is not enough in a nuclear age. If there is to be a genuine security, the search for it must go on beyond the anarchy of nations. This means law. Merely the recognition of this fact will not achieve it. But if, in addition to recognition, we add conviction, making this our driving national purpose and leading a great debate in the world on how best to achieve it, we might at least fix the sights of the world's peoples on what it is that is required to keep human life going. No one knows in advance what kind of energies and historical thrust might be released by such a commitment. Certainly it would do no harm to try.

—N.C.