THE CHILD AND SOCIAL REFORM.*

Despondency, verging upon despair, is a note that is often heard in the utterances of many of our most earnest and most intelligent students of social problems. Material prosperity we have; material

* THE CONSERVATION OF THE CHILD. By Arthur Holmes. Illustrated. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co.

THE DELINQUENT CHILD AND THE HOME. By Sophonisba P. Breckinridge and Edith Abbott. With an Introduction by Julia C. Lathrop. New York: Charities Publication Committee.

PROGRESS AND UNIFORMITY IN CHILD-LABOR LEGISLATION. A Study in Statistical Measurement. By William F. Ogburn. "Columbia University Studies." New York: Longmans, Green & Co.

CHILD LABOR IN CITY STREETS. By Edward N. Clopper, Ph.D. New York: The Macmillan Co.

CITIZENS MADE AND REMADE. An Interpretation of the Significance and Influence of George Junior Republics. By William R. George and Lyman Beecher Stowe. Illustrated. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.

YOUTH AND THE RACE. A Study in the Psychology of Adolescence. By Edgar James Swift. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

THE COMING GENERATION. By William Byron Forbush. New York: D. Appleton & Co.

THE CHILD IN THE CITY. A Series of Papers Presented at the Conferences Held during the Chicago Child Welfare Exhibit. Edited by Sophonisba P. Breckinridge. Illustrated. Chicago: School of Civics and Philanthropy.

HELPING SCHOOL CHILDREN. By Elsa Denison. Illustrated. New York: Harper & Brothers.

progress may, as far as we can see, continue into the indefinite future. But the ideal values that prosperity should embody, the values that should give real meaning to progress, appear to be wavering. Religion, personal and political integrity, family obligation, love of truth and beauty, self-control and honesty of endeavor—those ideals and abstractions which are the only contributions of the past to present welfare that are of unimpeachable worth—are apparently undergoing important structural changes. Whether these changes represent, on the whole, an advance, or whether they are signs of a degeneration which forebodes the ultimate downfall of western civilization, must be left to the constitutional optimists and pessimists to debate. Optimists and pessimists, however, must agree that our society suffers from maladies that if neglected will result in serious consequences.

We are acquainted with the social reformers who hold that nothing short of a thoroughgoing transformation of our political and economic structure can bring relief. Other reformers, not less zealous, urge that even this could do little good. Men are poor, as a rule; but, as a rule, men are inefficient, self-indulgent, envious. As long as men are what they are, the most profound changes in social structure will leave the sources of misery uncontrolled. An improved human nature is evidently what we need. To improve the nature of the adult, however, seems a task beyond the power of the social reformer. Hence his attention turns to the child, and we have a flood of books designed to force upon the citizen a realization of the necessity of the conservation of the child.

First in the order of urgency is the problem of the defective child. Among our public school children are tens of thousands who suffer from congenital defect of understanding. They block the progress of the classes, yet profit nothing themselves. There are hundreds of thousands suffering from impaired hearing or eyesight, from under-nutrition or other remediable condition which, as matters stand, assimilate them, for all practical purposes, with the congenitally defective. It is the plain duty of society to segregate from the body of normal children all those that are abnormal, to provide adequate treatment for those suffering from remediable defects, and to devise means for the training of those who are congenitally inferior. Adequate medical inspection in the schools will perform the cruder work of segregation. To draw a distinction between the children whose mental deficiency is due to causes that are removable and those who suffer from incurable mental taint is a difficult matter. The distinction must, however, be drawn; for it is obviously the duty of society to segregate, as far as possible, tainted stock, to prevent the transmission of the defect to the next generation. For this work of segregation we have need of the services of the psychologist, who can also give invaluable suggestions as to the training of those whose development has merely been retarded. Even the children who are incurably defective in mind may often be trained for useful and reasonably happy lives, provided the teacher can command the best methods that the psychological expert can devise. Students of education have long known of the wonderful work of this character carried on at the University of Pennsylvania under Professor Lightner Witmer. We have now in Mr. Arthur Holmes's "The Conservation of the Child" an account of the work of the University of Pennsylvania psychological clinic. The book is a practical guide, specially adapted to the use of investigators and teachers who wish to undertake a similar work. For such it is extremely rich in suggestions as to methods. The book contains also much that will interest the general reader who has awakened to the significance of the current eugenic movement.

Important as are the problems of checking the transmission to future generations of hereditary mental taint, and of removing physical defects which tend to retard mental development, there is a problem of even greater immediate importance: the protection of the child against the degrading influences of environment. Much of our juvenile delinquency, much of the criminality of adult life, is traceable, not to physiological or psychological causes, but to the forces for evil that bear upon the neglected child in the city. What obstacles the children of the slums must overcome if they are to reach a plane of normal living we are beginning to understand. Miss Breckinridge and Miss Abbott give us, in "The Delinquent Child and the Home," a clearer insight into the conditions of the homes that produce delinquents. The book presents, to be sure, much evidence of delinquency due to tainted heredity; but the main root of juvenile delinquency appears to be unfavorable environment, due to parental vice or ignorance, to poverty, or to the lack of adjustment to American urban conditions of a population of foreign or rural origin. The book is a general study of juvenile delinquency in Chicago, and is the most thorough and systematic study of its kind extant. It not only exhibits the causes of juvenile delinquency, but offers also abundant suggestions for practical reform. Not the least important part of the book are the appendices, containing a very competent discussion of the legal problems involved in the juvenile court, an abstract of juvenile court laws, and "family paragraphs" relating to one hundred boys and fifty girls brought before the juvenile court for delinquencies.

More potent than the disorder and neglect of the home, in producing delinquency and in arresting the physical, mental, and moral development of our children, is their economic exploitation. Child labor in the factories has for almost a century received the condemnation of all men of intelligence and public spirit. The evil is still with us. As all American students know, progress in the direction of the abolition of child labor is rendered difficult by the fact that the subject, in this country, is a matter of state legislation; and each state fears to advance too far

beyond its neighbors. We are, however, advancing; and little by little the more backward states imitate, in legislation, the measures of those bold enough to prefer the permanent welfare of their children to the transient prosperity of their industries. The present state of legislation in this field, throughout the United States, is set forth by Mr. W. F. Ogburn in his "Progress and Uniformity in Child Labor Legislation." Its somewhat forbidding style should not bar this work from the shelves of the student of the labor problem. It is a systematic study of comparative child labor legislation. The age limit of each state, the exceptions to the rules of state law, the machinery of inspection, the penalties upon infractions of the law, are here placed before the reader in easily comprehended tables. The author hopes his study will be useful to legislators. It certainly will be, if, as many believe, we are about to enter upon an era of expert legislation.

While factory exploitation of child labor has been the subject of reforming agitation for three generations, the exploitation of children in the manifold services of the city street has scarcely been noticed. We know comparatively little about the extent of employment of small children as newsboys, street vendors, bootblacks, etc. The effects of such employment upon character receive little thought from the general public who are served by these children. Mr. Edward W. Clopper, in "Child Labor in the City Streets," shows that the number of children thus employed is enormous. He also emphasizes the fact, pointed out by other social investigators, that such employment is attended by grave dangers to society. The children of the streets furnish an extraordinarily large contingent to our army of juvenile delinquents.

For the child who has gone wrong, through the fault of his guardians, or in consequence of the adverse social and economic influences to which he is exposed, there formerly appeared to be little hope. Fortunately we have learned that the reform of the juvenile delinquent is far from a hopeless task. The bad boy of our city slums can be transformed into a useful and virtuous citizen, provided he receives the proper kind of treatment. The whole world has heard of the achievements of Mr. William R. George and his Junior Republic. It cannot hear too much about this great work, and will welcome "Citizens Made and Remade," written by Mr. Lyman Beecher Stowe, upon data furnished by Mr. George.

The experience of Mr. George has given many of the suggestions for Professor Edgar J. Swift's "Youth and the Race." Professor Swift, however, is concerned primarily with the education of the normal youth. He is a follower of the school of pedagogy which sees in the life of the average person an abbreviated repetition of the life history of the race. Boyish nature, in this light, loses its inexplicable and irresponsible quality. Boyish sins are thrown back upon that modern representative of the principle of vicarious atonement, primitive man. We should recognize the atavistic character of the impulses of the child and utilize them in the great work of education.

Like Professor Swift, Dr. William B. Forbush, in "The Coming Generation," is concerned primarily with the problems of the upbringing of the normal child. If Professor Swift's interpretation of youth is essentially anthropological, that of Dr. Forbush is essentially human. Dr. Forbush loves children — boys especially. It is doubtful that he has even studied them scientifically. Possibly for this very reason, his knowledge of their nature is profound. His book should prove helpful both to parent and to teacher; it is worth anyone's while to read it. It is difficult for the social reformer to enter the kingdom of pure literature; and probably Dr. Forbush's work, in spite of its fine personal quality, must be consigned to the realm of pedagogy.

The problem of the proper care and training of our children is manifestly one of great complexity. The American public school system is, on the whole, an efficient one; the American public school teachers are as a class devoted and intelligent. The schools are not, however, performing all the work we have a right to require from them. Moreover, the services of the teachers must be supplemented by the organized activities of many other social agencies. From papers presented at the conferences held during the Chicago Child Welfare Exhibit in May, 1911, now published under the title, "The Child in the City," both the teacher and the interested layman can gain much information as to the possibilities of child welfare work. The book contains an enormous mass of information concerning actual achievements in this field in the various cities of the country. As would naturally be expected, the material composing the volume is very uneven in quality. A number of the papers, however, are of such excellence as to make the volume an important contribution to the literature of social reform.

There has probably never been a time when a larger proportion of the citizens of a state were willing to engage in the work of social amelioration than at present. Much of the social work undertaken by laymen, however, is lamentably ineffective. Who has not known of associations of public-spirited men or women, meeting regularly through months or even years, conducting an interminable correspondence, with a view to the accomplishment of some worthy but wholly trivial task? The waste of philanthropic energies in our society must be incredibly great. If these energies could be controlled, and directed to the use of our children, many of our problems would solve themselves. Miss Elsa Denison's book on "Helping School Children" is essentially a manual designed to impart the technique of organizing the scattered philanthropic forces of society and of applying them to the service of the child. The book is a marvel in its multiplicity of practical suggestions. No one to whom it is accessible will need to confess his inability to find important social service work to do.

The pessimist will urge that it is easy to suggest work for children that needs to be done,—the funda-

mental difficulty which we encounter is in finding men and women who are capable of doing the work. The truth would appear to be that we have, in our society, a host of men and women qualified by intelligence and sympathy to assist in the conservation of the child. If they are inactive, it is because the general public does not recognize the worth of the work. Values are social. If the general public regards a certain function with indifference, the individual, however pure his motives and devoted his character, must lose the faith upon which effective action depends. The books under review, and others of their kind, are helping to create general interest in the problems of child welfare, and so are establishing the new values upon which, in the last analysis, the solution of these problems must depend.

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