

WHEN THE CALL COMES TO THEM

By Franklin Chase Hoyt

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IT'S a long, long way from Springfield, Massachusetts, to Erivan, Armenia.

This and several other obvious facts were discovered by Ernest soon after his altruistic, but somewhat visionary, attempt to cross the seas and succor the oppressed was interfered with and brought to a lame and impotent conclusion by the unsympathetic minions of the law. For Ernest came to realize that, after all, the place for a boy of fourteen is in his own home and among his own people, and that, for the time being, he could prove himself of greater usefulness in Springfield than in Erivan. He also came to understand that by doing his duty, faithfully and unaffectedly, in his allotted place he would best fit himself for wider service and larger achievement later on when the call should come to him to serve in other ways.

Ernest really did not get very far on his travels, for he had barely completed the first one hundred and thirty miles of his journey when an adverse fate put an end to his cherished project. On arriving in New York from Springfield, he went up to the nearest police officer and asked, quite casually, what was the quickest route to Constantinople. The officer, naturally, was somewhat startled. He was well used to pointing out the way to Brooklyn and the Bronx. He was capable, at a pinch, of directing a traveller to Coney Island or Jersey City. But he was not accustomed to guiding wanderers to the four corners of the earth. At the same time Ernest's inquiry seemed to interest him greatly. He asked the boy a few questions, which led Ernest to unbosom himself and to tell of his plans for service in Armenia. The officer shook his head. He was a man of hard, common sense, and he failed to sympathize with Ernest's aspirations.

"How much money have you got left?" he asked.

"One hundred and fifty dollars," replied Ernest. "It's all mine, too. I drew it out of the savings-bank when I left Springfield."

"It may be yours, all right," retorted the officer. "But there are some other folks, I'm thinkin', who will have something to say about this little trip of yours. I'm a man of family myself, and I wouldn't like to let a kid of your size go and mix it up with the Turks till I'd heard from his popper and mommer. I guess you'll have to postpone your jaunt for a while and stay with us till we get in touch with Springfield. It won't be long before we hear from them, I'm thinkin'."

Ernest suffered himself to be led away to the children's shelter, but when he appeared before me the next morning he was in a distinctly rebellious mood. Not that he was in the least excited. In all my experiences I have never seen a boy so calm, so deliberate, and so precise in his manner and choice of words as Ernest. But he was indignant and outraged at the act of the officer in taking him into custody.

"I should like you to tell me," he said, "why this man has arrested me. All I did was to ask him how to get to Constantinople. I didn't suppose that it was a crime to question him."

"Of course it's no crime to question an officer," I laughed. "But, tell me, why did you want to go to Constantinople?"

"This was my reason" (I record Ernest's sententious words almost verbatim): "I wanted to be of some real use in the world, and there was nothing I could do at home. I've read a great deal about the suffering in Armenia, and I thought that if I could get to Constantinople I might offer my services to the American committee."

"Don't you think," I asked him, "that you are rather young to take up such work?"

In answer to my question he produced from his pocket a newspaper clipping,

telling of a boy of thirteen who had enlisted as of the age of eighteen, and who had actually served in France with the American Expeditionary Force. "What others have done, I can do!" he remarked gravely.

"Did you talk over this plan with your mother and father?" I continued.

"No, I didn't," he replied. "They wouldn't have understood."

"I suppose, of course, that you communicated with some of the Armenian relief committees?"

"No, I didn't do that either. I thought about it, but I felt sure that they would discourage me."

"The opposition seems to be fairly formidable," I remarked; "your parents, the authorities, and the Armenian representatives. Ernest, do you know what I think of you? I believe that you are a slacker and a deserter!"

He looked at me in utter astonishment. "I don't quite understand, judge," he said.

"Just this," I replied. "If you can't be of use in your own home, you can't be of any possible use elsewhere. You tell me that you want to serve in Armenia. Have you ever tried to serve in Springfield? You left there without a thought of your family or your obligations. You simply ran away to avoid your duties and to find adventure. The officer was quite right. You will have to stay with us until we hear from your parents. Think it all over, and let me know your conclusion when I see you again."

The next day Ernest was brought into court for a second time, accompanied by his elder brother, who had just arrived from Springfield to represent his family. There was no question as to the attitude of his own people. Through his brother they recorded their emphatic opposition to Ernest's romantic project, and were unkind enough to suggest that he might prove to be more of a burden than a relief to Armenia, if he should ever succeed in reaching there.

"Well, Ernest," I said, turning toward the boy, "you have had twenty-four hours to reflect on the situation since I last saw you. What do you think about it all, and what would you like to do now?"

"I've made up my mind to give up my trip entirely," he replied, with seriousness and deliberation. "I want to go home with my brother, and I can promise you that I won't run away again in a hurry. I've thought over everything very carefully since yesterday, and I see now how foolish I was. I'm much too young to carry through this plan. What you said to me about serving in Springfield and of making myself of real use in my own home impressed me a great deal. I've never tried to do that before, but I see that there are a lot of things that I can do there. I'm going to make myself a good American, and then later on I can take up other work if I want to. Perhaps I'll get over to Armenia, after all, but don't you worry, judge, I'm going to make good at home first."

"I am very sure you will," I responded as I bade him good-by.

Sally's probationary period was a comparatively long one. She was brought into court at the age of fifteen on her mother's complaint that she was disobedient, keeping late hours, and associating with most undesirable company. Although she was given a chance to prove herself and to correct her own faults under the court's supervision, she found it very hard at first to break away from her old habits and from the influences of her former associates. Consequently, the first year of her probation was marked by many disappointments and frequent lapses. Gradually, however, she gained a better control of herself, and during the second year she fulfilled our fondest expectations. So satisfactory was her progress that she was honorably discharged from the court's supervision a short time ago, after reaching her seventeenth birthday, and those who know Sally's grit and common sense have no misgivings whatsoever as to her future.

A little while after her discharge I was agreeably surprised to receive the following letter from her:

"DEAR JUDGE:

"I am writing to ask whether it would be possible for you to appoint me as a probation officer in your court. Considering all I have been through and all

I know (*sic*!) I think that I could make a mighty good one.

"If you can't do that, couldn't you get me a job in a place where children are sent to. I would just love to take care of babies.

"Everybody has been so good to me and has worked so hard to help me, that now I want to turn around and do my share in helping others. I've learnt an awful lot since I came to court and I've found out that one is much happier in doing things for other people than in any other way.

"I think in the end I will study to be a trained nurse, but I'd like to be a probation officer first. I think it must be a grand job. Please write and let me know what you can do for me.

Yours truly,
SALLY —."

In answer, I informed Sally that it was necessary to go through a course of study and to pass a competitive examination before one could receive an appointment as probation officer. I also added that she would have to wait some years before she would be old enough to qualify for any of the positions she had in mind. I suggested, however, that while she was waiting she might offer her services as a volunteer to some of the clubs and settlements who were interested in supervising the activities and recreation of younger children. This idea seemed to meet, temporarily, Sally's desire to do her share in helping others, and I understand that she is engaged in such work at this very time.

The instinct to serve—the desire to take one's part and prove of use in the community—is but a natural attribute of youth. Sometimes it exists in an embryonic state; sometimes it flourishes with surprising strength and vitality; but in one way or another its development must begin with childhood if it is to survive at all in later years. It is a blessed quality, which should be encouraged and guided with the greatest possible care, and which should never be belittled or ignored.

Are the children of our community to be taught to think rightly and to live usefully, or are they to be allowed to drift

aimlessly, with no regard for their personal obligations toward the State and society at large? They often reach the parting of the ways sooner than one would suspect. If their thoughts and activities are properly directed, and they are kept mentally alert and spiritually awake, they will be fitted to take their allotted parts as efficient and helpful citizens in the future. If, on the other hand, they are permitted to become selfish and self-centred, if they are allowed to grow indifferent to their obligations, and weak in self-discipline and self-control, they will soon lose respect for all authority and fall into that very class which, bereft of decent incentives and healthy ideals, and seething with discontent and lawlessness, threatens danger to our commonwealth.

Out of which material are we going to create our future citizenship and build the city and State of to-morrow? The choice is ours to make, and we all share a common responsibility in seeing that our children are taught to reverence and to fight for those ideals which we justly regard as the corner-stone of our beloved country.

No one should be discouraged at the magnitude of the task. If every year we progress a little further in promoting child welfare, and in developing our methods and standards along these lines; if we take no backward steps and do not relax our efforts, we shall move steadily forward toward the goal. If we build slowly—"precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little"—we can at least build surely and make our foundations permanent and secure.

In teaching the children to take their part and to fit themselves for their duties as citizens of to-morrow, we must not ignore nor forget the obligations which we ourselves, as citizens of to-day, owe the community in this respect. Every man and woman in the land can render at least some measure of service toward this end. The work cannot be left to specialists and experts. Some individuals may be in a position to dedicate their lives to child-training and child-saving, but alone and unaided they cannot elevate and protect the whole youth of the nation. The entire country must join in the task with enthusiasm, and accept child-conserva-

tion as one of its principal and sacred tenets if the movement is to be carried on to a glorious consummation.

It goes without saying that those who are devoting their time and energy to the care and training of their own children are by that very act rendering the supreme service to the State, and this is also true of those who are working in the fields of religion, education, health and social service. But there are many other ways in which an individual, no matter how busily engaged in different walks of life, can contribute his or her share to the advancement of child welfare in general.

Take, for example, such organizations as the Big Brother and Big Sister Societies; their members are not required to give up any great amount of time to the exclusion of other activities, but are merely asked to interest themselves singly in the case of a boy or girl, and to befriend some one child who has been handicapped from the start by misfortune and has been denied that fair average chance of normal development which is its inherent right. Surely this is not much to ask of any one, yet every individual effort of this sort, when taken and added together, produces a result which is astonishing in its far-reaching effect.

If people would only look around they could find a thousand and one places where even a small measure of service would be appreciated and count for something. There are the churches, schools, hospitals, institutions, settlements, community centres, societies, including such effective organizations as the Boy Scouts, clubs, playgrounds, camps, and other social and civic groups innumerable, which are calling for the public's active co-operation and support, and to which everybody can contribute something by way of personal interest.

In fact, every centre where children are gathered together for the furtherance of their moral, mental, or physical development constitutes a unit in the general system of preparing our vast army of future citizens for their service in the years to come. No unit or link in this chain is too small to be neglected or overlooked, for sometimes the greatest good and the

most far-reaching influence can spring from the least conspicuous group.

"Cast thy bread upon the waters," and rest assured that neither the time, nor the money, nor the personal service which is expended in this cause will ever be wasted or spent in vain.

A great nation can afford to be generous in the treatment of its children. Indeed, one of the very tests of its greatness is to be found in the measures which it takes to safeguard and improve the coming generation. If a country expects to receive devoted and efficient service from its future citizens it must take scrupulous care in meeting its own obligations toward them with wisdom and honor. There is nothing visionary or utopian about such a policy; it is a matter of plain common sense and self-protection.

To paraphrase a famous document with which all good Americans are supposed to be familiar, it might be said that every child is endowed with certain inalienable rights, and that among these are protection, education, health, and the pursuit of happiness.

Its right to protection comprises many things besides its mere preservation from cruelty and neglect. It has the right to a normal, decent, and sympathetic home; the right to the care and protection of the State in case its natural guardians fail in their duties; the right to be safeguarded against corrupting influences and debasing environments; the right of deliverance from economic pressure and the serfdom of child labor in all of its forms.

By a child's education much more is understood than a mere smattering of learning or a rudimental course of instruction in the three R's. It has the right to be taught of other things.

Most important of all is the question of its religious training and its moral guidance. The opportunity must be given every child to learn of religious truths and to worship God. The form of its religion does not concern the authorities; that is a matter to be decided by its parents, its family, and its ecclesiastical advisers. But it should be strengthened and confirmed in its chosen faith, and encouraged to follow its precepts. If our experience in the Children's Court has proved one

thing, it is that religion is essential in the training of youth, and that no lasting good can be achieved when its spiritual development is neglected.

A child should also be taught allegiance to the law, so that when it is called upon for service it will not have to act blindly. It has a right to a thorough understanding of governmental functions, of the purposes of our statutes, and of the fundamental principles of law and order. It must be so guided and governed that it will grow to love and reverence the ideals of our country, and thoroughly appreciate the importance of the part which it must perform as a unit of society.

In the development of our educational system no effort should be spared in providing the schools with efficient instructors. Our children, certainly, have a right to the very best. Every penny spent in this direction will be repaid; for, unless competent teachers can be obtained and induced to remain in the service, the whole system will be threatened with disaster. Adequate provision should also be made for an intelligent policy of vocational guidance, and this, too, will require the employment of experienced workers. We are just beginning to awaken to the importance of vocational guidance as a means of discovering a child's special aptitude and of directing its efforts in the right channels. Surely a child has the right to make a special study of those things for which it is best fitted by predilection and natural bent, and to choose its vocation with discrimination and understanding.

It is scarcely necessary to comment on the duty of a government to preserve the health of its children. Dark indeed would be the future of any nation which neglected to safeguard the physical well-being of its rising generations.

There are, however, several subjects closely akin to health which deserve a passing reference under this head. A child as it approaches adolescence has a right to be instructed in the laws of sex hygiene. This is primarily a task for its parents, but if they fail in the performance of their manifest duty, then its teachers must undertake the work. A child should not be allowed to pick up its knowledge of this subject from the gutter.

If any one should doubt the wisdom of giving such instruction, let him come to the Children's Court and see the number of children who have fallen victims to immorality and hideous disease because of their lack of information concerning such matters and their ignorance of the first principles of moral cleanliness.

The treatment of mental deficiency is another problem which bears an intimate relation to health. Children who suffer under this handicap deserve the greatest care and attention to prevent them from becoming a burden and a menace to the community. Their existence cannot be ignored, and as entities in the body politic they, too, have their rights. The State should provide for their examination and diagnosis, furnish proper facilities for their custodial care, and see that such of them as are fit to be at large are taught to be self-supporting and to fill a niche according to their capacity.

As to the pursuit of happiness, that is a right with which, as we are told, all persons are equally endowed, and so, it might be argued, it is not a special prerogative of children. Yet children are as much entitled to their happiness as any other class in the community. Of course, happiness in the abstract has a number of meanings. It may refer to a state of contentment, or a condition of mind which triumphs over circumstances. A child, however, would invariably select the definition which suggests pleasure and enjoyment. That is only natural, for if we think of a child as happy we think at the same time of its recreation and amusements. Indeed, a child without an instinct and a desire for play would be a most abnormal and unhappy one. Its diversions, however, are not always easy to regulate, for pleasure cannot be forced down any one's throat. If a child does not like the amusement which is provided for it, it will sally forth to find substitutes for such amusement, and these substitutes are too often of a dangerous type. The whole question needs more intensive study and consideration than it has been given in the past. The child's point of view and its natural tastes should be better appreciated and understood, so that something satisfying may be given it in the way of recreation, and its amusements,

at the same time, made safe and clean. We are often apt to confuse this subject, and are too prone to attribute to the absence of playgrounds, or to congested living conditions, all the faults occasioned by the lack of healthy outlets for a child's normal activities. These things are most important and must be improved, but even recreational centres and model homes will not satisfy a girl's or a boy's primal instinct for pleasure. The problem is not wholly a city one. It is met with equally in the town and the country. At the bottom of many juvenile delinquencies and disastrous experiences we find a natural craving for amusement and adventure, which, if it had been understood and wisely treated in the beginning, might have been easily controlled. We might as well realize that, whatever we may do, children are going to join in the universal quest for happiness and pleasure as one of their rights. It is for us, therefore, to see that they are properly guided in their search for recreation and are taught to find enjoyment in the finer things of life.

These, then, are some of the main obligations which the State owes its future citizens. All of the subjects which have been alluded to are obviously of transcendental importance, the proper consideration and treatment of any one of which would require a lifelong study and the writing of many volumes. It goes without saying, therefore, that no attempt could be made to deal adequately with even the least of them in so brief a space. They have been mentioned in these pages, however, because they unquestionably lie at the very root of the problem of preparing children for their future service, and because it would be impossible to write on this topic at all without some allusion to these cardinal requirements for a child's proper development.

It is quite extraordinary, when one comes to think of it, how dependent these essentials are one upon another. Education would be futile without health; health would be difficult without recreation, and all three would be well-nigh impossible without proper protection. Child labor cannot flourish side by side with education and health. Health cannot survive cruelty, abuse, or neglect.

Or, if a child is to be denied all recreation and happiness, its education, health, and moral training might as well be thrown into the discard at the same time.

There is great need, therefore, for the establishment in these particular fields of certain minimum standards which should be moderate and sensible enough to win the support of the community and yet sufficiently comprehensive to insure the children thorough protection. Once established, these standards should be enforced as a whole, for it would be useless to safeguard them in one direction only to neglect them in another. As has been said, they are all interdependent, and a break in one link of the chain would cause disaster to the rest. If we could count on the existence of such standards and feel sure that they would be observed and enforced, many existing problems would be simplified, and in every case the children of the nation would be the gainers.

At the beginning of the great war most of the nations engaged cast aside all thought of child conservation and sacrificed in a few months the achievements which had been gained through years of effort. As the war progressed, however, and delinquency and neglect increased appallingly, these nations began to see that a fearful mistake had been made, and that the protection of youth was really essential in the successful prosecution of the strife. Accordingly, after a year or two, a decided change of policy took place, and before the close of the war our allies were doing everything possible to repair these errors, and to safeguard their children more carefully than ever before. America, fortunately, profited by this lesson, with the result that in this country the barriers were kept intact, and delinquency failed to show that increase which many had prophesied.

Now that the strife is over, is it not the appropriate time to give our attention to these selfsame problems, and to look upon the conservation of childhood as essential to the finer development of the nation in the new era which lies before us? This end can never be attained by legislation alone; it can only be brought about by the united will of the whole people. Laws and regulations are neces-

sary up to a certain point, but they cannot serve as a substitute for a national conscience, nor can they make individuals into decent citizens merely by virtue of some legal process. No intelligent person believes in the multiplication of laws and statutes which would deprive a man, or a child, for that matter, of independent thought or action; no one can seriously wish to make an individual a mere automaton in the operation of a super-socialistic state; but every far-sighted man and woman must believe in comprehensive effort and planning for the protection of youth as a national asset.

To-day the whole world may seem weary and sick at heart, but in time it will forget its scars and look forward to the future with new hope and courage. How can it continue to be spiritless and despondent when it sees the rising generations coming on in serried ranks, ardent and eager to run their course and to fight the good fight? A few more years and their enthusiasms, their energy, and

their vitality will make the world young and strong again.

Glorious will be the destiny of this or any other nation which is wise enough to prepare its children for the responsibilities which they will be called upon to bear. Happy will be its future if its sons and daughters are spiritually awake and ready to dedicate themselves to its service.

America has already done much for the cause of child welfare, but it must not falter in the struggle if it is to maintain its ideals and the purposes for which it was created. All of our citizens, young and old, must recognize and understand the obligations which they owe the community, and with that understanding must follow the resolve to fulfil those obligations by such service as each may be able to render. In the past too little regard has been paid to these duties, but more is to be demanded of every one in the future. Let us see, therefore, that our children are so guided and guarded that when the call comes to them they shall not fail.

THE STAY AT HOME

By Christine Kerr Davis

THE years are slipping past me,
And I've never left my home,
Though the big, strange world has called me,
And tempted me to roam.
But when I'd think of going,
Och! my little fields were sweet,
With soft green grass and blossoms
That clung about my feet.

I thought to see the royal dun,
They built for England's King,
Where life is like a fairy tale,
And pleasant as the Spring.
But when it came to going,
I couldn't see my way,
For my little white-walled cabin
Seemed coaxing me to stay.

I've longed to hear the big winds
That howl along the shore,
And lash the Coast of Connaught,
'Til the green waves leap and roar.
But Och! they're only stranger winds
I've never known at all,
And the soft wind off Croagh Patrick
Puts the silence on their call.