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THE HISTORY OF THE FAMILY.

The History of the Family as a Social and Educational Institution. By Prof. W. Goodsell. Pp. xiv + 588 pp. (New York: The Macmillan Co.; London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1915.) Price 8s. 6d. net.

IN what sense is it right to speak of the history of the family? As an institution it occupies so central a position in the social structure that it may well seem fundamental. Should we write a history of stellar motion so long as the component forces determining it are constant? Are the forces which find expression in the family constant? Can it be said to have a history? The institutions surrounding the family vary from one age to another, and from people to people. Marriage ceremonials, customs in such matters as dowries, settlements, and other marriage contracts, are not uniform. The rights of parents over their children, of husbands over their wives, differ in a similar way. But can these differences be brought into any general historical scheme, or are they local variations brought about by economic and ideal forces acting upon an institution the essential nature of which has never altered?

Some such questions as these arise in one's mind as one takes up Prof. Goodsell's book, which is, however, rather descriptive in its treatment than historical. True, he has adopted a chronological order. After a very brief discussion of the primitive family he describes the matrimonial institution and family life of Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans, and the changes brought about by Christianity. Thus we proceed through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance to the modern period, in which attention is confined to England and America. In this section there is a chapter describing the influence of the industrial revolution on the family, and elsewhere the influence of chivalry is discussed, but, broadly speaking, as we pass from chapter to chapter we feel ourselves in a different atmosphere without knowing exactly what it is that has brought the change about. In consequence, the book is more like a selected series of panoramic views than a history in the strict sense. It may be that the author's treatment is the only possible one, but in that case why has so much been omitted? Except for the Hebrew, the Asiatic civilisations are entirely omitted; Egypt is not mentioned, and an important institution like the "Conseil de Famille" escapes notice.

Obviously, the subject so interpreted is one of vast range; indeed, we have only to interpret widely enough to make it include the greater part of the history of civilisation. Prof. Goodsell himself takes a wide view and includes much of that side of human conduct which springs directly from the sex-impulse. Modes of courtship,

prostitution, education in matters of sex, household furniture, clandestine marriages, Platonic love are examples. The odd way in which they occur in the various sections helps to destroy the unity of the book and to confirm the "panoramic feeling" previously mentioned. Accessibility of material rather than a philosophic plan seems at times to have led the author into side-tracks, attractive and interesting enough in themselves, but *culs-de-sac* in spite of that, from the point of view of the subject as a whole.

A short notice of this kind cannot cover the ground of such a book, though even a casual reader will be struck by a want of precise references in certain of the chapters, particularly, perhaps, in that dealing with the primitive family. Where is the "weight of evidence" which shows that polygamy is unpopular among savage women? The author gives several reasons why we condemn it, but there is surely room for doubt whether deprivation of the father's care in the rearing of children or any other of the alleged reasons for this feeling could have operated—indeed, Prof. Goodsell himself suggests this, for he says on the preceding page that primitive man could not be aware of the physical and moral advantages which monogamy brings. How much attention could the politically occupied citizen of Athens give to the care of his children? And what of men in the modern industrial State? What proportion of men in our day feel this particular disability? In the same chapter the author has clearly confused the household and the village community as it still exists in Russia. It is the whole community which owns the land, not the related families living under one roof, and communal authority, not patriarchal, which allots the land to the householder.

His account of Greek family life omits all reference to the Spartan system of common meals, so much admired by Plato and Aristotle. It does little justice to Plato's high-minded, if mistaken, attack upon the family, and still less to Aristotle's defence of it. Both these philosophers raised moral and educational issues in this connection which should have found a place in a book which gives considerable space to Edward Carpenter and Ellen Key amongst the moderns.

From the particular point of view of education the book is perhaps least satisfying, but the task which Prof. Goodsell undertook was one of extraordinary difficulty. It called for scholarship of a high order, and, above all, for a philosophical outlook which would help to preserve unity of aim and balance of treatment. Although defective in these respects, the book is full of human interest. The pictures of home life in the old colonial days are especially so. As a collection of facts connected more or less closely with the family, many readers will find pleasure in its perusal, and as each chapter closes with a long list of references it may serve as a very useful introduction to a subject of vast interest and importance.

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