

OUR OVERPRIVILEGED CHILDREN

By Rose G. Anderson, Ph. D.

Social workers in recent years have made us understand the blight which extreme poverty visits upon underprivileged children. Yet intimate contact with homes in many parts of the United States convinces me that all too often parents in better circumstances impose equally severe handicaps upon their children by giving them too many privileges. They surround them with possessions which they themselves were denied in their own youth. They pamper them, satisfy their every desire, and think that thus they are giving their youngsters advantages. Actually, in the case of thousands of boys and girls, normal children are blighted by such "advantages."

No one denies that children should be warmly clothed and supplied with proper play equipment. But the danger is done when parents anticipate the child's very wish. One father I know presented his ten year old boy with an expensive movie camera before the child had expressed any desire for it, or had mastered the elements of photography. Another parent gave his nine-year-old son a costly airplane model powered by a miniature gas engine. On its first flight the machine was wrecked. How much better if the father had first let the boy build his own model from ten cent store material.

By such extravagant indulgences as these, parents deny their children one of the most precious experiences in life—the opportunity to yearn for something. Only by yearning is the child challenged to work and plan and save for his objective. Remove this incentive, and you destroy a tremendous stimulus to growth.

Fond mothers, straining to hurl their small daughters over social hurdles, go to preposterous lengths. It is not uncommon to see 10-year olds at a children's party with marcelled hair and fashionable evening frocks. The warping effect of such nonsense upon grade-school children is more than the strongest character can stand.

No wonder these children grow up with a distorted sense of values, and without regard for property that they never wanted in the first place. I know a 12-year-old girl who left a pair of riding boots and a hand-knitted sweater in her locker at the end of the school year. When her teacher asked what to do about them, the girl replied, "Throw them away. I never liked them anyway." At another school, despite every effort to return unclaimed articles, there remained at the end of the year 18 pairs of gloves, 17 hats, six sweaters, many pairs of rubbers and sneakers, and miscellaneous articles including bracelets, fountain pens and manicure kits. Either the children did not recognize their property or were too indifferent to claim it.

What a commentary upon parental training! When a child makes no effort to locate lost possessions it means that the parents were indifferent to the loss, or that they were so complacent about spending money to replace it that the loss made no impression on the child. Obviously those parents are neglecting an important opportunity for habit-training.

It is only a step from disregard of one's own property to disregard for the property of others. Teachers tell me that children from such homes are carelessly destructive of school and playground property, even that common honesty is not a major concern with them. They pick up fountain pens or sporting

equipment whenever they find them.

A 12-year-old girl in a fashionable New York school handed her teacher a ten cent tip for picking up her coat from the floor. Her twisted little mind led her to believe that money was a valid substitute for ordinary politeness. Unmannerly conduct, bordering on insolence toward parents, teachers and servants, is a characteristic of the overprivileged but underbred child. This is not primarily the child's fault; the blame must be borne by parents who are either animated by false ideals, or are too "busy" with social and financial strivings to instruct their children in the rudiments of courtesy.

Parents frequently complain that the school "doesn't teach my son work-habits." But the school is not to blame for your son's failure to see a task through. Instead of grounding him from early childhood in habits of self-reliance and application, you have given him money that he should have earned himself, permitted him to grow up without discipline or the need for ambitious self-direction. And now you are angry because he is failing at school! Even yet, perhaps, you haven't begun to realize that these failures in school will be followed by similar, graver failures in later life.

If one of the main objects of education is to prepare your child for adult life, then he must be taught the importance of work and the thrill of accomplishment in a job well done. In too many of America's comfortable homes, children absorb the idea that the physical work is "menial," degrading. Nothing could be more hurtful to the formation of character. From early years, they should be given regular household tasks and required to carry them through.

The value of money can be tied up with the importance of work. Let your child earn his pocket money by performing these domestic tasks. And don't be too liberal in payment. Let him first learn how to manage a few pennies, how to spend some and save the rest. If this allowance is gradually increased, the child will develop a proper regard for the value of money, and what it can—and cannot—buy.

Lastly, I would say to parents, "Give more of your own time and interest to your children's affairs." They are quick to appreciate the difference between lavish gifts—hollow things at best—and your companionship, your comradesly concern with their pleasures and work. Spend yourself on your children—the dividends in family enjoyment and mental health, in juvenile character and adult integration will be more lasting and valuable than any material riches you can shower upon them.—Readers Digest.

WHERE CHURCH MONEY GOES

The first step in the pastor's program was taken when the attention of the church members was called to the fact that the members of a certain denomination, quoting from their own literature, "the largest in the United States," had spent for useless luxuries and for amusements last year the sum of \$165,000,000, which was itemized as follows: "tobacco, \$40,000,000; chewing gum and soft drinks, \$35,000,000; movies, \$25,000,000 to \$40,000,000; beauty parlors and cosmetics, \$43,000,000; joyrides, \$10,000,000. The members of this largest church in America gave to the church which Jesus loved and for which He gave Himself up, the sum of \$32,618,125. A per capita contribution of \$8.27. God have pity on us!"—Religious Digest.

THE TRAGEDY OF TRAGEDIES

We are in an hour of the world history when tragedy fills the atmosphere of our days.

The death toll on our highways is an alarming tragedy since the repeal of the eighteenth amendment.

The late Clarence Darrow wrote a letter to Clarence True Wilson after about two years of repeal experience and acknowledged to Mr. Wilson that he (Mr. Wilson) was right and that he (Mr. Darrow) had been wrong in their respective attitudes about repeal.

The suicide rate is a tremendous tragedy, it is reported that there was a suicide every twenty-one minutes last year. Murder and crime deluge our civilization.

There is heart ache and heart break on every side, but the tragedy of all tragedies in this hour is that men are missing God. In a land where we have an open Bible and a Christian pulpit, where church bells ring, and where freedom to preach is our grand privilege, men are missing God. Men live and die at our finger tips without God. Oh! that we who know Him might double our diligence to reach men for Him. Brother, are you doing all in your power to help those with whom you have contact to know God? Are any of us guilty of letting those with whom we associate in any relation of life go quietly on missing God without an effort on our part to avoid this? You would leap to save any one from the tragedy of an accident, what are you doing to save men from the tragedy, eternity long, of missing God.—C. W. Butler—Christian Witness.

SACRIFICE?

He smoked cigars three times a day,
Ten-centers, too, at that;
Then gave a nickel to the Church,
When the deacon passed the hat.

She gave one cent for mission work,
Then spent ten cents for gum;
Then really bowed her head and prayed,
"O Lord, Thy kingdom come."

They sat at home and wondered why
The Church did not succeed;
She chewed her gum and couldn't tell;
He, puzzled, smoked his weed.

—Oklahoma City-Star

A CLEAN HEART

"Some have said, 'Must I have a clean heart before the Holy Spirit can come into my heart? Can the Holy Spirit come into a heart that is not clean?' I shall answer yes, for if He cannot, then I despair of ever having a clean heart. It is true, He cannot come into a heart that is not willing to be clean; He cannot abide in a heart that is not clean. But if you will let Him, He will come, and

Burn up the dross of base desire,
And make the mountains flow.

—George Shaw

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."—I. John 2:15.

Giving needs no more apology than does praying. In the Bible there are 1,539 passages which refer to giving while there are only 523 passages which refer to praying.