

# THE FAMILY AND SOCIAL CHANGE<sup>\*</sup>

Professor William G. Sumner

Yale University

We currently speak of the "institution" of marriage. We also use marriage instead of wedding, nuptials, or matrimony. The result is confusion. A wedding or even nuptials occur as a ceremony or festival, on a day, and as the commencement of wedlock or matrimony. Wedlock may be an institution, but a wedding is not. A wedding lacks the duration or recurrence which belongs to an institution. It does not provide for an enduring necessity. It has no apparatus for the repeated use of the same couple. Wedlock is a permanent relation between a man and a woman which is regulated and defined by the mores. It brings the pair into co-operation for the struggle for existence and the procreation and nurture of children. Wedlock therefore forms a family, and a family seems to satisfy our idea of an institution far better than marriage or matrimony. The family institution existed probably before marriage. A woman with an infant in her arms is what we see as far back as our investigations lead us. She was limited and burdened in the struggle for existence by her infant. The task of finding subsistence was as hard for her as for a man. The infant was another claimant of her time and labor. Her chance of survival was in union and co-operation with a man. Undoubtedly this gives us the real explanation of the primitive inferiority of woman. They needed the help of men more than men needed women and if a union was made it was made on terms of which the woman got the disadvantage. It certainly is a great mistake to believe that the women were put down because the men were physically stronger. In the first place the men are not always stronger; perhaps it is, as a rule, the other way.

Mr. H. H. Johnstone says of the Andombies on the Congo that the women, though working very hard as laborers in general, lead a very happy existence; they are often stronger than the men and more finely developed some of them having splendid figures. Parke, speaking of the Manyema of the Arruwimi in the same region, says that they are fine animals, and the women very handsome. They are as strong as the men. In North America an Indian chief once said to Hearne, "Women were made for labor; one of them can carry, or haul, as much as two men can do." Schellong says of the Papuans in the German protectorate of New Guinea that the women are more strongly built than the men.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>\*</sup> Address of the president of the American Sociological Society at its third annual meeting in Atlantic City, N. J., December 28–30, 1908.

<sup>1</sup> H. Ellis, *Man and Woman*, p. 4.

Kubary<sup>2</sup> says that a man has the right to beat his wife but the women are so robust that a man who tries to do it may well find that he will get the worst of it. Fights between men and women are not rare in savage life and the women prevail in a fair share of them. Holm mentions a case where a Greenland Eskimo tried to flog his wife but she flogged him.<sup>3</sup> We hear of a custom in South Eastern Australia that fights between the sexes were provoked when

there were young women who were marriageable but were not mated, and when the eligible bachelors were backward. The men would kill a totem animal of the women or the women would kill a totem animal of the men. This led to a fight of the young men and young women. Then, after the wounds healed they would pair off and the social deadlock would pass away.<sup>4</sup>

Another case, from higher civilization, shows how the woman was weakened by considerations of another kind. Sieroshevski, a Pole, who lived for twelve years among the Yakuts, says that he knew a Yakut woman who was constantly abused by her husband although she was industrious and good-natured. At last the European asked her why she did not fight. He assured her that she would succeed and he argued with her that if she would once give her husband a good beating he would not misuse her any more. She, however, answered that that would never do. Her husband's companions would deride him as the man whose wife beat him and their children would be derided by the other children for the same reason. She would not do anything which would produce that consequence and would make her worse off. This case has many parallels. A characteristic incident occurred at the Black Mountain station on the Snowy River about the years 1855—56.

A number of Theddora (Ya-itma-thang) blacks had come across from Onleo and there met a woman, known to me as Old Jenny, of their tribe, who had broken their law by becoming the wife of a man to whom she stood in the tribal relationship of Najan (mother). She had been away for some years, and this was the first time that her kindred had encountered her. The wife of one of them attacked her first with a digging-stick, but she defended herself so well with the same weapon that the woman had to desist, and her husband continued the attack on Old Jenny, who had divested herself of all but one small garment. He commenced with a club, but finding he could not hit her, changed it for a curved club with which he tried to "peck" her on the head over guard. After a time he also had to give it up, and they had to make friends with the invincible woman. This is an instance of the manner in which the women are able to defend themselves with their weapon, the "yam-stick," being no mean opponents of a man armed only with a club.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Nukuoro, p. 35.

<sup>3</sup> *Angmagslikerne*, p. 55.

<sup>4</sup> Howitt, *South Eastern Australia*, p. 149.

<sup>5</sup> Howitt, p. 197.

The status of women was generally sad and pathetic in savage life but we may accept it as an established fact that that was not because she was physically inferior to man but that it was due to inferiority in the struggle for existence on account of maternity. In the family the man often tyrannized over the woman, and the woman came into the family unwillingly, driven by a greater necessity, but the family was not a product of force. It was a product of contract. It was controlled by the mores which soon established notions of the right way to behave and of rights and duties which would be conducive to prosperity and happiness.

In this primitive society the family became the arena in which folkways were formed and taught, traditions were handed down, myths were invented, and sympathies were cultivated. The mother and the children were in the closest association and intimacy. The instruction of example was the chief instruction, without spoken command or explanation. It makes little difference whether we think of a family in a horde or of a monandrous family of Australians or Bushmen. The children learned from their mothers the usages which were domestic and familiar, which underlie society and are moral in their character. At puberty the boys went with their fathers into the political body and became warriors and hunters. Then they were disciplined into the life of men and left the family. They got wives and founded families, but the father, in his own family, was an outsider and a stranger with few functions and little authority. Mohammed gave approval to the father-family which seems to have been winning acceptance in his time. Islam is founded on the father-family. In the Koran women are divided into three classes in respect to marriage: First, wives, that is, status-wives with all the rank, honor, and rights which the name implies; second, concubines, that is, wives of an inferior class, in a permanent and recognized relation but without the rank and honor of wives; thirdly, slaves, whose greatest chance of happiness was to "find favor" in the eyes of their master or owner. This classification of the wives was also a classification of the mothers and it produced jealousy and strife of the children. Only men of rank and wealth could have households of this complex character. Those of limited means had to choose which form of wife they would take. The full status-wife could make such demands that she became a great burden to her husband and it appears that the Moslems now prefer concubines or slaves. In Mohammedan royal families the jealousies and strifes of children, where the son of a slave might be preferred and made heir by the father, have reduced kingdoms and families to bloodshed and anarchy.

In general, in the mother-family, the family must have lacked integration and discipline. The Six Nations or Iroquois had the mother-family in well-developed form. Each woman with her husband and children had a room about 7 feet square in the "long house." This room was separated from others inhabited by similar families, not by a partition but only by a pole three or four feet from the floor over which skins were hung. Each family shared fire with another family opposite. Evidently privacy was only imperfectly secured. Any man who did not bring in what was considered his fair share of food-supply could be expelled at any time. A husband had to satisfy not only his wife but all her female relatives if he was to be in peace and comfort. He

could withdraw when he chose but he must leave his children which belonged to his wife. He must also keep the peace with all the other husbands in the house while it is easy to see that frequent occasions of quarrel would occur. In short, the man had constant and important reasons to be dissatisfied with the mother-family. He always had one alternative; he could capture a woman outside the group. If he did this he distinguished himself by military prowess and the woman was a trophy. He was not limited in his control of her or their children by any customs or traditions and he could arrange his life as he pleased. We should expect that great numbers of men would try this alternative but it does not appear that many did so. If they had done so they would have speedily introduced man-descent and the father-family. As we well know uncivilized men do not freely reflect on their experience or discuss reforms or speculate on progress. They accept custom and tradition and make the best of it as they find it. The change to the man-family was brought about by some great change in the conditions of the struggle for existence or by the invention of a new tool or weapon used by the men or by war with powerful neighbors. This much, however, can be said with confidence about the family under woman-descent: It was the conservative institution of that form of society in which traditions were cherished and education was accomplished. It did not encourage change or cherish reforms. It preserved what had been inherited and protected what existed.

Probably the change from mother-family to father-family was by far the greatest and most important revolution in the history of civilization. This was so because the family, especially in primitive society, is such a fundamental institution that it forces all other societal details into conformity with itself. Miss Kingsley, speaking of the negroes of West Africa, describes societal details as follows:

The really responsible male relative is the mother's older brother. From him must leave to marry be obtained for either girl or boy; to him and the mother must the present be taken which is exacted on the marriage of a girl, and should the mother die, on him and not on the father, lies the responsibility of rearing the children. They go to his house and he treats and regards them as nearer and dearer to himself than his own children, and at his death, after his own brothers by the same mother, they become his heirs.<sup>6</sup>

These details are all consistent with the mother-family and perfectly logical deductions from its principles. There never was any such thing as woman-rule if by that it should be understood that women administered and conducted in detail the affairs of house or society, directing the men what they should do or not do, but the women of the Iroquois regulated the house life, they owned the land, in the only sense in which Indians could conceive of land-owning, because they tilled it, they established the reputation of warriors and so determined who should be elected war chief in any new war, and they decided the treatment of captives. Women, however, never made a state, and war, so long as the woman-family existed, was always

---

<sup>6</sup> *Travels in West Africa*, p. 224.

limited and imperfect. It was never decided whether a man must fight with his wife's people or go back to the clan in which he was born and fight with that. War was oftenest about women, or about blood-revenge. It was, as among our Indians, a raid and not a persistent campaign. It was mean, cowardly, savage, and marked by base bloodshed.

Much of this seems strange and inverted to us, because our society has long been on the father-family. The state has long been the institution, or set of institutions, on which we rely for our most important interests and our notions of kinship, of rights, of moral right or wrong, and our ways of property, inheritance, trade, and intercourse have all been created by or adjusted to the system of man-descent. We can see what a great revolution had to be accomplished to go over from woman-descent to man-descent. Christian missionaries now often find themselves entangled in this transition. In West Africa the native tie between mother and children is far closer than that between father and children. The negro women do not like the change which white culture would bring about. In native law husband and wife have separate property. If white man's law was introduced, the woman would lose her property and would not get her husband's. The man also objects to giving his wife any claim on his property. At the same time he does not want the children saddled on him. It seems to him utter absurdity that it should be his duty to care more for his wife than for his mother and sister.<sup>7</sup> At every point, in going over to the father-family, there is a transfer of rights and power and a readjustment of social theory.

In the long history of the man-family men have not been able to decide what they ought to think about women. It has been maintained that woman is man's greatest blessing and again that she is a curse. Also the two judgments have been united by saying that she is a cheat and a delusion. She looks like a blessing while she is a curse. Each of those exaggerated views supported the other. Every blessing may appear doubtful, under circumstances; every curse will sometimes appear to be a blessing. What was most important about both these views was that man was regarded as independent and complete in the first place and the woman was brought to him as a helpmeet or assistant; at least as an inferior whose status and destiny came from her position as an adjunct. That was the position of woman in the man-family. We have abandoned part of the harshness of this construction of the status of woman and all the unkind deductions from it. The moral inferences, however, remain, and we regard them as self-evident and eternal. Loyalty to her husband is the highest virtue of a woman and devotion to her family and sacrifice for it are the field of heroism for her. We speak of the Christian family as the highest form of the family and, in our literature and our current code the Christian family is considered as furnishing women with their grand arena for self-culture and social work. I cannot find that Christianity has done anything to shape the father-family. The Old Testament tells us hardly anything about the Jewish family. In Proverbs we find some weighty statements of general truths, universally accepted, and some ideal descriptions of a good wife. The words of Lemuel in chap. 31 are the only didactic treatment of the good wife in the

---

<sup>7</sup> Kingsley, *West African Studies*, p. 377.

Old Testament. She is described as a good housekeeper, a good cook, and a diligent needlewoman. Such was the ideal Jewish woman. In the New Testament there is no doctrine of marriage, no description of the proper family, and no exposition of domestic virtues. Down to the time of Christ it appears that each man was free to arrange his family as he saw fit. The rich and great had more than one wife or they had concubines. The Talmud allowed each man four wives but not more. In fact at the birth of Christ among Jews, Greeks, and Romans, all except the rich and great had one wife each, on account of the trouble and expense of having more. Yet, if circumstances, such as childlessness, seemed to make it expedient, anyone might take a second wife. Therefore it became a fact of the mores of all but the rich and great that all practiced pair-marriage and were educated in it.

Christianity took root in the lowest free classes. It got the *mores* from them and in later centuries gave those mores authority and extension. This is the origin and historical source of the Christian family. The Pharisees are credited with introducing common-sense into domestic relations. They made the Sabbath an occasion of "domestic joy," bringing into increasing recognition the importance and dignity of woman as the builder and guardian of the home. They also set aside the seclusion of women at child-birth, in spite of the law.<sup>8</sup> A leader of the Pharisees introduced the *Ketubah*, or marriage document, "to protect the wife against the caprice of the husband." The Shammaites would not allow a wife to be divorced except on suspicion of adultery, but the Hillehites allowed more easy divorce for the "welfare and peace of the home."<sup>9</sup> The ancient Romans practiced pure monogamy but after they developed a rich leisure class, in the second century B.C., they practiced luxurious polygamy. The traditions which came down into the Christian church were confused and inconsistent and various elements have from time to time got the upper hand in the history of the last 1,900 years. Gide says:

In a word, the law of the gospel accomplished a radical revolution in the constitution of the family. It broke domestic tyranny and recomposed the unity of the family by uniting all its members under mutual duties. It elevated and ennobled marriage by giving it a heavenly origin, and it made of marriage a union so intimate and so holy that God alone can break it.<sup>10</sup>

This is a good literary statement of what is generally taught and popularly believed, but it is impossible to verify it. We cannot tell what was the origin of our modern pair-marriage, but it grew up in the mores of the humble classes in which Christianity found root. In the first centuries of the Christian era the leading classes at Rome went through rapid corruption and decay, but the laboring classes had little share in this life. Christian converts could easily hold aloof from it. During the first four centuries Christians believed that the world was about to perish. Evidently this belief affected the whole philosophy of life. Marriage lost sense and the procreation of children lost

---

<sup>8</sup> Lev. 12:4-7; 15:19-24.

<sup>9</sup> *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. IX, pp. 663 f.

<sup>10</sup> *Condition privé de la femme*, p. 195.

interest. This may be seen in I Cor., chap. 7. It also helps to explain the outburst of asceticism and extravagant behavior such as the renunciation of conjugal intimacy by married people.

Paul also, as is well known, discusses the renunciation of marriage, but he speaks with remarkable restraint, and urges objections. John of Asia Minor appears in tradition as the apostle of virginity, and the glorification of virgins<sup>11</sup> confirms this view of his. But it is something quite different from this when false teachers are said in the Pastoral Epistles to hinder marriage.<sup>12</sup> Procreation as such was considered sin, and the cause of death's domination. Christ came to break away from it<sup>13</sup> Hence, on the other hand, we have the idealizing of Christian motherhood.<sup>14</sup> Woman fell into sin but shall be saved through child-bearing. Sexual impulse is a foul frenzy, something devilish.<sup>15</sup> Stories of the lust of the devil and his companions after beautiful women make up the gnostic romances. The horribleness and insatiableness of the sensual passions are illustrated by all sorts of terrible tales.<sup>16</sup>

It may indeed have happened, as the Acts of Thomas report, that bride and bridegroom from the very marriage-day renounced wedlock, and man and wife separated from one another. In particular, the continually recurring narratives of a converted wife avoiding common life with her unbelieving husband seem to be taken from life. We have the express witness, not only of Christian apologists, but also of the heathen physician Galen, that among the Christians many women and men abstained all their life from the intercourse of sex. It is not possible for us to estimate the actual spread of this kind of absolute renunciation.<sup>17</sup>

On the one hand the women are little thought of. In the Clementine homilies (3:22) it is expressly declared that the nature of woman is much inferior to that of man. Women, except the mother of Clement, play almost no role in this romance.<sup>18</sup>

Professor Donaldson<sup>19</sup> shows the error of supposing that Christianity raised the status of women.

---

<sup>11</sup> Apoc. 14:4.

<sup>12</sup> Saturnil *apud* Iren., I, 24:3; Tatian, *ibid.*, 38, 1: Gospel of the Egyptians.

<sup>13</sup> I Tim. 4:3.

<sup>14</sup> I Tim. 2:15.

<sup>15</sup> Act Joh., 113, p. 213.

<sup>16</sup> Dobschutz, *Christian Life in the Primitive Church*, pp. 261, 262.

<sup>17</sup> Op. Cit.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 263.1

<sup>19</sup> *Contemp. Rev.*, September, 1889.

It is rather a formulation due to dogmatic than historical interests to assert that the worth of women came to recognition first in Christianity and in Christianity from the very beginning.<sup>20</sup>

Renan says that Christianity, in the second century of the Christian era, "gave complete satisfaction to just those needs of imagination and heart which then tormented the populations" around the Mediterranean. It offered a person and an ideal. It made no such demand on credulity as the old mythologies which had now lost their sense. It joined stoicism in hostility to idols and bloody sacrifices and the faith in Jesus superseded ritual. Renan thinks it a wonder that Christianity did not sooner win control, hut at Rome, all the civil maxims were against it.<sup>21</sup> The latest scholars also recognize the strong rivalry between Christianity and Mithraism.

Tertullian (born A. D. 160) was an extremist among Christian ascetics, but he was one of the ablest and most influential men of his time. Addressing women he says:<sup>22</sup>

Woman, thou shouldst always be dressed in mourning and in rags, and shouldst not offer to the eyes anything but a penitent drowned in tears and thus shouldst thou pay ransom for thy fault in bringing the human race to ruin! Woman, thou art the gate by which the demon enters. It was thou who corrupted at him whom Satan did not dare to attack in face [man]. It is on thy account that Jesus Christ died.

It was the doctrine of the church fathers who lived about 400 A. D. that marriage is a consequence of original sin, and that, but for the first sin, God would have provided otherwise for the maintenance of the human species.<sup>23</sup> "Let us cut up by the roots," said Jerome "the sterile tree of marriage. God did indeed allow marriage at the beginning of the world, butt Jesus Christ and Mary have now consecrated virginity." Virginity thus furnished the ideal in the church and not honest wedlock.

Juvenal and Tacitus give us pictures of Roman (heathen) society in the first centuries of the Christian era which would make us doubt if there was any family at all, but some of our later historians have well pointed out that we ought not to take the statements in Juvenal and Tacitus as characteristic of all Roman society.

Let me quote two or three passages from Dill about Roman women of the empire:

Tacitus, here and there, gives glimpses of self-sacrifice, courageous loyalty, and humanity, which save his picture of society from utter gloom. The love and devotion of women shine out more brightly than ever against the background of baseness. Tender women follow their husbands or brothers into exile, or are found ready to share their death.

---

<sup>20</sup> Tscharnak, *Der Dienst der Frau in den ersten Jahrhundersten der christlichen Kirche*, p. 5.

<sup>21</sup> Renan, *Marcus Aurelius*, pp. 582-85.

<sup>22</sup> *De Cultu Feminarum*, i, l.

<sup>23</sup> See Chrysostom, *De Virginitate*, i, 282.



Even the slave girls of Octavia brave torture and death in their hardy defense of her fair fame. There is no more pathetic story of female heroism than that of Politta, the daughter of L. Vetus . . . Vetus himself was of the nobler sort of Roman men, who even then were not extinct. When he was advised, in order to save the remnant of his property for his grandchildren, to make the emperor chief heir, he spurned the servile proposal, divided his ready money among his slaves, and prepared for the end. When all hope was abandoned, father, grandmother, and daughter opened their veins and died together in the bath . . .

The bohemian man of letters (Juvenal) had heard many a scandal about great ladies, some of them true, others distorted and exaggerated by prurient gossip, after passing through a hundred tainted imaginations. In his own modest class, female morality, as we may infer from the Inscriptions and other sources, was probably as high as it ever was, high as the average morality of any age. There were aristocratic families, too, where the women were as pure as Lucretia or Cornelia, or any matron of the olden days. The ideal of purity, both in men and women, in some circles was actually rising. In the families of Seneca, of Tacitus, of Pliny, and of Plutarch, there were not only the most spotless and high-minded women, there were also men with a rare conception of temperance and mutual love, of reverence for a pure wedlock, to which S. Jerome and S. Augustine would have given their benediction. Even Ovid, that "debauchee of the imagination," writes to his wife, from his exile in the Scythian wilds, in the accents of the purest affection . . .

Dion Chrysostom was probably the first of the ancients to raise a clear voice against the traffic in frail beauty which has gone on pitilessly from age to age. Nothing could exceed the vehemence with which he assails an evil which he regards as not only dishonoring to human nature, but charged with the poison of far-spreading corruption. Juvenal's ideal of purity, therefore, is not peculiar to himself. The great world was bad enough; but there was another world beside that whose infamy Juvenal has immortalised . . . .

From the days of Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi, to the days of Placidia, the mother of Honorius, Roman women exercised, from time to time, a powerful, and not always wholesome, influence on public affairs. The politic Augustus discussed high matters of state with Livia. The reign of Claudius was a reign of women and freedmen. Tacitus records, with a certain distaste for the innovation, that Agrippina sat enthroned beside Claudius on a lofty tribunal, to receive the homage of the captive Caractacus. Nero emancipated himself from the grasping ambition of his mother only by a ghastly crime. The influence of Caenis on Vespasian in his later days tarnished his fame. The influence of women in provincial

administration was also becoming a serious force. Thus Juvenal was fighting a lost battle, lost long before he wrote. For good or evil, women in the first and second centuries were making themselves a power.<sup>24</sup>

The Christian emperors made the (lower of the wife not simply the property of the two spouses. It was the endowment of the new household, a sort of reserve fund which the law assures to the children which they would find intact in spite of the ruin of their family, if it should occur. The dower was offset also by the gift *propter nuptias* which the man must give. The law also provided that the (lower and the gift *propter nuptias* should be equal and that the spouses should have the same rights of survivorship.<sup>25</sup> These seem to be distinct improvements on the dotal system, but that system has dropped out of popular use in modern times and the advantage of this legislation has been lost with it.

The family was more affected by the imperial constitutions of the fourth century which enacted the views and teachings of the clergy of that time. Constantine endeavored to put an end to concubinage, and the power of mothers over their children as to property and marriage was made equal to that of fathers.<sup>26</sup> It appears that the collapse of the ancient society and the decay of the old religion with the rise of Christianity and Mithraism with new codes of conduct and duty produced anarchy in the mores which are the every-day guides of men as to what they ought to do. On the one side we find asceticism and extreme rigor and then by the side of it, in the Christian church, extravagant license and grotesque doctrine. What element conquered, and why, it seems impossible to say. The society of western Europe emerged from the period of decay and rejuvenation in the twelfth century with some wild passions and dogmas of commanding force. Over-population produced social pressure and distress with the inevitable tragedy in human affairs. The other world was figured by unrestrained imagination and religion went back to primitive demonism.

Out of this period came the canon law.

Of all civil institutions, marriage is the one which the canon law most carefully regulated, and this is the idea from which all its prescriptions were derived; viz., marriage is a necessary evil which must be tolerated, but the practice of which must be restrained.<sup>27</sup>

The doctrine of this law is that "woman was not made in the image of God. Hence it appears that women are subordinated to men and that the law meant them to be almost servants in the household."<sup>28</sup> From this starting-point the law went on rationally although it contained two inconsistent ideas, the merit of wedlock and the

---

<sup>24</sup> Dill, *Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, pp. 48, 49, 76, 77, 81.

<sup>25</sup> Gide, 215.

<sup>26</sup> Cod. Theod., iv, 6.

<sup>27</sup> Gide, *Condition price de la femme*, p. 202.

<sup>28</sup> Can. 13-19, caus. Xxxiii, qu.5.

merit of celibacy. The product of such inconsistency was necessarily base. Some parts of the literary record which remain to us would lead us to believe that the whole society was brutal and vicious, but when we think of the thousands of families who died without ever making a mark on the record we must believe that domestic virtue and happiness were usual and characteristic of the society. The best proof of this is presented by the efforts at reform throughout the fifteenth century and the vigor of the reformation of the sixteenth century. The hot disputes between Protestants and Catholics turned chiefly on the doctrine of the mass and on sacerdotal claims but they contained also an element of dissatisfaction with inherited *mores* about marriage and the family. The Protestants denounced the abuses which had grown up around the monasteries and the gratuitous misery of celibacy. They, however, lost the old ideas about marriage and divorce and the Catholics denounced them for laxity and vice. At the Council of Trent, in 1563, the Catholics made a new law of marriage, in which they redefined and strengthened the ritual element.

Out of all that strife and turmoil our modern family has come down to us. The churches and denominations are now trying to win something in their rivalry with each other by the position they adopt in regard to marriage and divorce and the family. The family in its best estate, now among us, is a thing which we may contemplate with the greatest satisfaction. When the parents are united by mutual respect and sincere affection and by joint zeal for the welfare of their children the family is a field of peace and affection in which the most valuable virtues take root and grow and character is built on the firmest foundation of habit. The family exists by tradition and old custom faithfully handed down. Our society, however, has never yet settled down to established order and firm tradition since the great convulsion of the sixteenth century. Perhaps the family still shows more fluctuation and uncertainty than any other of our great institutions. Different households now differ greatly in the firmness of parental authority and the inflexibility of filial obedience. Many nowadays have abandoned the old standards of proper authority and due obedience. The family has to a great extent lost its position as a conservative institution and has become a field for social change. This, however, is only a part of the decay of doctrines once thought most sound and the abandonment of standards once thought the definition of good order and stability. The changes in social and political philosophy have lowered the family. The family has not successfully resisted them. Part of the old function of the family seems to have passed to the primary school, but the school has not fully and intelligently taken up the functions thrown upon it. It appears that the family now depends chiefly on the virtue, good sense, conception of duty, and spirit of sacrifice of the parents. They have constantly new problems to meet. They want to do what is right and best. They do not fear change and do not shrink from it. So long as their own character is not corrupted it does not appear that there is any cause for alarm.