

The Teen-Age Girl

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für euch? Wie erfülle ich meinen Sinn als Mensch, der spürt, daß er nicht für sich allein da ist?»

Vielleicht ist es die mürrisch aussehende Nachbarin, die in mir diese Frage weckt, vielleicht, der blinde Mann, der über die Straße geht, vielleicht, die unter ihrer Arbeits- und Sorgenlast fast zusammenbrechende Mutter, vielleicht das weinende Kind vor dem Hause. Vielleicht erregen bestimmte traurige Ereignisse in mir das Mitgefühl, das mich sehend macht für die Not der andern und mir mehr oder weniger deutlich zum Bewußtsein bringt, daß mich die Sache etwas angeht, daß ich, weil ich Mensch und von Gott geliebt bin, diese Liebe an die Welt weiterzuschicken habe, dorthin, wo es gerade nötig ist. Nur im Gehorsam kann es mir wohl werden, und ich höre auf, mich nach dem Kinder-glück zu sehnen.

Diese innere Haltung des Erziehers wird nun nicht etwa dazu führen, daß er dort, wo Kinder sich

dem Genuß des Augenblicks hingeben und sogar im Herbst froh sind, die Freude dämpfen zu wollen. Kinder sollen Kinder sein dürfen und keine seufzenden Puppen werden. Aber — ist dort nicht soeben das hinkende Trudi von den andern, die sich beim Blätterfangen vergnügten, weggelaufen weil es seiner ungeschickten Sprünge wegen ausgelacht wurde? — Da muß mit den Kindern gesprochen werden. Sie brauchen keine Schelte, aber sie haben Aufklärung nötig. Sie müssen wissen, daß Trudi leidet, das Mitleid muß geweckt werden. Es braucht nicht viel. Und wo es erwacht ist, ist auch schon die Frage da: «Was kann ich für Trudi tun, daß es nicht mehr traurig ist?» Die Hilfsbereitschaft ist da, der Sinn für das Füreinanderdasein hat Gestalt angenommen und wird wachsen und hineinführen in das volle Menschenleben, wo der Herbst weder der Anlaß zu trauriger Klage noch zu ungetrübtem Genuß, sondern zum freudvollen Geben und Nehmen in der Gemeinschaft werden wird. Dr. E. Brn.

The Teen-Age Girl

By Marie Heynemann

Whatever is said and written about the teen-age girl of to-day she is not at heart so different from her mother and grandmother as she would like one to believe. But her outward reactions can be startling to the older generation.

Are the teen-agers nowadays very different from those before the war? I don't think so. After the first world-war one could already see a difference between the young people of the pre-war and post-war years, and now this difference has been maintained and developed in accordance with the times and environment in which our teen-agers live.

Alfred Adler was once asked "What is normal?" His answer was: "A person is regarded as normal, when he is so abnormal that he considers the abnormalities of the age as normal and can cope with them."

On this basis our teen-agers are well adjusted to their environment.

Puberty has always been a time when the youngster wanted to create a new world protesting and rebelling against all established values. In these times of almost continuous strife and strikes the life of the adolescent has become one great protest.

Let us consider what she protests against and what her environment is. Often both father and mother go out to work — the girl is sent to a board-

ing school as early as possible and sees her parents only in the holidays, if she is not sent camping with the Guides or made to spend her holidays at a holiday school abroad. Or if she goes to a day school, she comes home to an empty flat and has to look after herself, until her parents arrive. What of family feeling? How can it grow when there is no family life? Some old-fashioned parents still expect love and gratitude from their children. Here is the answer given me by a young girl of seventeen: "Why should I be grateful to my parents? They did not ask me whether I wanted to be born, they were simply pursuing their own pleasure when they conceived me and never thought whether they were capable of bringing up a child and make her happy. Now it is their job to look after me, to feed and clothe me and send me to a good school until I can earn my own living. I do not see that there is any reason for gratitude. If they had asked me I would probably have preferred not to be born at all."

Cool Common Sense

THIS is not such an extreme case as it sounds; such girls regard life with cool common sense, they need no mother to explain the facts of life to them. At the age of thirteen they know everything about child-birth, V.D., etc. They read these facts in the illustra-

ted magazines and learn them from the soap-box orators in Hyde Park.

Their attitude towards boys has become more natural, but they often lack that dignity and tact which show a boy how far he may go, and which can only be learned in the family through the example of parents.

It is every teen-ager's wish to be looked upon as grown up—thus when school forbids lipsticks and make-up, the minute the school door has closed behind them they make up, often in rather a vulgar way—for here again a sense of proportion and a refined taste is lacking. They prefer to look like a scarecrow rather than ask for their mother's advice.

They want an unlimited freedom; nearly all hate being asked to lend a hand in the household, or being questioned as to where they are going in the evening and with whom. The less they are asked, the less they will feel forced to lie. When a girl has been brought up in a nice home, and has a mother who does not intrude her advice, but is always ready to help her, this girl can be relied upon to conduct her life sensibly. But when the parents have not given their daughter the support of a happy home, they have reason to be distrustful and afraid of what may happen to her.

The lack of a happy home is also apparent in a girl's social attitude. Her life is ruled by egotism; she only does what appears to be to her own advantage without any consideration for others, or any desire to help them. For her the teaching "love thy neighbour as thyself" is meaningless—until that time when love at last enters into her own life. And this love—be it for a teacher, for an older boy or for a girl-friend—will suddenly transform her whole outlook on life. All her female qualities will awake, and though she may still prefer trousers to skirts there will be many hours in every week when she feels and behaves exactly like the young girls of the pre-war age and is perfectly happy in loving and being loved. Many parents resent this stage more than her former recklessness, for their jealousy is aroused towards this outsider who seems to have stolen their daughter's love. The attitude that they take now will be decisive for the future and will either cause a total break or will gradually restore confidence in them.

Use of Leisure Time

WHAT do teen-agers do with their leisure time? Today very few adolescents read—devouring books for the sheer pleasure of reading as former generations did. Between the ages of 10 and 12 they have read all the books by Enid Blyton and, of course, they

have had to read Shakespeare and Dickens at school, but by the time they are 15 they have generally stopped reading. They seem no longer to be able to concentrate on a long novel, they prefer to look at illustrated magazines, turn over the pages of a digest or switch the wireless on and listen to jazz. Of course many of them are fond of sport: of tennis and swimming, and especially of dancing, but they are also very fond of doing absolutely nothing. Cinema and television are killing the creative power in our children, much as we admire the attempt of some schools to stimulate creative ability.

When we ask the girls between 12 and 14 years of age: "What will you be when you are grown up?" most of them say they want to go to a University and become doctors or scientists. Between the ages of 15 and 17 they want to go to Art Schools, become dress-designers, models, actresses, film-stars. They all wish to marry, and even those who choose the University career do so only as an insurance "in case the right man does not turn up." or to "while away the time usefully until . . ." When I asked a girl student why she was going up to Cambridge, she answered: "You see there are two women's colleges and eighteen for men, so the girls can pick and choose and really have a chance of finding the right man." Of course, there are always a few who study because they love studying; they are admired, but they are not very popular among their contemporaries.

In spite of the present day teenagers' character, they have a healthy, natural base, and many of them have already realised—young as they are—that a man needs a mother, a sister, a loving wife—not a money-earning, professional comrade.

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Toleranz und Schwäche ist niemals ein ethischer Wert; aber trotz entschiedener Kraft tolerant zu sein, ist das große Problem, dessen Grenzlinien nur das Leben lehrt und keine Theorie.

Die höchste Tat enthält am meisten Bindung — vor sich, in sich, nach sich.

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SCHWEIZER UMSCHAU

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