IS IT FEASIBLE FOR CHILD HELPING AGENCIES TO MAINTAIN RESEARCH EXPERTS? (Abstract)

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By child helping agencies is to be understood all of the societies whose names are to be found on this programme and many more of the same nature, but it should not be forgotten that after all the home is the first and indispensable factor in the welfare of the child, and perhaps my subject should have read "home helping" instead of "child helping" agencies, because all the agencies ever founded would be unnecessary if the home were ideal. Few homes are ideal, and societies have sprung up everywhere from the old-fashioned orphanage to the modern playground association which try to supply to the child what the home fails to do. But are we prepared to say just what the home does give the child, and can these separate factors have the same effect on the child working through the various public agencies that they would in the family group? As an example of what research may do along this very line, we may remember that there has been going on for some time a very animated discussion of the relative merits of the placing out in homes and the institutional systems of caring for dependent children. At last the subject is being carefully investigated by Mr. Hart of the Russell Sage Foundation, and we hope that before long results of such a nature can be shown as will bring about an agreement in favor of the former method where it is properly carried out according to careful, humane, and practical methods which include a thorough investigation of every home into which a child is sent and a sympathetic understanding of the child for whom the home is sought. The placing out involves following up each case with the same care in supervision. I give this as one example of what is being done, but many others might be mentioned, such as the study of the retardation of children in school, by Dr. Luther H. Gulick and others, the studies of delinquent boys and girls made by members of the School of Civics and Philanthropy in Chicago, not to speak of the many studies by Clark University, the pioneer in systematic child study.

But whether these will be sufficient of themselves to probe into the many problems which new societies and old are espe-

cially trying to solve, may be questioned, so that these institutions should be regarded as pointing out the way rather than as doing the whole tremendous task.

If the problems and methods of many societies were thoroughly investigated before their organization they would never be organized, because it would be found that their work was done by other existing organizations or that their methods were impossible. Miss Richmond, recently appointed as investigator for the Sage Foundation on the subject of organizing charities, estimated that a very large proportion of the societies organized never survived two years.

The period of childhood has not been studied exhaustively yet in any department. In whatever field the mother or teacher or the social worker seeks for expert advice there is too often the reply that enough is not known to enable one to give an authoritative answer. When assisting in New York last winter in the attempt to secure better and more general instruction of mothers in the care of children and some systematic supervision of the health of children under school age, nothing which was proposed met with such enthusiasm as the establishment of research fellowships in child hygiene; for nurses and physicians lamented the handicap of ignorance.

If we may believe the results of such meagre investigations as have been carried on lately, we shall see that it is not the desire to do wrong which causes the delinquencies of boys and girls, but the desire to do something, where there is nothing wholesome and legitimate. And so one step farther back and we have the boys and girls clubs, reading and story hours, and lastly the public playground. But are these the ultimatum?

Mr. Allen Burns, in his study of playgrounds, says that juvenile crime decreases in the neighborhood of city playgrounds. Mrs. Florence Kelley has observed that the surrounding buildings go up so much the higher wherever spaces have been cleared for the playgrounds. What would an exhaustive and expert investigation have to say on these various problems? Mr. Travis, who has investigated the social problems of juvenile delinquency, finds that in the last analysis it is the home which has most to do with the moral firmness and integrity of the child. The non-functioning home, whether it be such from loss of parents, from dire poverty, from weakness or wickedness, is found in most cases of children brought before the court.

Back of the moral deficiency we find physical deficiency, due to lack of properly selected and well cooked foods or of sufficient quantity. Perhaps the child is not only poorly nourished with food, but it may suffer from lack of sleep, as Miss Ravenhill has found in her investigation of the amount of

sleep obtained by certain school children in London. Miss MacMillan, also of England, claims that cleanliness not only increases bodily health, but mental and moral efficiency, as shown by the introduction of school baths among the English poor children. One is inclined to ask, if there should be school baths, why not school dinners and school beds? And why not? Where shall we stop? Would it be possible through a careful, painstaking study, to find out what can be done in masses or with groups of children, and what should be done for the individual child or in the family group. Psychologists and educators who have made a study of the differences in personality in the same persons in groups and alone say that they are entirely different. If this is so, then the child always in a group of children will perhaps never develop certain traits of character necessary for a private life such as has been developed by the training in the home. I believe Froebel thought the age of three was the proper time for beginning the socialization of the child, while a very few advocate the public care of the infant from the beginning, in order that the child may be from the first under the care of trained nurses. That involves a great many problems, psychological as well as hygienic, but I will only speak of one. Several books on the nursing and care of infants say that babies should be handled as little as possible. Miss Shinn, however, in her recent book on the development of the child, says the very young child needs a certain amount of handling and cuddling not only for the sake of the warmth from the body of the adult and for the sake of the passive exercise or massage effects, which increase circulation, but also because of the sense development which comes in this way. Mothers have told me that frequently a child cried simply from a natural desire to be held. A physician reported to me that it was surmised that the high rate of mortality of infants in hospitals where they received the utmost care in feeding, dressing, etc., might be partly due to this policy of not handling the child, and that in one case the personal care of a nurse had resulted in a very greatly improved condition of the baby's health.

The matter of medical inspection of schools is another case in point. What has it done for the children and are the methods employed the best? California has taken a step far in advance of any other state in passing a law providing for health development in the schools and for the granting of health development certificates to those holding high school teachers' certificates in the fulfillment of certain requirements. At Clark University much is being made of the mental hygiene of the child, taking into consideration the subject matter of instruction, hours of study and class work, etc. But it is the

tragedy of our whole school system that so many children grow more nervous, more defective in eyesight, and more delicate, the longer they attend school. Schools should aim at mental efficiency, which includes mental health as well as acquired knowledge.

Those of you interested in child labor know, of course, of the recent studies of Dr. Crampton and others in New York on physiological age, and of those of Dr. Rotch, in Boston, on the development of the bones as a test of maturity; but many other problems such as that of blood pressure in adolescents, now in process of investigation in the Clark laboratory, await the same careful study. Such studies will furnish information in regard to what is the proper treatment of the growing child, and labor laws will have no excuse for the criminal carelessness now permitted towards children.

While all these things relating to the school and kindergarten child have seemed of wonderful importance, still the fact has forced itself upon some thinking people that the school age is too late to begin what we may call health development, to use the California term. For example, could not adenoids be prevented instead of being removed? So high is the rate of infant mortality during the first year that we are forced to conclude that either the mothers must have special instruction in the care of infants or else there should be skilled supervision from the start of life. Finally, we are driven still further back into problems of heredity and eugenics, and there is being carried on now under the patronage of the Carnegie Institution at the Station for Experimental Evolution at Cold Spring, Harbor, N. Y., a series of investigations on what affects the physical vigor of offspring.

But all interesting problems are not in the physical and moral fields. What about the religious development of the child? It is strange how very early children begin to wonder about things related to God, death, birth, immortality, evil, and salvation. If these first questions of the child could be answered in a simple, satisfactory way, much of the immorality, the sin, and suffering of childhood and later life would be spared. If the child meets with perfect frankness in so far as explanations are possible, and if he is told that God holds the key to the mystery of that which he cannot understand, a habit of intelligent faith will be formed with a belief in the ultimate realization of the best in his own life and in humanity.

Some one should make a study of the questions children ask at different ages concerning these subjects and work out a system of biblical and other stories and short texts, prayers and poems which shall give the mother an idea of what to expect and how to answer. It has been found that many children

fear death at night because of the line in the prayer, "If I should die before I wake." I believe the Religious Education Association is working on a manual of prayers for domestic worship which will be a boon. Inasmuch as poetry is so closely related to religious feeling, I have long desired that a collection of children's poetry be made; for in poetry, which is a spontaneous outburst of the deepest that is in the soul, one could get a glimpse of child nature not otherwise obtainable. Until most recently there has been no attempt to train adults in teaching religion to children, but it is to be hoped that some day every theological seminary will devote a great deal of time to preparing men to understand and develop the religious nature of children.

Nor must we omit the recreative interests of children. We have various theories of play but all theories agree as to the necessity of spontaneous activities which allow of the greater freedom of development and which relieve the mind of tiresome workaday strain which drains the strength. Play in the purely recreative sense is as necessary for mental health as sleep is for physical health, but as yet we have hardly touched upon the subject in this aspect and hardly have we yet distinguished it from childish imitation.

While advocating the maintenance of research workers and the training of child specialists my conclusions are that they should instruct the mothers and fathers or the nurses and not deal with children *en masse*; for I cannot affirm too strongly that the child is individual at first rather than social and must have individual care. His nurse and teacher should be the same, in the ideal home, namely, the mother or whoever takes her place, at least until the age of six and preferably later.

It seems to me that every existing child helping agency should engage the best person available to probe into the matter of the effect of its activities on the whole nature of the child, its health, its character and its usefulness as a member of the family as well as society.

Here mention should be made of the Association of Collegiate Alumniæ, whose permanent committee on child study although serving without stipend has made some valuable contributions to child psychology. Also the Federation of Women's Clubs of Massachusetts has maintained a fellow at Radcliffe who has been investigating the subject of child labor and whose results are soon to be published. At one time the Woman's Club of Worcester donated \$200 towards the expenses of a student at this University, who investigated the subject of college customs and published a book on it. What is proposed is therefore no new thing, and there are doubtless others doing a similar thing. Perhaps we should mention here

also the Juvenile Psychopathic Institute established through the Juvenile Court Committee of Chicago, which has kindly sent a little account of the purposes of this new departure, and if I am not mistaken the Psychological Clinic at the University of Pennsylvania was established at the instigation of the Juvenile Court Association.

If I am right in believing that the results of these investigations would all point to the necessity for better housing conditions, so that each child will have pure air and sunshine and a place for play without leaving the home premises, whether it be in a roof garden or a court area, thus leaving public playgrounds to the adolescent boys; if they point to the necessity of women being educated and trained in everything pertaining to the physical, mental, and social, recreative and religious development of the child, then I am asking these organizations to do that which will cause their own disintegration unless they resolve themselves into societies of home helping. If sufficiently accurate knowledge could be gotten together by investigators and specialists so that every young woman in universities, colleges, normal schools, and continuation schools might be instructed in the home care, and every young man in the social or community care of children, society would find many of its problems simplified. As for these organizations, they need not mourn their extinction if it comes through fulfilled purpose.

From the scientific standpoint the study of child life, when once it has been grasped as holding the key to the mystery of the biological and psychical life of mankind, is the subject most interesting, and yet few have been granted the vision of its importance and its meaning. It is the most difficult and the most delicate of all subjects and yet the one most worth doing, if we are really desirous of raising the humanity of the future as well as the present. And right here in the study of the child as nowhere else must we have those two great forces at work together, the desire to decrease human suffering and to increase human knowledge. Some day we hope it will be as great a thing to say "I have helped mould a soul for eternity through giving it the best that is in me" as to say, "I have written a book or painted a picture."