WAIFS AND STRAYS: AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE
CARE OF DESTITUTE, DEPENDENT, AND NEGLECTED CHILDREN

by
Dana Fife Williams

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This thesis has been approved on the date shown below:

Victor Christopherson
Professor of Home Economics

Date
There has been a revolution in the lives and status of children as a social element in the population of America. Because this revolution has been achieved through gradual and voluntary concessions, rather than through wars of bloodshed and rioting, social historians have been slow to identify it or to appreciate its importance. There exists today in the United States a vast, well-defined social movement whose object is the promotion of the well-being of its children. This humanitarian reform movement that swept the U.S. in large measure following 1850 proceeded primarily from a new view of the child in society, a revolution in the social notion of the meaning of children and of childhood.

It is important to realize that the concept of "childhood," or the set of ideas that naturally come to mind when the word childhood is mentioned, is a relative one. An idea or a concept of the child is created within particular times and places; it is significant to note that there have been and still are various concepts regarding the child and his status, and that these vary over time and among societies. In order to understand a particular concept or a mode of thought, it is often more revealing to study the conditions under which it developed, rather than to treat the set of ideas as a universal, given fact.
This method of studying the child as a variable in history has been used by several notable authors. Probably the most well-known is Philippe Aries' *Centuries of Childhood*, written in 1962 in which the author traces the changing concept through the art and literature of France from the Middle Ages through the nineteenth century. Two other authors who employ the historical method of analysis are Henry Thurston, *The Dependent Child*, written in 1930, and G. Henry Payne, *The Child in Human Progress*, written in 1916. Thurston's text focuses primarily on the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, while Payne's book covers a much wider span in history, but gives little attention to the dependent child. This thesis will employ the historical method to trace the changing social notion of childhood as seen through the eyes of the dependent child.¹

Through many centuries there have been children who, because of the misfortunes of the responsible elders in their kinship groups, were thrown upon the larger society for support. Customary arrangements for these children were made in keeping with the accepted time and place where the need was manifest. With the passage of time conceptions of need and customs of care change, so it seems appropriate to review, against the background of the changed status of childhood as a whole, the changes in the care of this more specific element in the child

¹ The definition of a dependent child has customarily included children who present such situation of behavior, health, abuse, or economic need that the agencies of society step in to assume responsibilities ordinarily discharged with reasonable acceptance by their parents or natural supporters. Other commonly used definitions include destitute (no natural supporters), abused, or unwanted children. This definition of the dependent child will be used throughout the thesis.
population. G. Henry Payne calls the dependent child the "weakest link" in society, and he goes on to say that the attitude of a state toward its dependent children has been, with few exceptions, an index to its social progress. We can learn a great deal about a society and its values by studying its children.

Specific dates for this survey have not been fixed, but the report begins in ancient times and does not extend beyond the nineteenth century. The dependent child in the twentieth century has not been included (1) because of obvious space limitations (and to avoid a description and analysis of the complex legal development on behalf of the dependent child which took shape in this century), and (2) since the foundations of thought regarding the care of dependent children were fairly well fixed by the latter half of the nineteenth century. The time span of the report covers a wide span of history, yet it should be remembered that glimpses of child life prior to the seventeenth century, particularly that of the dependent child, remain largely hidden in obscurity. Specific references and incidents have been taken from the various historical works listed in the bibliography, and these have then been woven into a story, hopefully interesting and revealing, of the changing methods of care and attitudes toward the unwanted, destitute and dependent child.

This thesis may be of particular significance to students of child welfare as an historical prelude to the principles and methods of child welfare in the United States today. Each change in the development of ideas, methods of care, agencies and institutions for dependent
children was, at the time it was made, based upon a sympathetic recognition of actual conditions and so, though not always scientific in use of resources, was a real step forward. No step, past or present, has brought us to the journey's end. An account of our first conscious efforts to cope with the dependent child problem has great relevance to the present as well as the future in that we may derive from it further appreciation of the need and the opportunity for organized efforts to eliminate and prevent the problems of dependent and homeless children in the larger community in which we now live.
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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of America's awakening to the needs of dependent children as a social problem. It is an attempt to explain, in an historical framework, the factors that made Americans conscious of and sympathetic to the misfortunes of homeless and neglected children as a specific element in the population. The objectives of the report are to trace the growth of factual information about the social conditions surrounding this group of children, to characterize and account for changing attitudes toward the dependent child, and to present the experiences and influences that led to the enactment of legislation affecting the "waifs and strays" in U. S. history.

The description of the dependent child's place in the social order begins in ancient Semitic days, prior to the Roman and Greek influences, and continues throughout Western European history (primarily English) up to the end of the nineteenth century in America.

The changing social notion of childhood is traced using the care given, and the status of dependent children through history as the primary variables.
CHAPTER 1

ANCIENT BEGINNINGS

To understand more clearly the current philosophy regarding the child in our society, particularly the dependent child, it is necessary to consider the background out of which it grew, how it took form, and what factors have been most influential in its development. The starting point must necessarily be with America's ancient European ancestors.

Early Semitic Period

It is possible to trace written records of civilization further back than even the great pyramid builders of the Egyptian Empire. The Semitic peoples, along with the Assyrians and Babylonians, provide us with the beginnings of our knowledge of European civilizations and their child caring practices. The Code of Hammurabi, the oldest known table of laws in the world, gives us an indication of the basis for the later and more well known Roman and Greek ideas of the child's place in society. Hammurabi, the sixth king of the dynasty of Babylon, was the first king to consolidate the Semitic empire in approximately 2250 B.C. (Payne, 1916, p. 100). Taken from the seven tablets of the series called the "Ana Ittisu" are the following six laws:
I. If a son has said to his father, 'you are not my father,' he may brand him, lay fetters upon him, and sell him.

II. If a son has said to his mother, 'you are not my mother,' one shall brand his forehead, drive him out of the city, and make him go out of the house.

III. If a father has said to his son, 'you are not my son,' he shall leave house and yard.

IV. If a mother has said to her son, 'you are not my son,' he shall leave house and property.

V. If a wife hates her husband and has said, 'you are not my husband,' one shall throw her into the river.

VI. If a husband has said to his wife, 'you are not my wife,' he shall pay half a mina of silver (Payne, 1916, p. 100).

Though attributed usually to the later Roman Empire period, the idea of "patria potestas," the power of the father over all matters regarding wife and children, is well exemplified in this earlier code. Although little is known about the unwanted or dependent child during this early period, several authors report that infant exposure (death by abandonment) was practiced when famine or poverty threatened the welfare of the adults. Payne (1916, p. 105) states that an older child could be driven out without any ceremony by the father who had the legal power to do so. Girl children in this early period — as in much later times — were always more subject to be exposed when food supply ran short since males were considered to be a greater asset. Throughout this early Semitic period, however, there really is no evidence of an endeavor to destroy unwanted children or to put them out on the scale that is found in ancient Greece and Rome. Human sacrifices to gods were not frequent occurrences. Bastard children were apparently reared
as part of the family unit under the power of the male head. There is mention in the Code of Hammurabi of adoption of children who were deserted. The primary reason for adoption was for a family to gain a male heir. The Code contains minute regulations as to the claim of the child on possessions, etc., and as Payne (1916) states, we can be sure that girl children were not generally adopted since they could hold no possessions.

**Egyptian Child Care**

The Egyptians became the dominant power in Europe after about 2500 B.C., but nowhere is there any evidence that among the Egyptians of the Old, the Middle or the New Period (from about 2800 to 110 B.C.) children were ill-treated or suffered from any of the usual methods — usual for more Nomadic Semitic tribes — of getting rid of surplus or unwanted progeny (Lindsay, 1963, p. 43). The ancient Egyptians represent one of the most compassionate peoples that the world has ever known. Living in a land of plenty they had, apparently, passed beyond the stage when the life of a child, unimportant as it seemed, was the first sacrifice to the God of Necessity.

As an illustration of the important place that children occupied in ancient Egypt, Payne (1916, p. 110) reports that the people worshiped two dieties, actually Goddesses, whose main responsibility was protection of children and childhood (one of the Goddesses was named Mama).

One important piece of evidence we have from ancient Egypt is a letter written by Diodorus Siculus, a contemporary of Caesar, who...
visited Egypt in the course of his work. In what he says of the punishment of those who killed their children, he is citing the Egyptians before they came under the influence of the Greeks and Romans. The letter in Payne (1916, p. 112) goes:

Parents that killed their children were not to die, but were forced for three days and nights together to hug them continually (the dead child) in their arms, and had a guard all the while over them to see they did it; for they thought it not fit that they should die who gave life to their children, but rather that men should be deterred from such attempts by a punishment that seemed attended with sorrow and repentance.

We do not know, in either the Semitic period or the Egyptian era, of what specific care was given orphaned children. But even the later days in Egypt were notable for their restrictions on child sufferings. Children were not known as bastards in Egypt because descent was traced in a matrilineal line. Orphaned children in Egypt were, no doubt, cared for in a humane manner. The early development of the belief in a hereafter must have affected the attitude of the Egyptians toward the killing or abandonment of unwanted children, since even the poorer classes treated the death of a child as a serious matter accompanied by elaborate religious ceremonies.

Payne (1916, p. 118) tells us, "... of the Egyptians after the conquest of Alexander, we must write as of the Greeks and the Romans..." In the matter of children it is important to note a certain papyrus, written in the year 1 B.C. in Egypt, which shows how completely the foreign point of view had been absorbed in a land in which 4,000 years had not yielded a single evidence of child killing. The papyrus is
a letter from a prominent Egyptian man on a trip to Alexandria. The letter is written to his wife in Egypt who is pregnant with child. The letter exclaims that if the child should turn out to be a female, it should be destroyed. "When you bear offspring, if it is a male, let it be; if a female, expose it."

Greek and Roman Practices

When the powerful Roman Empire rose up in western Europe, it quickly dominated the lesser powers of Egypt and even Greece. It is interesting to note in the history of the Roman Empire that what might be called the legal movement which solidified in the U.S. in the latter half of the nineteenth century had its beginnings in approximately 800 B.C. in Rome. Romulus, the legendary founder of Rome, showed the first interest in what might be called the child protection movement. Romulus pledged his people to bring up all males except those who were lame or deformed, and he pledged the people also to bring up the first born of the females. In a law shortly following Romulus' it was noted that all children were to be allowed to live until they were three years of age unless they were deformed, and even the deformed infants to be exposed had to be shown to five witnesses who discussed the matter (Cowell, 1961, p. 62).

The Roman Republic was established in approximately 509 B.C.; apparently in the 250 years after Romulus' decree the people of Rome drifted toward a callousness and disregard for dependent or unwanted children that seems to be unequalled in history. With the adoption of the Twelve Tables about 450 B.C., the doctrine of "patria potestas"
was firmly established for centuries. It literally gave the male head of the family group the power of life and death over his children and all others living in his house. This power was exercised freely and frequently to get rid of dependent children for the next few centuries (Payne, 1916, pp. 216-217).

Child sacrifice to the impatient and fearful Gods became part of life for the early Romans, as well as Greeks, as they became a method of soliciting favors for the future. The Romans voiced their belief that children were more acceptable to the Gods as sacrifices since they had just come from the other world and were therefore freer of sin (Payne, 1916, p. 142). The weak, the deformed, the unwanted -- including, of course, many girl children -- became usual sacrificial objects. Child exposure was more common than child sacrifice, but the objects of both were the same children, the dependent ones. There were other circumstances regarded as sufficient for destroying a child based on certain taboos: birth of twins and often the first born child of a family. Child sacrifices were often made when a new building or temple was built; the child was usually walled into the cornerstone. Other agricultural tribes sacrificed a young child at every new moon to insure good crops. There seemed to be few restrictions on destroying a child who was unwanted, though surely not all children were mistreated. Children were simply not very important creatures and little was lost, the Romans felt, if the children were killed. A great portion of the exposed children consisted of bastard children, since as Crook (1967)
states, "Rome traced descent through the male line, and also because the concubine class of women occupied a distinct and acceptable role in the social order."

Israel seemed to be the only corner of the world during Rome's rule that was never content with the abuses to children, and in this way her philosophy differed from the Greek, Roman, later Egyptian and Mesopotamian peoples. The practice of using human sacrifices was reported in Israel as late as the seventh century B.C.; but from the time of Abraham and Isaac, when the Israelites' God, Yahiveh, stopped a human sacrifice and was content with an animal substitute, there was a prevailing attitude in Israel that human sacrifice was not necessary. The blood of humans was still desired for many years, but the rite of circumcision of newborn male babies took the place of the sacrificial blood. From the first settlement in Canaan, about 1200 B.C., until the birth of Christ, the Israelites progressed steadily in humanitarianism toward its children.

In Greece, especially Sparta, child exposure was frequently practiced to get rid of all deformed or weak children, for the Greeks lauded physical beauty and prowess. Plato says in the "Theaetetus" as an argument for exposing deformed infants: "... are you not risking the greatest of your possessions? For children are your riches, and upon their turning out well or ill depends the whole order of their fathers' house" (Payne, 1916, p. 189). Aristotle wrote in the fifth century B.C.: "As to the exposure and rearing of children, let there be a law that no deformed child will live." One of the statutes in
Greek law, approximately 500 B.C., called the Laws of Gortyna (Payne, 1916, p. 190) gives the mother direct permission to expose the unwanted infant:

If a woman bear a child, while living apart from her husband, she shall carry it to her husband at his house, in the presence of three witnesses; and if he does not receive the child, it shall be in the power of the mother either to bring it up or expose it.

Even a servant who had an illegitimate child would take it to her master who decided whether the child should live or die.

In the fourth century B.C. the favorite figure in the comedy of the day was the child that had been exposed and saved, then years afterwards found by his real parents. Strange as it may seem in the cultural and refined city of Athens with its great philosophers and wonderful art, the object of jest was the starving and dying infant.

In Greece, as was true in Rome, doubt as to paternity generally led to exposure. Even the rich felt that one son and one daughter was a large family, and other children born were unnecessary. The poorer families often kept only one child, the first male child born. In Greece the explanation was that some of the children had to be sacrificed that others might be raised.

Goodsell (1930, p. 187) tells us that every year in Rome and in Greece (prior to the Christian influence) scores of newborn children were brought to particular columns or buildings in popular places in hopes that some stranger would take them up. Children were usually adorned in some way with trinkets which were, at times, inducements for a stranger to befriend the child. If the child died, the feeling was
that these ornaments would assure for it a happy life in the next world. Although there are various stories in Greek and Roman literature of an orphaned child being picked up and adopted as an heir, what usually happened was that the child either died or was taken up by a professional "pander" who brought the child up as a prostitute or sold it into the large slave class (Goodsell, 1930, pp. 178-179).

During the reign of Augustus, from 31 B.C., dramatic changes in these old customs of caring for unwanted and dependent children began to take place. Civil wars and proscriptions had left great voids in Roman and Greek families. Great wealth and leisure for the noble classes caused men and women to care little for raising children, and celibacy and a decreasing child population became major problems. Augustus proposed the "Lex Julia" in about 25 B.C. (Goodsell, 1930, p. 143) which became the seed of a growing humanity and one of the first inclinations to treat dependent children with kindness. Included in the "Lex Julia" -- or family law -- were these provisions:

1. Persons who were not married and had no children were unable to inherit.

2. Candidates for public office were chosen by those who had the greatest number of children.

3. A relief from all personal taxes was granted to citizens who had three or more children.

The child now had some value other than future use -- he had an immediate, tangible value. Augustus even set aside a small reward for the person who would rescue an orphan.
This altruistic attitude toward children continued for a short while in Rome and her vast territories. During the year 96 A.D. the Emperor Nerva decreed that abandoning infants was unlawful, and he required the government to subsidize poor parents. In the year 100 A.D. it was reported that over 5,000 Roman children were receiving aid from the state. (Payne, 1916, p. 230).

The emperor after Nerva, Trajan, continued the government subsidies to poor children, and he also ruled that deserted children who were found and brought up should be allowed their freedom and not be obliged to repay the money expended for their maintenance.

From about 250 to 350 A.D. there seems to be a turning back in the history of the child as poverty continued to increase in the Empire, despite the new laws. The practice of murdering and exposing new children became frequent again. Later emperors, like Constantine, tried to dissuade the people from their practices. Rather than kill the children, the emperor gave back the right of parents to sell their unwanted children. In order to encourage strangers to pick up waifs, Constantine decreed that they should be the slaves of those who would raise them.

Influence of Christianity

Into the Roman Empire of Tiberius Caesar was introduced a new religion, born, like all great religions, in the East. Christianity spread very slowly at first through the vast Roman territories, since it placed the authority of religion above that of the state whenever
the two were opposed. Well into the fourth century A.D. Rome went on exposing and selling unwanted children according to the earlier customs, while the Christian fathers were preaching among their followers a new doctrine of parent/child relationships in direct opposition to Rome. The Christians did not cease to denounce those who, no matter what their reasons, exposed or otherwise got rid of unwanted children. The new religion taught the importance of every human life, particularly the unbaptized children. The stand of the Church can be seen in this letter written to Marcus Aurelius in 205 A.D. from a Christian supporter:

Although you are forbidden by laws to slay newborn infants, it so happens that no laws are evaded with more impurity or greater safety, with the deliberate knowledge of the public and the suffrages of this entire age (Payne, 1916, p. 261).

The two systems existed side-by-side for at least four centuries until Christianity pushed its doctrines to the very ends of the vast empire and climbed to a position of great strength by the second half of the fourth century A.D. Possibly the most important doctrine of the Church to gain acceptance was that every human being had a soul, children as well, and that damnation was eminent if the soul was not saved by the belief in Christ.

A series of laws was written down between the years 250 and 450 A.D. that reflected the influence of the new Christian teachings. Some of the relevant statutes included; (1) a woman found guilty of murdering offspring was punished by being forbidden to enter a church for the rest of her life; (2) adoptive parents did not have to forfeit
a child they rescued from exposure to his real parents should they seek it; and (3) set fees were paid to adoptive parents by the state.

In 325 A.D. at the Council of Nicea it was proscribed that in each village of the Christian world there should be established an asylum for the poor and abandoned children (Payne, 1916, p. 268). In 442 A.D. it was decreed that, "whoever takes up an abandoned child shall bring him to the church where the fact will be certified." The real parents from then on had no claims to him.

Church and state united in the movement for the protection of the child in the Laws of Justinian, written in 529 A.D. These laws proclaimed absolute liberty for foundling children, declaring that they were not the property of either the parents who saved them or the parents who bore them. There were also severe penalties imposed on anyone who tried to hold exposed children as slaves or prostitutes. This law stated also that the act of killing a child exceeded the cruelty of an ordinary murder and would be punished more harshly (Maine, 1864, pp. 130-140).

As the powerful Roman Empire began to weaken, various barbarian tribes conquered the lands and imposed a more crude culture on the ruins of the greatest nation and highest civilization the world had ever known. But the Church also gained in strength and its humanities were slowly accepted by the invading tribes who eventually settled to become Germans, English, Irish, etc. (Originally they were known as Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Vandals, Franks, Saxons, etc.)
From studying the various laws of these early tribes, the absorption of Christian doctrines can be clearly seen. Several tribes proscribed fines for killing unwanted children; Salic law put the highest fine on killing an unborn child or the pregnant woman. Murdering a woman past child-bearing age was considered to be of less importance than killing a woman in the child-bearing years for many of the tribes. Abortion was severely prohibited in the code of the Visigoths in the fifth century A.D. The Anglo Saxons incorporated a law that paid certain fees to people who would raise foundlings. Most of the tribes provided that a poor parent could sell his child if unable to keep him, but the child was then considered a slave, or a servant anyway. We know of no asylums for dependent children or other specific care practices, but the lot of the child in general had risen considerably since the earlier centuries of Roman rule. He had far to go, however, before he was granted a position in society distinct from his adult superiors.
CHAPTER 2

GLIMPSES OF MEDIEVAL CHILD LIFE IN EUROPE

For almost a thousand years after the fall of the Roman Empire and the conquest by the invading tribes, civilization seemed to be stagnant, finally to be standardized into feudal society. There is an extensive and imposing literature on the history of the Middle Ages, with full accounts of political and national affairs. Information on the status of children, however, is ominously scant. The child was, apparently, the product of a mixture of the early Roman position of complete subordinance and subservience to the father — and to the social order in general — plus the influence of Christianity which was trying to protect the child from ruthless murder.

Childhood as we know it today was extremely short, almost non-existent. Bossard and Boll (1948, p. 496) state that the usual age for marriages in Medieval Europe was 14 for boys and 12 for girls. The society, prior to the end of the feudal order, was still primarily agricultural; each family obtained their living off the land as best they could. Children were necessary laborers in the fields and began to work as soon as they could walk. Craft guilds came into existence soon in this era and some children were apprenticed into the crafts. The contract for a child with parents, the mediators, was usually for four to six years. The child was given bed and board in return for
the labor of his hands. Thurston, (1930, p. 11) relates incidents of some dependent children who served as apprentices, but they generally were bound to the master until age 21; thereafter, they had to pay back the money expended by the master for room and board. There was no mediator for the majority of dependent children, just as there were no laws to protect their welfare. These things were not to be for at least another four centuries.

Pre-Feudal Society: 1-1000 A.D.

Several religious historians offer glimpses of the dependent child in relation to the Church in pre-feudal society often called the Dark Ages. The Church occupied an extremely important position in the local communities and very early it became the protector of the parentless child. There were in reality only two classes of people in the social order, the wealthy, or the nobility, and the poor; and the poor often had too little food for the family. Caulfield (1930a, p. 489) states that in order to dissuade the people from exposing the unwanted or starving children, the churches built receptacles, usually marble baskets, outside the doors of the churches where women could place the children. The priest made periodic checks of the basket and then attempted to find a willing family to care for the child. There were always too many orphaned, deformed, or simply unwanted children for the church to take care of adequately, and many infants must have perished from the cold in the winter before the priests found them (Caulfield, 1930a, pp. 488-498). Payne (1916, pp. 387-388)
relates that in a few towns, children who had been abandoned were shown at the door of the church for ten days by the priest. If anyone in the district recognized the child, that person was to make a public declaration of the abandonment to the townspeople in order to ostracize the real parents. We have no indication of any legal action, however, taken against the family for abandoning a child. Some towns in western Europe offered an adoption document to any person in the district who would take up one of the orphans. This document gave the new parent the right to hold the child as a servant until he was 21 years old (Payne, 1916, p. 289). Bastard children were often exposed, sometimes given to the church, but most frequently sold as servants. There was literally no place in this society for an unmarried woman with a child, unless as a beggar.

By approximately the seventh century conditions of poverty were extremely severe in much of western Europe. Despite the church teachings, thousands of children were simply thrown on the highways or left in deserted places to die. These "dropped" children were too numerous for the churches to take care of, though compassionate church women would walk the highways in search of them. According to Payne (1916, pp. 289-290) many families in need of food for survival took their older children to the public market and sold them to middlemen as slaves. This practice was common in Germany, Italy, and France as well as in England. In Britain, such middlemen developed a prosperous slave trade, selling the children to the Vandals in Africa. Moved by the misery of the thousands of children disposed of in this way, the
churchmen were often seen at the markets, with purse in hand, to purchase as many of the children as they could. The Church, dependent at this time upon charitable contributions, usually had less to bargain with than the slave traders.

Although these practices seem unbelievably cruel to the twentieth century student of child development, the infant or young child of this era was often expendable. He was most often seen as simply the young of the species, not otherwise differentiated from the rest of the society; moreover, children were thought to have no emotions, thoughts, or feelings, much like a young animal. Sirjamaki (1959, p. 105) emphasizes that only when the child was able to earn a living was he of worth, for then he acquired a special status, that of the adult. It should also be reiterated that for many families there was no other alternative but to expose or sell some children so that others could live.

Not until the year 787 A.D. is there record of the establishment of an infant asylum or institution to care for dependent children. The Church, again, was instrumental in protecting the helpless child, for the first infant asylum was founded in Milan, Italy, by the Archbishop named Datheus (Caulfield, 1930a, part I, p. 480). Daltheus believed that an unbaptized child went straight to Hell, so the asylum's first task was to baptize. His words, recorded by Payne (1916, p. 294) were:

My wish is that as soon as a child is exposed at the door of a church that it will be received in the hospital (asylum) and confided to the care of those who will be paid to look after them . . . . These infants will be taught
a trade and my wish is that when they arrive at the age of eight years they will be free from the shackles of slavery and free to come and go wherever they will.

This quotation clearly shows that the child of eight was considered to be able to care for himself and earn his way in society.

The prevailing notion of the child as an adult in Medieval days is more precisely explained by Philippe Aries (1962, p. 128):

In Medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist; this is not to suggest that children (as a whole) were neglected, forsaken, or despised. For the idea of childhood is not to be confused with affection for children: it corresponds to an awareness of that particular nature which distinguishes the child from the adult, even the young adult. In Medieval society, this awareness was lacking. That is why, as soon as the child could live without constant solicitude ..., he belonged to adult society.

This notion of childhood prevailed in Europe and America until the eighteenth century at least, and although there are records of many foundling institutions coming into existence after the initial establishment in 787 A.D., they were "infant" institutions which cared for very young children and babies. A destitute or dependent child of four or five years of age was not usually accepted for care in them. These children had no recourse but to beg on the streets, to grow up as servants, or to seek charity from the churches.

The Feudal Order and After

By approximately 1000 A.D. the feudal order was firmly established as a way of life in much of Europe as the nobility seized the lands and, therefore, the lives of the people living on them. Feudalism lasted for centuries in all the countries of Europe from which, directly
or indirectly, most people of the United States have come. Under feudalism the land itself claimed fealty. Every man — from villein (or peasant) up through the lord of the manor — owed loyalty, food, raw materials, and the work of his hands to his immediate overlord, from the king on down. In return, each man above owed protection against attack and an opportunity to get a living to all below him. Thurston (1930, p. 2) writes that as an unwritten law the overlords became obliged to take care of the foundlings abandoned within their jurisdiction, and the child was usually kept to work in the fields or in the manor house as a servant. There was a place for every person on the manor, as long as he earned his way and a little extra for the overlord. Again, children seemed to be as important as they could contribute to their own as well as the welfare of others.

Little more is known of the lot of the dependent child under feudalism, except that infant asylums continued to be built in the larger towns in Europe to help those children not under the care of a manorial lord. Payne (1916, p. 294) reports that by the end of the twelfth century religious infant asylums were established in six or seven large cities in Europe. Pontanus, a writer of the thirteenth century speaks of having seen over 900 infants in the asylum at Naples. Aries (1962) found that glimpses of children in the art or literature of this era are extremely rare. The few exceptions portray the children as miniature adults, with adult clothing and facial features. The only pictures of babies or infants are religious portrayals of cherubs.
The break up of the European heritage of Medieval culture was a gradual process. In the fourteenth century it was still intact; by the end of the sixteenth century it was well on its way to disintegration. What became of dependent children in England when the feudal system gradually gave way to a different economic and political order? When the overlord no longer was obliged to offer work to the child, and the families migrated to the larger cities? The answers to these questions will throw light on the evolution of the care for dependent children in the American colonies.

Probably the greatest single cause of the breakdown of feudalism was the introduction of a money economy -- a new system of exchange. People who gradually became dependent on this money economy ceased to belong to any landed estate and overlord and so lost all feudal rights, especially the right to work and earn a living.

Vagrant dependent children multiplied rapidly following the decline of the feudal obligation and roamed the streets of the cities searching for charity. In an effort to rid the cities of this growing problem, the local governmental bodies began in 1536 to enact laws which would divert the children into the labor force. The first statute enacted in England (Zietz, 1959, p. 5) in that year, 1536, empowered the local justices or other officials to "bind-out" or sell all destitute and begging children under age 14 and above age five into industrial or agricultural service. In 1536 under the "Statute of Artificers," children could be compulsorily used for the "better advancement of husbandry and tillage." Even sons of freemen, states Zietz (1959, p. 5).
who were not destitute could be bound out for seven years as apprentices. This principle was generally called "indenture" and at least gave the child room and board and, supposedly, a trade, although many of the children were simply servants. Thurston (1930) feels that indenture offered a means of ridding the streets of beggars and at the same time saving any expense from the public treasury.

The local manors, now called parishes, had long been the units of local administration and for many years the Churchwarden and Archdeacon had been empowered to solicit and collect voluntary contributions for the care of the dependent infants. Voluntary contributions were far from sufficient, however, so in 1572 England first instituted legislation for the collection of taxes for dependent relief (Ware, 1908, p. 91). Thurston (1930, p. 6) sees the two most important factors contributing to this new theory of public support for the dependent people in the sixteenth century as: (1) the growing numbers of wandering, unattached, destitute people entitled to nobody's support, and (2) impoverishment of the Church which had previously mitigated, to some extent, their condition. (Henry VIII, father of Queen Elizabeth, had seized the monasteries and lands held by the Catholic Church in the sixteenth century; the Church itself became poor and had few alms to give.) Indenture and apprenticeship remained the principal methods of care for older children, but the tax money provided a little better care for the infants.
Poor Laws and the Workhouse

The tax money collected by the local parishes was generally spent in hiring "overseers of the poor" whose job it was to find women to care for the infants, to find work for the older children in industry or agriculture, or to apprentice them into a trade. Some monies were used as "outdoor relief" — money given to the poor families in their own homes. These various methods of caring for dependent children were used for about 100 years in England but never seemed to encompass all the begging street children. Finally, in 1696 Parliament passed a bill (Webb and Webb, 1927, p. 52) on the proposal of one John Cary, a Bristol merchant, which put a workhouse to test, and also tested the "farming-out" of the poor to the lowest bidder. Both of these two philosophies were enthusiastically adopted by many parishes throughout Europe. The significance of this new bill, later put into law, plus the earlier public taxation laws are tantamount in that they served as the nucleus for the next three centuries of poor law legislation and administration in Europe as well as in the American Colonies, and they reflected a final acknowledgement of the transition from feudalistic paternalism to the ultimate responsibility of government or the State regarding poor and dependent children.
CHAPTER 3

ENGLAND: SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

The opening of the seventeenth century has particular importance in the history of the child welfare movement for two reasons. First, as Aries (1962) notes, historical accounts offer a more complete and revealing story of the status of the child and his place in society; and second, because it is at this point that the story of American child care begins. The principal methods of caring for dependent children in the United States beginning in the seventeenth century and continuing through the nineteenth century were direct translations of the English law and philosophies; it is necessary, therefore to continue briefly with the English transition before turning directly to the new United States in Part 4.

Child Mortality and the Status of Children

The picture drawn by various historians of seventeenth and eighteenth century child care in Western Europe seems little different from that of the earlier centuries. Evidence of child neglect, cruelty and infanticide are so abundant that one is forced to believe that at times children were not even considered necessary. Notices of births and deaths were first recorded in public journals during the seventeenth century (much more completely during the eighteenth), and these indicate
one of the major reasons for the child's inferior status in society. Statistics dramatically illustrate the almost inevitability of the death of children. Kessen (1965, p. 8) states that before 1750 in England the odds were three to one against a child completing five years of life; and the eighteenth century had almost closed before children born in London had an even break on surviving until their fifth birthday. Death from disease, infection, and poor infant care accounted for the major proportion, but child abandonment was still a grave problem. In 1750, for every three births registered in London, one foundling was left at one of the infant asylums (Kessen, 1965, pp. 8-9). Such extremely high child mortality rates must have been common in Europe prior to this century and can be assumed to be one of the reasons for the apparent disregard of the child in society. People surely could not allow themselves to become too attached to something that was regarded as a probable loss. Aries (1962, p. 155) reports that children born in the seventeenth century often remained unnamed for the first months of life since the probability of death was so high. He further adds that dead children were most often given no burial ceremony, and sometimes buried in the yard, much like a family pet.

Early medical writings from Hippocrates on, contain only brief references to the child. Physicians avoided the child because he seemed hopelessly resistant to medical intervention, undeveloped as it was. Literally nothing was known in the way of proper child care. There were no medical books until late in the eighteenth century, so physicians had little understanding of pediatric ailments. Bills of
Mortality, or death notices, were systematically recorded in the early eighteenth century and indicate the state of development of medical knowledge. Caulfield (1930a, p. 483) reprints one Bill of Mortality recorded for a parish in London in 1740. The terms used for causes of death of children under five include these words: dropt, overlaid (a common term in England meaning the child smothered while sleeping), evil, purple spots, grief, headache, itch, lethragy, rash, rising-of-the-lights, teething, and fright. From the beginning of 1700 to the middle of that century records indicate that in London alone, over 90,000 deaths of children were attributed to teething. Caulfield (1930a, p. 483) further concludes that deaths from "overlaying" during that same time period amounted to nearly 4,000.

In scrutinizing the birth and death notices of one year in particular in London, 1741 (as printed in Gentlemen's Magazine, 1741, p. 218), over 40 percent of the total deaths were of children under five years of age. In that year these deaths amounted to 13,000 children, while the total population of London has been estimated by Caulfield (1930a, p. 482) in that year alone to be between five and seven hundred thousand. In the two decades, 1730 to 1750, it was stated that 75 percent of all the children christened were dead before they reached the age of five. The historical example of the deaths in early infancy of Queen Anne's 18 children was not a misfortune peculiar to either the nobility or the poorer classes.

It is understandable states Payne (1916, p. 108) that although the punishment for child murder in England during the seventeenth and
eighteenth centuries was hanging, few women were convicted. The case of "overlaying" is an example. Caulfield (1930a, p. 484) feels that this was really infanticide and bases this opinion on a personal letter he found dated 1740. In the letter, a wife is writing to a friend about her new baby, Billy:

He is very kind (her husband): and Billy not being well when he came in, my grief passed off without blame. He had said many tender things to me; but added, that if I gave myself so much uneasiness every time the child ailed anything, he would hire a nurse to overlay him.

Though deliberate child murder accounted for many of the deaths, the most profound and far reaching cause of the terrific waste of child life can be summarized by the word neglect. Not only did the medical profession neglect the children, but often the mothers themselves neglected them. William Cadagan, a well-known compassionate physician of the seventeenth century writes (in Kessen, 1965, p. 1) that it was not fashionable in the wealthy classes for a woman to rear her own children. She most often suddenly acquired a case of the "vapours" and hired a wet nurse (to give milk to the child) to care for the child. Caulfield relates (1930a, pp. 488-489) that the position of wet nurse was much sought after by the poorer women, and they often took the position of employment at their own children's expense. If a poor mother wished to give up her own child, there were two relatively simple avenues open to her: (1) dropping the child, or (2) abandoning it to the parish workhouse. The unmarried mother was still the lowest of the social outcasts, so many bastard children were disposed of in these two ways. Art works of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries
often depicted pleasant country or street scenes with people casually strolling past several dropped infants. (One picture is reproduced in Caulfield, 1930a, p. 480.) Such was the every day life in England.

There are records to indicate that some of the foundling children were well cared for, such as the following newspaper account of 1734 (in Caulfield, 1930a, p. 489) of a child left on the doorstep of a wealthy woman:

Last Tuesday evening, a female child, of about three weeks old was left in a basket at the door of Buckingham House. The servants would have carried it into the park (to be exposed) but the case being sometime after made known to the Duchess, who was told it was too late to send for the overseers of the parish Poorhouse, and that the child must perish with cold without speedy relief, her grace was touched with compassion, and ordered it to be taken care of... Her grace doth not propose that this instance of her tenderness should encourage any further presents of this nature, because such attempts will prove fruitless.

But the compassion shown by the Duchess was not a universal trait of the common people, as this newspaper account (Caulfield, 1930a, p. 489) reveals:

A shoemaker's lad having found a basket in the streets with something packed in it, carried it home to his master, who opening it, being enraged to find in it a new-born child, threw it out of a two-pair of stairs window, by which it was killed.

Another characteristic of the seventeenth as well as preceding centuries, which we have evidence of was cruelty to the children, particularly begging "street children," or children without any means of support. A child brutally disfigured with the loss of an eye or
limb was commonly used by vagabonds and beggars to incite pity. Kessen (1965) states that conditions had improved a great deal in the eighteenth century and legally, at least, such habits were not tolerated. But a people who had not yet placed a value on the child, other than a monetary value, could not be expected to be completely free of the vicious habits. The following account (taken from Caulfield, 1930a, p. 492) written in a contemporary periodical needs no comment:

The Court at Hick's Hall lately committed Anne Martin, alias Chapney, to Newgate, where she is to be imprisoned for two years . . . . She is accused of putting out the eyes of children, with whom she went a-begging about the country; she has been several times whipped at the cart's tail.

Children whose parents were genuinely concerned for their welfare often had slightly better chances of survival due to the ignorance of proper infant care. William Cadagan, the physician, as reported in Kessen (1965, p. 12) wrote an essay in 1748 in which he described the more common infant care practices. He wrote that children's limbs were often bound tightly so that their arms and legs would turn out straight. The common custom was also not changing infants' clothes for days, or even weeks at a time "in order not to rob them of their nourishing juices." In feeding, the general practice was, as soon as the child was born, to cram a dab of butter and sugar down its throat followed by wine or ale (to strengthen the stomach). Cadagan also stated that "it is generally assumed that whenever a child cries, it wants food; and it is accordingly fed 10, 12, or more times a day and night" (Kessen, 1965, p. 12).
Infant Asylums and Poorhouses

By the mid eighteenth century there was a parish workhouse established in almost every parish in England. Other names commonly used for this institution were the poorhouse or the almshouse. Supported to a degree by the public taxation method discussed in Part 3, and partly by the work of the residents (or inmates, as they were called), the workhouse became a depository for the old, the sick, the poor, the insane, and the dependent children. The pauper children often lived in the workhouse along with the rest of their family, but the greatest number were orphaned or vagrant children who had been rounded up from the city streets. No matter how many historical works are consulted, the general picture painted of the workhouse was extremely grim. Children suffered from inadequate diet, lack of sanitation, and were deprived of any normal family life. There were usually no separate quarters for the children as everyone ate, slept, and lived in a common dormitory. Mulry (1898, p. 365) relates that the infants and children included all those who were born in the workhouse, those older children picked up off the streets, and children found "dropt" within the limits of the parish. Not much is known about the fate of these children prior to 1750 except that they were cared for by the inmates. Caulfield (1930a, p. 681) reviews several articles which indicate the high death rates among young children in the workhouses. One public official writing prior to 1750 exclaims, "I have heard it declared in public court of one very important parish, which in 14 years did not preserve a single child . . . ."
Finally in 1761 Parliament passed a law called the "Act for Keeping Children Alive," which made it mandatory for all workhouses to publicly register births and deaths of all parish inmates under four years of age. Caulfield (1930b, p. 682) states that the act changed the conditions of the children very little, but it furnished more precise data on the conditions within the workhouses. The mortality rates of children under five was somewhere around 80 to 90 percent, although some reported 100 percent child mortality. The new law did give a certain impetus to poorhouse overseers in that they frequently offered rewards to inmates (or wet nurses) in the house who could keep a child alive for one year. Even in the better workhouses, however, an infant had practically no chance of being reared.

Older children in the workhouses suffered as well, particularly with the coming of the Industrial Revolution. Bossard (1940, p. 11) feels that 1760 is the most commonly used date for the inception of the Revolution. It was there that the earlier Statute of Artificers, in Part 2, assisted in the crushing industrial plight of the children, for the overseers of the poor quickly became the agents of the mill owners and often arranged for days when the dependent children could be inspected and selected for factory work. The mill owner paid the overseer a small sum usually for a whole group of children, and the overseer was therefore relieved of a few children needing care in the workhouse. Nominally the child laborers were apprentices, but actually they were most often slaves and their treatment even more inhumane than in the workhouse. Payne (1916, pp. 319-320) relates that the parish
authorities, in order to get rid of the imbeciles in the workhouse, often bargained that the mill owners take one idiot with every 20 children. What became of them is not known. The reports of cruelly treated children in the factories are too well known to go into detail, but they continued even as late as 1850 in Western Europe.

Another way that the poorhouses rid their wards of the children was to transport them by ship to the new American Colonies. In the late seventeenth century a law was passed in England (Caulfield, 1930a, p. 493) that, "... such children who shall be apprehended and are afflicted with any disease and have no persons to take care of them, be cured of such disease and then transported." The poorhouses took every opportunity to empty their wards of, not only children, but adults as well in this way. Later reports in America (Bremner, 1956) tell of boat loads of these immigrants arriving in the colonies, many still clad in their asylum uniforms, where they immediately became a great part of the poor, destitute, and unwanted population of the new colonies.

The London Foundling Hospital

The year 1741 marked the beginning of a great turning point in the story of child welfare in England. The London Foundling Hospital (later named the Foundling Hospital of England) was founded in that year and, although smaller asylums were operating throughout Europe, this hospital marked the first truly successful attempt to deal with dependent children on a large scale. Prior to this asylum, smaller religious infant asylums operated on an intermittent basis in most of England, and
their mortality rates were similar to those of the workhouses. Kessen (1965, pp. 8-9) reveals that during the first quarter of the eighteenth century over 10,000 infants were admitted to the various asylums, but only 45 survived.

The London Foundling Hospital survived with encouraging results for several important reasons. Its founder, Thomas Coram, was a physician of the noble class. He began to appeal to the nobility and the wealthy classes of London for support; it quickly became the fad of the English nobility to see who could outdo the other in contributions. Coram also recruited various noted artists and musicians to give benefit performances. One public notice (reported in Caulfield, 1930b, pp. 666-667) stated that for Handel's concert "... above 500 coaches" were lined up outside the hall. Coram also recruited William Cadagan, the most famous English physician, to give lectures at the hospital on proper infant and child care. Soon many prominent physicians joined the staff of the foundling hospital, following Cadagan's lead, and the children began to receive better medical care.

Very soon in the history of the hospital, the child mortality rates began to diminish. Caulfield (1930b, p. 668) found that in its first four years over 15,000 children were admitted to the hospital. Children were transported from all over England when news of the asylum's success was spread. Within the next few years Parliament began public support of the hospital and helped to build more throughout the country. The parish workhouses were, later in the eighteenth century, authorized to turn over all their young children to the hospitals.
It should be noted that although the public conscience seemed to be awakened for the first time in history to the adequate care of dependent children, the idea of the child's individual and special nature was still dormant, not to be inspected until the latter part of the next century. Even with the success of the Foundling Hospital, there were many people who took the opportunity to benefit from the lot of the dependent child. The conveyance of children to the infant hospitals became so common that there grew up a notorious trade of people who undertook to transport the children at so many dollars a head. They would go from town to town offering to take the children to the public hospitals. Notices began to appear late in the eighteenth century like the following, from Caulfield (1930b, p. 668):

One man, who had charge of five infants in baskets gathered from the townspeople, happened in his journey to get intoxicated and lay all night asleep on a common; in the morning he found that the children had all frozen to death.

The efforts to care for dependent children sparked by the Foundling Hospital of 1741 continued to increase, and abuses to children very slowly diminished in the next 100 years. It was calculated that the mortality rate in London for children under five years was approximately 66 percent for the years 1730 to 1780. Whereas from 1780 to 1829 Caulfield (1930b, p. 692) says that it was reduced to 38 percent. In the last decade of the eighteenth century various historians and physicians made comments in journals such as the two reported by Kessen (1965, p. 15) as follows:
"... dropping of children is but little known at present as it was in my youth," and, "The accident of the infant being overlaid is now quite uncommon."
CHAPTER 4

THE BEGINNINGS OF CHILD WELFARE IN AMERICA

 Approximately 300 years ago the United States was beginning its history in scattered settlements of Medieval Europeans, chiefly English. There were two primary groups of settlers coming into the New World in the seventeenth century. The first group consisted of religious dissenters such as Quakers, Puritans and Separatists who were seeking freer lifestyles in a land where the powerful Church of England was nonexistent. The second group consisted of large numbers of indentured, dependent people. Zietz (1959, p. 17) states that the principal motive in granting the first charter to settle the New World was to secure resources and products from the fertile land for England. A great amount of human labor was necessary to extract the resources, so England conveniently converted one of her major social problems the large, vagrant poor population, into the source for cheap labor in the new colonies. Boat loads of indentured adults and children, many taken directly from the poorhouses, were shipped across the ocean to arrive along with the religious zealots. The lifestyle that developed, including the care of destitute and dependent children, became a mixture of English traditions plus the newer Puritan philosophies of hard work, rigorous discipline, and Spartan ideals.
Colonial Childhood

Calhoun (1945) in a comprehensive study of the colonial family relates that there are very few references to childhood, per se. Letters and diaries contain little mention of the child except the recording of births, baptisms, and deaths. In colonial America, as in England of the same time period, children were considered to be of importance only as their abilities and interests contributed to the welfare of their elders, and only as they fit into the pattern of adult life. A study of parent-child relationships in colonial America reveals no evidence that children were treated with discrimination or recognition of individual needs, capacities or purposes. These ideas were to be a later outgrowth of the scientific study of the child.

The broad picture of colonial days with regard to child rearing looked something like the following description summarized by Bossard (1940, p. 33). "Parental authority was strict and overwhelming; the law upheld stern parental authority in all instances." (This idea, which continued until the last part of the nineteenth century, was a carry-over of the "patria potestas" belief in which the parent had supreme power over his family.) In some cases of "incorrigible disobedience" death was the penalty meted out to colonial children. The theory of infant damnation was universally accepted, and in this vein, extremely harsh punishment of children was favored so that the "devil might be whipped out of them." In many of the famous sermons of noteworthy Puritan preachers of the seventeenth century children were likened
to vipers and alligators whose unruly instincts had to be tamed. Only strict discipline and religious piety could remedy their evil natures.

**Early Provisions for Waifs and Strays**

Some kind of public provision for dependent children had to be made by the earliest colonists. Besides the orphans indentured from England, many children in the colonies were left without support due to sickness, death, Indian massacres, and other misfortunes of the elders. The provisions instituted for these children early in the seventeenth century followed, basically, those principles of relief formulated in Elizabethan England. The two primary methods of care were the poorhouse and indenture. The poorhouse theory, basic in all Elizabethan poor relief legislation, held responsibility for the dependent to be with the local community. Public tax funds were to pay for this responsibility, and the poorhouse was always the primary recipient. The English practices of apprenticeship, indenture, or binding-out of children became common in America in the seventeenth century and continued until the end of the nineteenth century when it was abolished. Although a few authors (for example, Zietz, 1959, p. 21) state that outdoor relief, or relief given to poor children in their own homes, was a third method of care, it was infrequently used and the least favorable method because it was the most expensive form of aid.

One basic philosophy more distinct in America than in England, permeated all forms of dependent child care in the colonies and continued up to the opening of the twentieth century. That philosophy equated idleness with sin, even the idleness that modern man calls
play for children. This "Puritan work ethic" was, fundamentally, a response to a condition of harsh existence and the struggle for life in the new land; the rigors of making a living made impossible the prolongation of infancy that we enjoy today. The southern colonies, though not so steeped in the New England Puritanism, regarded child labor equally as important since the large agricultural domains required it. This work ethic, however, was quickly translated into a religious ideal and gained great strength as a noble philosophy. As a striking example of this ideal, when Boston built her first poorhouse in 1682 it was written in the dedication (recorded in Calhoun, 1917, p. 126) that the house was built to employ children who "shamefully spend their time in the streets." One southern orphan asylum justified binding-out all the children to a plantation owner by saying, "... little children here by setting of corne may earn much more than their own maintenance." There was also a blatant tendency in the colonies to relate poverty to the integrity, morality, and laziness of the individual. The responsibility for poverty and dependence was, therefore, affixed to the individual and seemed for many years to eliminate the need to examine societal influences.

The first public orphanage was erected in 1654 in New York when Amsterdam sent over a ship load of orphans to help in the agricultural process. (New York was a colonial property of Amsterdam at that time.) Records of this orphanage have been lost, but it is thought to have continued for about ten years until poorhouses began to honeycomb the colonies, replacing it. The first poorhouse was built in New York in
1657, and thereafter all forms of dependent people were massed together in them (Zietz, 1959, p. 17). The poorhouses were supposedly the most economic way of supporting the dependent children, since they eliminated the need for a separate institution. Poorhouses in America generally maintained a section of ground which the inmates tilled for their food, but some houses simply bound-out the people to wealthy farmers. Oftentimes an auction was held outside of the poorhouse and an individual, a family, or a whole group of people would be sold to the highest bidder to be servants and slaves.

There are more references in the colonial literature to indentured children than children committed to the poorhouses to live. Kelso (1922, p. 165) reprints the notice of the first child to be indentured by public authority. The child's name was Benjamin Eaton, an orphan, living in Massachusetts. He was indentured in 1636 by the Governor of Plymouth Colony to "Bridget Fuller, widow, for 14 years, shee being to keep him at schoole two years and to employ him after in such service as shee saw good and he should be fitt for; but not to turn him over to any other without ye Gov'n consente." In 1642 it was decreed in several colonies that all "unruly poor" children were to be bound-out for service, whether they had homes or not. In communities too far from a poorhouse to transport people, the constable or chief official held a "public bidding" where the poor people were auctioned off, or where sometimes a debtor sold his children. Abbott (1938, p. 4) relates one such instance of a woman selling the last of her several children to pay her deceased husband's debts: "Jane Whool's boy set up
at vendue to the lowest bidder till he is 21 years old and bid down to nothing and then bid up to one dollar and a half and struck off to Elisha James."

It is not known what proportion of the dependent children spent their lives in the poorhouses as opposed to those indentured directly, but either way children were probably very much overworked in these early days before the factory system. Their condition in domestic industries and on isolated farms was notably less conspicuous in these colonial days than later when children came to be massed together in great factories.

There are literally no references to child abandonment in the colonies (perhaps because there was always work for everyone in the early years) as was so ruthlessly practiced in England; but several authors, such as Abbott (1938), refer to the great numbers of handicapped children in the poorhouses -- particularly blind, deaf, and deformed children -- and speculate that many parents must have seen no other way to cope with the problem. Most illegitimate children were either put to work by their mothers, who most often kept them, or sold as servants to the wealthier families. The fear of public disapproval in the colonies, which included not only censure, but whippings and fines, probably tended to keep the level of illegitimate births low, although public records of such births are not available.
Thurston (1930, p. 17) reports that by the middle of the eighteenth century in America every state had a poorhouse and all states utilized the indenture method of dependent child care as well. Only four private orphanages were operating in 1750 — the Ursuline Convent in New Orleans which was a refuge for many orphans after the Indian massacre of 1729, the Bethesda Orphan Home in Savannah, the Municipal Orphanage in Charleston, and St. Joseph's Orphanage in Philadelphia. All these orphanages were small and operated on philanthropic support only. The numbers of children they cared for was minute compared to the vast numbers living in public Almshouses. Abbott (1938, p. 6) states that in 1750 there were 1,054 children living in the Almshouse on Randall's Island, New York, along with many other aged, sick, and insane people. This condition was typical in most states well into the nineteenth century.

The great turmoil of the factory revolution late in the eighteenth century in the United States finally brought the plight of the dependent child to the public's attention as stories of brutal treatment and long, toiling hours in the mills and factories began to be published in magazines and journals (see for example, Harpers New Monthly Magazine, 1873; Littell's Living Age, 1874; The Month, 1881). Children of the poor and the children living in the poorhouses fared worse than all the others, for there were no laws to protect them from either the overseers of the poorhouses or the industry owners.
Public revulsion against inhumane child labor began to spur protests against the mixed Almshouses and the practice of binding-out whole groups of children to a factory. Beginning with the first decade of the nineteenth century potent criticism stimulated some local groups of citizens in different states to investigate the conditions in the poorhouses. Thurston (1930, pp. 27-29) reprints one section of a report made by a select philanthropic committee of New York in 1816 whose members spent five months visiting "poorhouses, workhouses, hospitals, jails, orphan and lunatic asylums, and other charitable and reformatory institutions." The committee noted that one fourth of all people in these institutions were children under 14 years of age, and that "common domestic animals are more humanely provided for." The committee further reported that mortality rates in the institutions due to disease and unhealthy conditions were fantastically high. Some of the epidemics were said to have wiped out entire institution populations.

Just as public criticism began to reach an instrumental level of change, a severe setback to any child-saving impetus came in 1823. New York, the largest and most influential state in America, appointed one man, J. V. N. Yates, then Secretary of State, to collect information throughout the state regarding the operation and expenses of the laws for relief of the destitute, including dependent children. His report, presented later that year to the Senate, stressed that he found poorhouse care to be the most economical method of dependent care, and he suggested that a review of his detailed report be sent to other state
legislatures. Yates did suggest that all children in poorhouses be
given some education and instructed in a trade, later to be apprenticed
into an occupation. No mention whatsoever was made of the harm children
suffered from the conditions of treatment, the poor nutrition of the
food available, the lack of adequate caretakers, etc. Economics was
still considered to be the most important factor in dealing with the
dependent element of the population, and children did not represent any
special category of dependents. For the next four decades Almshouse
care continued as the primary method of relief and, although factory
overseers were appointed to inspect the mills and report to the state
governments on the treatment of workers, children in the poorhouses
fared little better than in preceding centuries.

The Child-Saving Movement Begins

With the rapid industrialization and urbanization of the United
States in the nineteenth century, the problem of dependent children
took on new aspects and dimensions. The plight of the children was
most urgent in the larger cities as slums, poverty, and disease
increased the numbers of homeless children wandering the streets, toil­
ing in the factories and mills, or crowding into the poorhouses. New
York State came to the forefront of the picture again -- perhaps
because the problem was most acute there -- and special attention is
given to that story.

A noteworthy publication appeared in New York City in late 1849
when Captain George Matsell, Chief of Police, wrote in his semi-annual
report of the "incredible numbers of vagrant children" roaming the city streets with no one to care for them (Langsam, 1964, pp. 1-2). Matsell called attention to the fact that no organization or individual in the entire city could be called upon to deal with the problem and that, consequently, many of them ended up in the jails and prisons when the poorhouses were full. He emphasized that in 1849 four-fifths of the felony complaints in New York were against minors, and that the city prisons held some 16,000 criminals — one-fourth of them minors, 800 of whom were between nine and fifteen years of age. Matsell's report was printed in the New York papers and shortly afterwards the press and the pulpit of the city began a campaign to erase what they called the "pit of infamy" first publicly recorded by Matsell.

Clergymen responded to the report in 1849 and 1850 with many vigorous sermons to arouse public awareness and with plans to redeem the heathen children. While Matsell urged vocational and educational training as a solution to the problem, clergymen proposed religious training as the best remedy. The wealthier classes in New York, those who possessed property interests in the city saw the immense loss and damage that would occur from such an increasing community of "young thieves," and they suggested factory schools be set up to offer the children work and education as an alternative to begging or stealing. Only a handful of charitable people in the city tried to take orphans into their homes rather than see them on the streets.

The first conscious attempts to redirect this mass of homeless street children came in the form of "boys' meetings," or special Sunday
services held by various clergymen across the city. Langsam (1964, pp. 3-4) reports that in the years 1849 to 1853 preachers could be seen walking the streets early on Sunday morning attempting to entice the children to come and listen to a "purifying" sermon. Although there are reports of many of these meetings instituted, they generally were dismal failures as the children did not respond to the traditional services. Brace (1880, pp. 79-81) records several humorous incidents at boys' meetings, the following taken from a typical conversation at one of the Sunday services he conducted: the preacher would say, "My boys, what is the great end of man? When is he happiest? How would you feel happiest?" and the answer, in chorus was, "When we'd plenty of hard cash, sir!" Or the conversation would be: "My dear boys, when your father and your mother forsake you, who will take you up?" They would answer, "The Purlice, sir, the Purlice!"

Charles Brace and the Children's Aid Society

In a series of articles in the New York Daily Times in late 1853 a Protestant minister named Charles Loring Brace publicized the growing realization among city missionaries that not only were boys' meetings failing, but the numbers of dependent children were growing. Brace urged the formation of an organization specifically designed to aid the homeless children of the city. Religious and humanitarian interests banded together, finally, and in 1856 they incorporated the Children's Aid Society of New York. C. L. Brace was elected as the first president. In a poignant article written by Brace in 1856 (recorded in
Brace, 1880, p. 88) a description of the life of the homeless street child can be seen. Crowds of wandering children immediately made their way to the office of the new society:

Ragged young girls who had no place to lay their heads; children driven from drunkards' homes; orphans who slept where they could find a box or a stairway - freezing in the winter; boys cast out by stepmothers or stepfathers; newsboys whose incessant answer to our question, 'where do you live?' rang in our ears, 'Don't live nowhere;' little bootblacks, young peddlers and rag-pickers, child beggars, and flower sellers all came.

The first thing the society did in 1856 was to buy and equip a "Lodging House" where the children from the streets were offered a bed and a meal paid for by charitable contributions. Many of these Lodging Houses sprang up in New York between 1856 and 1870. The first house bought, called the Newsboys' Lodging House, was reported to have lodged over 91,000 children by 1871. Gradually types of training facilities were incorporated into the Lodging Houses. Some kindly person would donate several sewing machines to a house, and with the aid of a few charitable women a sewing school would be established. Or a craftsman would donate some of his time in teaching the boys of another house a trade. These early efforts at removing the dependent children from the city streets rested on three basic ideas formulated much earlier: (1) the idea of self-help, (2) the gospel of work, and (3) the panacea of education. But Charles Brace went a step further in suggesting one more principle of care, and that concerned family life. Brace wrote in 1856 that:

The demand for labor is unquenchable in the West, land is plentiful as well as fresh air... The cultivators of the
soil are in America our most solid and intelligent class and they like to educate their own help. There is no drain on the food supply and the feeding of a boy or girl is not considered at all (Brace, 1880, p. 225).

Late in 1854 Brace sent out his first circulars through city weeklies and rural papers in the county districts of the West. He reported that literally hundreds of applications poured in at once, requesting a boy or a girl to help on the farm, to be a domestic servant, or to replace a dead son or daughter. The society formed little companies of "emigrants" and, after cleaning and clothing them, put them under an agent of the society who accompanied the bunch of dependent children by train to a village where there was an interest in them. The first party left New York in the fall of 1854 headed for Michigan. One account of the arrival of the company of children by the agent of the society accompanying them is printed in Brace's book, The Dangerous Classes of New York and Twenty Years' Work Among Them (1880, pp. 231-232):

The farming community, having been duly notified, there was usually a dense crowd of people at the station awaiting the arrival of the youthful travellers. The sight of the little company of children of misfortune always touched the hearts of a population naturally generous. They were soon billeted around among the citizens, and the following day a public meeting was called in the church or town hall, and a committee appointed of leading citizens. The agent then addressed the assembly, stating the benevolent objects of the Society and something of the history of the children. The sight of their worn faces was a most pathetic enforcement of his arguments. People who were childless came forward to adopt a child; others who had not intended to take any into their families were induced to apply for them, and many who really wanted the children's labor pressed forward to obtain it.
Citizens were urged to donate money, as well as the people who took a child, though no one was generally refused simply because he could not make a contribution at that time. The town committee decided on the applications, usually after hours of discussion and selection, and then necessary papers were drawn up.

At first there was a great deal of criticism about Brace's "placing-out" system. One group claimed that the children were sold as slaves, and indeed this system had much in common with the older form of indenture. The idea of labor service in return for room and board was the essence of both. The important difference, however, lay in the legal guardianship of the child. Under Brace's system the Society, after inspecting the child's background as completely as possible, retained legal guardianship and did not surrender it to the employer unless he wanted to legally adopt the child. Within a few months after placement, an agent of the Society visited each child and decided whether the child should stay where he was or be moved to another home. If either party, the child or the employer, was dissatisfied, the child was removed from the family and re-placed. The Society also kept records on the children and annual inspection reports were placed in each file. Gradually the agents developed more accurate methods of investigating the child's background and the new family situation to make sure that the child was legally adoptable and that the family was not mistreating the child.

From the very first, an asylum interest criticized the placing-out of children on the grounds of expense. But Brace staunchly defended
his system and showed that the total cost in 1856 of placing-out a child was about $15, while the cost of maintaining a child in an asylum for a year was much more.

The system quickly gained acceptability among the people and the government of New York State, and the Society began to receive public assistance in 1862. By 1880 there were over 24,000 children settled in the West with but few incidents of bad rapor or harsh treatment (Langsam, 1964, p. 35). To be sure, there must have been many bad experiences as well as good ones among the children, but the overall success of the system was tremendous. This represented the first wide-scale, successful attempt at caring for the dependent children of New York.

Related Developments

Other states quickly followed the lead of New York and instituted similar societies and methods. In 1863 Massachusetts established a State Board of Charities which helped to establish separate institutions for children, and it also began annual reporting procedures on the condition of the many children previously indentured by the Almshouses. In 1865 the Board in Massachusetts issued a noteworthy statement regarding indentured children. "If the state takes the place of a parent or guardian, is it not her duty to follow up that parental relation and see that the compact is faithfully adhered to, and that no harm befall the party dependent on the state" (Thurston, 1930, pp. 161-163). This same charity board also recommended in 1865 that a payment
to foster parents be instituted to secure better homes and better
treatment for destitute children. A small sum paid for the boarding
of a child for a time, the Board of Charities stated, would cost the
State less than his support in the institution and would secure better,
more individual treatment in a family.

The Boston Children's Aid Society, founded in 1863, was begun
primarily to remove the dependent children who had been put in jail but
who had no one to help them get out. Thurston (1930, p. 173) states
that in 1866 the Boston Society placed an agent at all sessions of the
Police Court and began taking children under 15 years of age on pro­
bation instead of seeing them put in jail. The Society then tried to
find foster homes for the children. Thus began the awareness of the
need for separate juvenile courts and juvenile probation. Children
were gradually becoming thought of as a class of dependents with needs
somewhat different from the needs of others.

By 1875 a Congress of State Boards of Charities was held and
at that meeting it was resolved to help bring about legislation in each
state to remove all dependent children from the poorhouses, almshouses,
jails, and from all association with adult paupers and criminals, and
to place them in families, orphanages, reformatories, etc. This legis­
lation was generally adopted in most states between 1875 and 1900.

Whereas in 1800 there had been founded in America seven separate
institutions for the care of different classes of dependent children,
by 1895 there were over 1558 such institutions, many specifically
built for children with physical and mental handicaps who could not be placed easily into families.

It was also during the last few decades of the nineteenth century that efforts to bring about legislation to protect children from cruel and inhumane parents or guardians were instituted, and this movement is believed to have been a direct result of success of the Children's Aid Societies. In 1874 the first child abuse case was tried in court in New York City. This case was a landmark in child welfare, for it formally put forth the idea that the State is the protector of all children, even children living in families. The ancient doctrine of "patria potestas" was finally broken when the court ruled that the parent, in cases of child neglect, abuse, or abandonment, has no power over the child. A spectator at the court the day of the first child abuse case described the episode later in a magazine article (in Coleman, 1924, p. 74):

I was in a courtroom full of men with pale, stern looks. I saw a child brought in carried in a horse blanket, at the sight of which men wept aloud. I saw it laid at the feet of the judge who turned his face away, and in the stillness of that courtroom I heard a voice raised claiming for that child the protection that men had denied it, in the name of the homeless cur on the streets. And I heard the story of little Mary Ellen told again, that stirred the soul of a city and roused the conscience of a world that had forgotten... The police told her (the woman who found Mary Ellen) to prove crime or they would not move; the Societies said, 'Bring the child to us legally and we will see; till then we can do nothing;' the charitable said, 'It is dangerous to interfere between parent and child; better let it alone;' and the judges said it was even so. Finally her woman's heart rebelled against it all and she sought the friend of the dumb brutes, who made a way.
"The child is an animal," the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) told her. "If there is no justice for it as a human being, it shall at least have the rights of the cur in the street. It shall not be abused."

So under warrant of that made for an animal came forth the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (SPCC), the first of its kind in the world.

**Summary of Nineteenth Century Developments**

The nineteenth century has been called the "age of the child," for the last 50 years of that century witnessed movement after movement designed to make dependent child life happier and more profitable. Bossard (1940, p. 37) gives a brief summary of the most important actions taken on behalf of dependent children those 50 years:

1. The establishment and maintenance of separate facilities for the care of specific groups of handicapped children, such as institutions for the blind, deaf, retarded, etc.

2. The placing-out and boarding-out of dependent and neglected children under supervision, replacing the indenture method.

3. The beginnings of separate parts of our present juvenile court system, like juvenile probation.

4. The establishment of societies for the prevention of cruelty and neglect of children.

5. The beginnings of compulsory school attendance.

6. The beginnings of adequate child labor legislation.

The climax of this stage in the history of the child-saving movement came in 1907 when President Theodore Roosevelt called together
the first White House Conference on Children and Youth. It was there that family home care was formally pronounced to be better than institutional care and that all efforts would thenceforth be directed to removing children from institutions and securing stable family environments for them.

The child-saving movement of the nineteenth century became the child welfare movement of the twentieth century; from a concern with a few groups of dependent children, it has come to have as its objective the well being of all children.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION: THE ESSENCE OF CHANGE

The whole life of the modern child, whether viewed by individual parents or by society, today represents the opposite pole of the conceptions held 2,000 or even 200 years ago. The guarding of a child's special personality is the child's newly won right, and the dangers which threaten it are recognized social problems. The essence of the change in the status of the child is a change principally in the minds of his elders. Perhaps the outstanding fundamental development in the social thought of the nineteenth century was the carry-over of the application of the scientific method of thought to problems of human well-being and of human relationships. Inspired by the achievements in the reconstruction of the material environment, contemporary man began to contemplate with a growing impatience the continuance of social miseries.

The history of science is the story of its progressive application to an ever widening range of phenomena. First applied to the material objects of the non-living world, it gradually came to be applied and accepted in other areas until in the late nineteenth century it came finally to be applied to human life. Social studies emerged as a legitimate, testable field in the esteemed scientific discipline.
One very definite way in which the application of the scientific method to social phenomena and social problems has affected the status of the child has been through its emphasis on the genetic viewpoint. This view stresses that if we want to understand anything we must look to its origin and development. This viewpoint has had revolutionary significance for childhood in that childhood is now seen as the period of origins, and any changes in later life must be instituted in childhood.

A second way in which the application of the scientific method to social phenomena has affected child study is through its emphasis on causation. While our earlier ancestors viewed childhood as a negative period of life, today man views childhood as a foundation period of crucial importance during which the nature of the future is determined.

The movement for social betterment in general is, of course, a very old one. Throughout the centuries it was spurred on by religious zeal and directed by good intentions. More recently, however, this movement has been transformed. It has ceased to be a sentimental exercise practiced by a few, with little hope of success; it has become a serious, organized, nation-wide movement. This social betterment movement has increasingly emphasized the child as the starting point in human welfare. Child welfare is now the legitimate and ultimate end of social welfare.
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