

The theoretical ideas in the book are derived first from Durkheim and Mauss, and secondly from Rivers and Granet. The first half of the book, which is concerned exclusively with the Kamo, is based upon the author's own observations as well as those of Maurice Leenhardt. This contains numerous ethnographic facts of great interest. The other two sections of the book are based only on second- or third-hand sources. On the theoretical side, the author neglects completely almost everything that has been written since 1939.

Marriage provides the central theme, but the author is also concerned with examining the relationship between the structural categories of human societies on one hand and the categories of language and the natural environment on the other. In recent years the most significant anthropological contributions to this topic are those of Radcliffe-Brown and Lévi-Strauss. Dr. Métais gives no evidence of having read any work by Radcliffe-Brown published later than 1913; that of Lévi-Strauss is not mentioned at all. In the circumstances, a detailed discussion of the argument becomes superfluous. On the theoretical side the book is not so much wrong as out of date. However, the massive and careful assemblage of ethnographic detail and the excellent series of bibliographies are of real value. Those who find stimulus in Radcliffe-Brown's essay, "The Sociological Study of Totemism", published in 1929, will find plenty of relevant facts in Dr. Métais's book. It may well be that some careful reader will be able to make the theoretical advance which Dr. Métais himself has failed to make.

E. R. LEACH

## THE CHESSER REPORT

### The Sexual, Marital and Family Relationships of the English Woman

By Dr. Eustace Chesser, in collaboration with Joan Maizels, Dr. Leonard Jones and Brian Emmett. Pp. xxxvi+642. (London: Hutchinson's Medical Publications, 1956.) 75s. net.

MANY of the so-called principles which form the basis of learning in disciplines like psychology, sociology and, even, education have been arrived at by empirical thinking, inspired guesswork or, too often, repeated utterance of what at one time may have appeared to be revealed truth. For this and other reasons this monumental survey of the emotional attitudes of English women towards marriage, the home and family life should be welcomed as an impressive scientific approach to sociological problems of major importance.

The study was undertaken with three aims in view. First, to discover experiences and attitudes towards marriage and sex relationships. Second, to relate the connexion between childhood and present experiences towards marriage and sex relationships; and thirdly, to discover those factors which are associated with feelings of happiness and unhappiness in marriage. It was not meant to be simply a classificatory, fact-finding inquiry, but was designed to test certain hypotheses suggested by sociological and clinical findings.

Touching, as they did, on the most intimate details of individuals' private lives, the investigators realized that, with all its deficiencies, only the use of a questionnaire would be likely to yield information

approximating most closely to the truth. Considerable care was taken in the preparation of the questionnaire so that answers to certain sections could be checked and counter-checked for validity by answers to other sections. It is a tribute to all the six thousand married and single women taking part in the inquiry and to the way in which their co-operation had been ensured by all the 1,498 general practitioners from many parts of England that there were few discrepancies in any of the completed questionnaires. With all the limitations of the questionnaire technique and despite the relatively small sample of women who could not wholly be chosen at random, the survey can fairly claim to have uncovered much information about the private lives of English women which previously had been only suspected and often misrepresented.

The first part of the inquiry was concerned with childhood experiences and, while confirming many cherished beliefs, cast doubt on a number of others. It is not surprising to learn, for example, that the quality of parental relationships affected the childhood lives of those taking part in the inquiry more profoundly than any other factor. Nor is it surprising to learn that the death of the mother, and particularly in infancy, had a markedly adverse effect on childhood happiness. What is surprising is that the loss of a father seems to have had little effect on childhood happiness. The results of the analysis are also interesting in that they do not appear to confirm the assumption that 'only' children necessarily have a happier or less happy childhood than others. Doubt is also cast on such a genuinely accepted belief that really happy children are to be found in large families; in this inquiry the highest proportion of those who felt their childhood had been exceptionally happy was found among married women who had one to three siblings. In the case of single women, the highest proportion with very happy childhoods were 'only' children.

The second field of study deals with single adult life, and the third with married life. In both, interesting and important information is revealed and shows that the sexual emancipation of English women has proceeded much farther than had been suspected. This part of the book bears out many of Kinsey's findings in his investigation into the sex life of American women. It has greater value, however, in being more comprehensive. In the Chesser survey, for example, the influence of religion as the chief external authority for an explicit code of moral behaviour with regard to sex and marriage was clearly recognized, and careful inquiries were made into parental attitudes towards religion and parental religious practice; early religious education and church attendance; and present religious observance. The strength of the religious influence in the early home lives of the informants was then related to certain experiences in later life and to attitudes towards sex and marriage. The differing influences of certain denominational groups are not wholly unexpected, and may cause further questions to be asked about the role of autocracy in religion.

The documentation of the book leaves little to be desired, and its value is enhanced by a number of appendixes setting out specimen questionnaires, how they were distributed and analysed, and the names of all the doctors who collaborated in this inquiry. It should be of interest to all who are concerned with the promotion of better relationships between men, women and children.

T. H. HAWKINS