



VILLAGE CHURCH

Woodcut by J. J. Lankes

The critical situation which now prevails in our homes is not due to the perversity of parents but to the lack of insight, inspiration, leadership, and adventurous faith in those who should be the guides and prophets of religion in the world today

ideas and thoughts are, and should be, transitory. They have their day and cease to be. The child ought not to be a little theologian. He ought to be a joyous little child, full of spontaneous enthusiasms and growing loyalties. George McDonald has beautifully expressed the natural spiritual reactions of a normal child:

*I am a little child and I
Am ignorant and weak;
I gaze into the starry sky
And then I cannot speak.*

*For all behind the starry sky,
Behind the world so broad,
Behind men's hearts and souls doth lie
The infinite of God.*

I do not believe that picture is overdrawn or greatly idealized. None of us believes any more that the new-born child is totally depraved. He is not a little brute. He is not a mere bunch of instincts. He has spiritual potentialities and he is quick to respond to the appeal of the divine which is always within reach. Professor Otto of Marburg has been showing that the religious experience is as natural for a child as is hunger or play. He is aware of something beyond himself. He has a mysterious feeling of some higher presence, a consciousness of more than he sees or touches. Sometimes it is a hushed and tremulous state which came over him. Sometimes it is charged with awe and wonder. Sometimes it is an over-brimming, over-abounding emotion. It is what Browning means when he says:

The child

*Feels God a moment, ichors o'er the place,
Plays on and grows to be a man like us.*

These overbrimming experiences made primitive man a religious being and they make the little child today natively disposed to religion.

Whether he "ichors o'er the place" and "plays on" like any case-hardened man, or opens out his spiritual possibilities like a flower in the sun, will depend a good deal on whether he discovers that his family carry that line of higher interests or are cold to them. We are coming more and more to realize that religion attaches to the simple, elemental aspects of our human life. We shall not look for it in a few rare, exalted and so-called sacred aspects of life, separated off from the rest of life and raised to a place apart.

Religion to be real and vital must be rooted in life itself and it must express itself through the whole of life. It should therefore begin, where all effective education must begin, in the home, which should be the nursery of spiritual life.

A home penetrated with spiritual culture and spiritual ideals is the highest product of civilization and it in turn ministers all the time toward the creation of a still higher civilization. In fact there is nothing of what we mean by civilization where the home is wanting. The savage is on his way out of savagery and barbarity as soon as he can create a home and make family life at all sacred. The real horror of the slums in our great cities is that there are no homes there, only human beings crowded indiscriminately into one room. Our present society will be well on its way out of the existing moral chaos as soon as the home is restored and rededicated to its true spiritual functions.

The home is the true unit of society. It determines more than any other one influence, and perhaps more than all influences combined, what the destiny of the boy or girl shall be. It shapes the social life; it makes the church possible; it is the true basis of the state and nation. Men and women each for self, with no holy center of family life, could never compose either a church or a state. The woman who is successful in making a true home and nursery of spiritual culture, where peace and love dwell, and in which the children whom God gives her feel the sacredness and holy meaning of life, has won the best crown there is in this life and she has served the world in a very high degree. Some day perhaps the men, too, will discover that this home-base, which is the center of all that is best and most valuable in their lives, is not alone a woman's task but deserves from the husband and father the same intelligent and devoted attention that his business ventures receive.

We moderns have the habit of conquering difficulties, of succeeding with great adventures, of daring to try what seems impossible. Has not the time come to apply that spirit and that attitude to other conquests than those of space and matter? That same determination of purpose which has cleared the virgin forests of this continent, made the deserts blossom like the rose and tapped for daily use the inexhaustible resources of nature can recover and revitalize the home and make it once more the nursery of souls.



Drawing by Jessie Willcox Smith, from *A Child's Garden of Verses*, by Robert Louis Stevenson. Scribner's

Sharing Experience

The Contribution of Social Case Work to Modern Life

By GORDON HAMILTON

NOT long ago, a woman went to a family welfare agency for help. Her husband had been drinking heavily for several years, and everyone in the home was suffering from the resulting emotional and the economic tension. Nothing dramatic ensued. Congenial part-time work outside the home was found for the wife, which tended to relieve the strain. The two high school children were helped to choose and find jobs, and the husband was persuaded to go to a psychiatrist for treatment. Slowly there emerged a more stable family life, with a better understanding by all of the causes of the past difficulty, of the assets which might be discovered in their family relationships, and the ways in which their several abilities might better be harmonized and developed.

Such a story illustrates modern case work procedure in a number of ways. One might say, for instance, that there were problems of insufficient income, marital friction, parent-child friction, alcoholism, which were treated with some skill and with success. One might count the cost of such treatment—so much in relief, so much in skilled service. One might try to measure the successes and failures by some measuring rod and so account for the contributions made by social case work. I wish to note only one aspect of the circumstances. Through a period of two years a case worker attended this family in all its troubles and vicissitudes until the family ceased to need her services. In much the same way did the old-fashioned practitioner attend his patients.

There is nothing new, singular or startling in the emphasis of social case work, yet there is something significant in the close concern of the case worker with the family. The word that suggests itself for this relationship is *participation*. Is it perhaps true that social case work because of its participation in these family groups can help us see a little more clearly in what ways family life is more than a bare sequence of events which may take this or that chance direction, and how the members of families may be made more effective in meeting the demands of modern affairs? It is always easier to possess ourselves of quantitative concepts than of values, but it is in the field of values that case work assumes to make its peculiar contribution.

One can ask many questions about the family. How did it originate? What is its purpose? The present generation is inclined to add, "What good is it anyway?" Social case work varies this question a little and asks, "What is its good?" and perhaps this significant further question—"Are we using this family good scientifically; are we using it to its fullest value?"

Now social work, like every other educational or scientific adventure, must begin by accumulating material, much of it irrelevant. Later, it must rationalize this material if possible; later still, and in addition to the processes of reason, social case work, like all creative effort, must "begin to have great intuitions," if its contribution is to have any

significance. As Dr. Richard Cabot has truly said, we know more about human beings than we know about anything else. Yet social work is far from having completed its fact-finding stage. Impressive as are some of our data on court, playground, school and home, we have scarcely scratched the surface of what we need to know. Is it too soon to talk of social work intuitions? Critics of the social sciences maintain that they can never be true, as the exact sciences are thought to be, because in the social sciences, and especially in social work, the investigator enters so completely into the observation—the experiment must include the maker of the experiment. How then reason about the experiment? And is not intuition still more insecure?

Reason, we are told, depends on a balanced and proportionate emotion, or sensitiveness. While emotional balance is not easily derived from social data, it may be derived, we believe, through the corrective of *sufficient exposure*. It is in fact only through exposure that one can achieve this proportionate sensitiveness. The important thing about social work is that it is *social*; its facts, perceptions, reasons, and intuitions lie within, not without, social relationships. Relations of cause and effect, obscure as they are in the area of interacting personalities, can be approached to some extent quantitatively by the aid of social statistics. The task of collecting and classifying life data is not simple yet granting the blockings of prejudice, vital interest, moral judgments and so on; granted, too, the imperfections of case record material as at present demonstrated, there is something positive as well as negative, strategic as well as perilous, in the position of the case worker.

SOME sociologists have asserted that there can be no laboratory in this field—that social experimentation must be carried on in the realm of the imagination. This is surely not true. The most significant thing about any experience is having it, and the next most significant thing is being able to reflect upon it. In an immediate sense the social worker lives his way into his thinking. He does not experiment on people but he shares a certain experience with people. The ability of human beings to interpenetrate and yet maintain awareness is the germ of the matter. It is possible not only to have the experience but to think about it; not only to have it but to evaluate it. Natural science does not teach us to prefer one end result to another, but religion, philosophy, aesthetics and perhaps also the social sciences, are inevitably concerned with preferences and values. Here is the point in which social case work is beginning to play a small role, but a definite one in helping to comprehend and determine the values in social relationships; and in trying to bring about understanding and self-directing in place of fatalistic and haphazard activity. The final test of any truth lies in "its experienced agreement with fact." The first intuition of social case work is that out of shared creative experiences, and the rationalizing of those