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SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF THE FAMILY

BY

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TO
CATHERINE, ERNESTINE, RUTH ELVA AND LOIS GROVES
COMRADES IN FAMILY FELLOWSHIP
AND
GLADYS HOAGLAND GROVES
THEIR UNDERSTANDING MOTHER

PREFACE

THIS book, written as a text for use in normal school and college classes, emphasizes, as its title suggests, the social function of the family. In spite of rapid and radical changes in its inner life, the family still remains the most significant of all our social institutions, for notwithstanding the ever-increasing competition from other social organizations, it continues to have the first and therefore the greatest opportunity to influence the character of children. It also provides for its adult members the most intimate form of association.

Sentiment naturally leads us to cling to conceptions of family life that are in harmony with the experiences of our own childhood, and in this way tempts us in thinking of the family to regard it as a static institution that exists by itself little influenced by the social conditions that are outside it. Actual facts show us, however, that the family is never sufficient unto itself, but rather at all times and in all places is in close contact with the general every-day life of people, influencing the motives and behavior of individuals and in like manner being itself influenced as an institution by the social experiences of its members.

A dynamic portrayal of family life which assumes that the family is always in process of adjustment in its attempt to minister to the needs of both the individual and the group in their practical life is the only treatment of the family that is in harmony with the thought of modern life. This book considers the family as a human relationship ever in such processes of adjustment, sensitive to the total social situation, and never a standardized and completed form of human activity. The faults and failures of the family therefore reveal the difficulties of an intimate group-life that cannot be more successful in its social activities than the individuals who comprise it. Thus the family and outside social conditions are in constant reciprocal relationship, and the two portions of social experience are so intertwined that neither can be understood by itself.

It is natural that tradition and prejudice should show them-

selves in discussions of family problems, since our personal attitudes toward the family are so tied up with our childhood experiences, our teaching and our affections. A scientific study of the family is not an ignoring of the values and ideals attached to the home, but an effort to put aside all subjective attitudes in order to understand the family as it actually is.

As the references and citations show, the literature on the family is extensive. There is, however, much less than one would wish that is scientific in attitude, and recent. The intimacies and reticence of family life create difficulty in its investigation and hamper scientific analysis. This explains in part why literature has attempted to interpret modern family life more often than has science.

I acknowledge my indebtedness to other students of marriage and family life, especially to those referred to in the text. I desire particularly to express my appreciation for the suggestions and stimulus given me in the writing of this book by Professor Benjamin R. Andrews of Teachers College, the editor of Lippincott's Family Life Series. Again I am indebted to my wife, Gladys Hoagland Groves, for her assistance in the preparation of my manuscript.

E. R. G.

January, 1927.

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