

# THE ONLY CHILD AMERICAN MENACE

## The Dangers to Nation, Parents and Children of a Too Small Family

**I**T WEIGHS somewhere around eight or nine pounds, and it can't help itself. There is only one of it. When it gets old enough to think about itself, it probably won't have any more sense than to stamp its impertinent heel on the face of great and patient Mother Earth and imagine it is too good to have any competitors.

If there were a dozen of it, if there were only a couple of it, it would probably be slammed down so hard on that wholesome old earth, and slammed so often, that, like Antaeus of old, it would rise up cured of every weakness. But, being simply a solo, it is liable to never suffer anything worse than applause until it's too old to be remedied.

The only child—there is its picture as very scientifically and statistically set forth by the famous Professor Friedjung, of the Society of Internal Medicine and Pediatrics, who has been studying Austrian only children for years, to learn whether being solos is good for them. It isn't.

American authorities are inclined to agree with him. They would indorse his view com-



Nero, One of the Worst Examples of an Only Child



William Randolph Hearst, an Only Son Who Went to Work



Owen Wisner, an Only Son Who Has Succeeded

pletely but for one factor, which gives the only child in an American family an infinitely better chance of being a credit to us.

That factor is the American mother. Her maternal affection is just as intense, just as prone to spoil her offspring, as the mother-love that works so indulgently, and so harmfully, abroad. But her brains are her child's salvation. The tiny human chip off the American block stands a better chance of coming off scot free from the numerous bogeymen Professor Friedjung sees lying in wait for him than the only child in any other land.

**T**HE small family is a distinctively national phase in the United States. In other countries the only child may just happen—no doubt with all the natural and social causes operating with individual families which tend to limit childbirth here.

But this country displays a distinct tendency toward the small family: a fact appreciated ever since Colonel Roosevelt, while he was president, investigated against race suicide, and now statistically demonstrated in the census bureau's special report for the immigration commission.

Of course, the resources of the census were enormously beyond those at the command of Doctor Friedjung, in Vienna, where he put the social and medical microscope on just 100 only children. The small-family study here took in the whole state of Rhode Island, the city of Cleveland, O.; the city of Minneapolis, twenty-eight large rural communities in Ohio and twenty-one in Minnesota.

Briefly, the average white woman whose parents were Americans has only one child in 5.3 years; while the woman of foreign parentage has one every 3.3 years. American white women of American parentage who have been married from ten to twenty years show precisely the same number of children in Cleveland and Minneapolis, 2.4 children—the census bureau, in its statistics, being able to split a child up better than old King Solomon ever did. In all Rhode Island the figures are practically the same. But in rural Ohio and Minnesota, the average rises by just 1, the number above the cities being 3.4. The percentage of women who bear no children at all is much higher among the native white women of native parentage than it is among the whites of foreign parentage; and it is higher among the whites of foreign parentage in the second generation than it is in the first. As for negroes, the startling fact appears that from 19 to 25 per cent of the married women remain childless.

### TENDENCY TO LIMITATION

The compilation of the census bureau was made with no special attention to the number of couples having a single child, the general statistics only being assembled. But the remarkably high number of white women in Rhode Island who have only two children—87.7 per cent of all recorded—shows the tendency to limit the first child and also the tendency to have only one child, the first child may remain the only one. Two children may fairly be regarded as the typical American family; but one child is a condition that tends to become more and more common.

The cases studied by Professor Friedjung in Austria paralleled to a remarkable extent not merely the only-child state affairs so far as it obtains in the United States, but also the moiety of the families here who, as the census has demonstrated, have but two children. These children, it was noted, come only one in 5.3 years; so that the first of them is practically the only child, just as were approximately 60 per cent of Friedjung's subjects, whose ages ranged between 2 and 10 years. Probably a very numerous proportion of those second children who came to native American mothers did not arrive until eight or ten years had elapsed after the birth of the first; and so they completely paralleled the conditions existing among Friedjung's subjects.

Out of his 100 children who had neither brother nor sister, he discovered only 13 who were completely normal. The group included 45 boys and 15 girls, and 41 of them showed marked symptoms of nervous instability, including 19 classified as severely neurotic. As contrasted with families having numerous offspring, the showing is appalling, for only 21 per cent of these children showed any neurotic symptoms, as against 87 per cent of the "only" children. Out of those 87 nervously unstable children, 75 were the victims of chronic fear and hysteria.

The parents, Doctor Friedjung declares, spoil an only child for it or its self-reliance, let its nerves develop unduly. It becomes a nervous, mollycoddled and a menace to the race. Every family for this potent reason, owes it as a duty to the one child and to the human race to have several offspring.

There is, however, one remarkable characteristic of only children: they usually manifest unusual mental power, which is accompanied by a pronounced tendency to waywardness. Substitute self-will for waywardness, and here are the attributes commonly believed to be the foundation of genius.

The trouble is that stingy parentage must always take chances. The number of children actually born to any one couple does not seem to make any difference in the individual child who happens to be reared as a solo. One of triplets stands as great a chance of being spoiled, if his two contemporaries should die, as if he had been the one child born in the family.

It is quite possible that the odious Nero might have been a decent citizen, if not another Augustus, had he been compelled to take the hard knocks incident to a brood of boys, who might have let him know how it hurt to be a mild imitation of a Christian martyr. As it was, he did not have, apparently, any feeling of compassion or sympathy when his unlicked cub character was allowed full swing; and yet he gave indications of genius which, although they never amounted to much, were of a piece with what the world has too often been inclined to associate with the erratic nature of superior endowment.

The high percentage of exceptional mental force that seems to be so often manifested in only children is evidenced in a type such as Owen Wisner, whose art is being recognized as owing no little of its excellence to the peculiarly original bent of his mind, as though the thoughts, continually evolved from a viewpoint def-

initely self-centered, yet always healthy and sane, had attained a peculiarly clear and refined discernment. Like him, though in a wholly different field, William Randolph Hearst, heir to untold millions, decided to carve out a career for himself.

The same faculty, in a totally different field, has been conspicuous in the character and genius of Hetty Green, whose unerring perspicacity in finance had its origins in her earliest childhood and in her upbringing amid the responsibilities of trade. Self-reliance, when the training has been careful and the original character is a strong one, never seems to fall in the child who has been reared largely alone. No more well-poised type is known in this country than that of mothers like Mrs. Grover Cleveland and, in the extreme of wealth, Edith, Kingdon Gould. And to mention just two examples of great talent that have not suffered by reason of lack of home playmates, Geraldine Farrar seems to have won all the advantages of an only child, with none of the unhappy handicaps, as has also "Billie" Burke.

But the American child has better fortune than any other, however well born those others may be. "The deductions of Professor Friedjung," said Dr. Edwin E. Graham, professor of children's diseases at the Jefferson Medical College of Philadelphia, "are in the main correct, and they are so recognized and acted on by the medical profession generally.

"If the only child be young, it is very liable to be spoiled, whether the parents be rich or poor; the kind of spoiling may be different, but the result is the same. It is perfectly natural for us to wish to grant the requests our children make, and if there be but one, its desires are much more likely to be gratified. It never has to



Billie Burke, Who Grew Up Alone

conditions surrounding the only child are likely to make it selfish. "The typical American family has two or three children, not one only, and that among the well-to-do. Yet the only child is much more likely to occur among the rich. With the saving care such a single offspring receives under conditions of large wealth, the result is likely to be a higher percentage of only children there than among the very poor.

"The trouble with all children nowadays is that too much is done for them. There are too many parties; there is too much entertaining, too much effort to amuse. The children are not allowed to develop normally and naturally. What should be done is, allow them to grow as a plant grows, surrounded by normal conditions, with plenty of fresh air day and night, plenty of sunshine, and no excitements or amusements such as are liable to keep their nerves continually on edge. Children generally are now more nervous than they were twenty or thirty years ago, for two reasons: their parents are more nervous, for one thing; and, for another, the children are reared amid environments which keep the nervous system under strain. So they suffer from nervous tendencies, both inherited and acquired.

"Nevertheless," continued Professor Graham, "the figures adduced by Doctor Friedjung will hardly apply to the only child in the United States as they do abroad. The American mother stands in the way of any such wholesale deterioration. Leaving aside the very rich, it is a conspicuous fact that Americans of the middle classes, and even the poorer mothers who come to the hospitals, are very level-headed. If the funds are not to be readily had for keeping the child at school, they will make all necessary sacrifices; they will wear old clothes, so that the child may appear decently while securing the coveted education.

"There can be no question that, while she is perhaps the most affectionate of mothers, the American woman, whether her circumstances be moderate or wealthy, studies out what is definitely best for the child. She endeavors to keep it in the open air, to provide food proper for the growing body, to insist on strictly personal cleanliness and to assure an ample outing at the seashore or in the country.

### SPOILS IT KNOWINGLY

"The American mother is by no means a fool. She is a clever woman. If she has an only child and spoils it, she does so knowingly, not because she has been wholly blinded by maternal love; she is too intelligent for that. There is a good deal of spoiling done by fathers, who are likely to see a safeguard an only child as to make a boy a ninny—and then be disappointed and angry because, as he grows older, he won't play hard football.

"Our growing national tendency to delay marriage undoubtedly restricts the period of child bearing, and in that manner increases the proportion of only children. If the woman whose one child comes to her late rather than early in life has a normal child—and her age need be no material factor in that regard—it is likely to prove her highest happiness. If, however, it be abnormal or neurotic, its care may be a severe burden to her; and the circumstance that it is the only child she has, of course, provokes the possibility that her affection may spoil it.

"Yet still, the American mother is of the type that does not lend itself so easily to her child's nervous ruin. A noteworthy factor, which comes into play among the families that are prosperous, is the boarding school. Now, much more than was done some twenty years ago, both girls and boys are being sent to these schools; and it is a good thing.

"Take a boy who is removed from the coddling atmosphere of his home. He leads a once a life that is systematized, with certain hours for study, recitation and outside exercise. He is compelled to decide an act for himself, where, under the conditions reviewed by Professor Friedjung, he would run to his mother or father for advice and aid.

"I think," concluded Professor Graham, "that any such close study of the only child in distinctly American homes would show a smaller percentage of neurotics and 'spoiled' individuals than he has found. And the better showing may be credited to the American woman. At such a mother knows infinitely more than her mother did at the same age. She makes her studies as to her child's care before it is born; she acquires a knowledge of how to feed it afterward which may be regarded as superior; she has the discretion to seek medical aid when it is necessary, and she has the self-control to send her child away from her to school when she perceives that her mothering is no longer good for it.

quired for the higher courses might prevent them coming out, as it is called, at an early age.

"Who are the girls who go to women's colleges? A great number are daughters of people in moderate circumstances; there are not so many daughters of the very rich. While a fair percentage of the wealthier classes do have their girls educated at the best colleges for women, the student bodies of these institutions are largely made up of those who expect to make their own living rather than to shine in society.

"We pay, on the side of the men, the penalty of a new and progressive nation. Every member of it has as good a right as another to get all the wealth and power he can. To do it, he concentrates his efforts in certain channels, and he begins to do it so early in life that he shackles his faculties against any development beyond his direct business interests. When the time comes when he might rest and enjoy himself, he often finds he cannot depart from the groove he has worn for his activities. Men should have avocations as well as vocations, and they should not be simply golf and bridge.

"Too much play, like too much work, seems to make ill an overstimulated soul; but if the choice is to be made, the woman with a career, and especially the American woman, stands a better chance of keeping her nerves and her balance by using her active brain and using intellectual lines than by pursuing folly as a life, and it is in fact her all-a-tremble on the sick list, with a doctor feeling her fluttering, useless pulse.

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Mrs. Grover Cleveland, a First Lady of the Land Who Was Reared an Only Daughter

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Work—honest brainwork—may save her; and that is the antidote advised by the distinguished American specialist, Dr. Charles K. Mills. Give the American girl who is destined for society's incessant diversions some healthy intellectual resources, and she will not only stand the strain of pleasure better, but she will have tastes that can serve as pleasure's sanest remedy. But the majority of those who do get the saving education are the girls who are destined for work, not play.

NEURASTHENIA, in its scientific perfection, was found by Doctor Serrhini to prevail among American women of wealth and refinement. It is worse in Washington than in New York, because Washington's activities are almost wholly social, while New York, in spite of its tremendous crush of energy, mixes business and pleasure so thoroughly that people have less chance to suffer the monotony of continual amusement.

# All Work Better than All Play for Women

**G**IVEN a woman who has all the leisure and luxury her nature can possibly crave, plus all the amusement and social diversion her twenty-four hours per day can possibly hold, and how happy will she be?

Any woman who hasn't tried it will be likely to disagree with any woman who has; and the woman who has won't be able to prove why she thinks as she does, because her whole supply of human nature keeps agreeing with the woman who hasn't.

A famous Italian specialist, Dr. Enrico Serrhini, has been trying to find out why women have nerves; and, after thorough studies in Europe, he came to the United States to seek the secret here. He has answered the question promptly. The woman with all the diversion she wants has so much more than she needs that she is headed straight for the miseries of neurasthenia. She may long for the

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