

A STUDY OF FAMILY DESERTION

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649396788

A Study of Family Desertion by Earle Edward Eubank

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

EARLE EDWARD EUBANK

**A STUDY OF
FAMILY DESERTION**

A Study of Family Desertion

By

EARLE EDWARD EUBANK, Ph. D.
(University of Chicago)

Published by
THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE
CITY OF CHICAGO
1916.

PREFACE.

The following study of family desertion is considered in no sense a final word upon the subject. It has been rather an attempt to outline some of its more salient features, in a way which will make further study profitable and possible. It is hoped that sufficient interest may be found in it to incite other students to other investigations more far-reaching and searching than this has been.

The generous co-operation of many persons and organizations has made the monograph possible:

The Department of Public Welfare of the City of Chicago has furnished the staff of investigators for the collection of material and financed its publication.

The United Charities of Chicago, and especially the Stock Yards District of that organization, has provided the bulk of the case material upon which the analysis is based. The Juvenile Protective Association has allowed the free use of its unpublished digest of two hundred cases from the Chicago Court of Domestic Relations; and that court itself has opened for study several hundred additional records. The Social Service Registration Bureau has afforded invaluable assistance in clearing particular cases; and the files of numerous other welfare agencies have been opened wide to furnish special data. It is not possible to mention by name all who have assisted, but specific credit is given throughout to whatever sources of information have been drawn upon. Public recognition must be made, however, of the valuable personal assistance rendered at various stages of the work by Mr. Ralph J. Reed, Superintendent of the Stock Yards District of the Chicago United Charities; Mr. Clarence D. Blachly, former Superintendent of the Bureau of Social Surveys of the Chicago Department of Public Welfare; and Miss Valeria D. McDermott of the same bureau. Important information upon the legislative phases of desertion has been supplied by Mr. Wm. H. Baldwin of Washington, D. C. The manuscript has been read by Mr. Eugene T. Lies, General Superintendent of the Chicago United Charities, who has made valuable criticisms and suggestions.

If the chapters to follow prove valuable in any degree, their worth is due largely to the constant, unselfish and discriminating supervision which they have received during their preparation from Dr. Robert E. Park, of the University of Chicago, to whom grateful acknowledgment is made.

Numberless hours of devoted labor have been bestowed upon these pages by my wife. They would not have been possible at all without the quiet inspiration of her presence.

Earle E. Eubank.

*University of Chicago,
June 6, 1916.*

CONTENTS.

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
The Family as a Subject for Scientific Study.....	1
Desertion a Phenomenon common to the Family.....	2
Desertion common to all parts of the world.....	2
Desertion manifested in all periods of history.....	3
Sources of Material.....	5
II. ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM.....	9
Desertion a Problem of the City.....	9
Desertion more frequently Manifested in the Husband.....	14
Desertion not a Racial Phenomenon.....	15
Desertion not a Phenomenon of Religion or Sect.....	17
Desertion as "the Poor Man's Divorce".....	17
Desertion not Primarily due to Economic Conditions.....	20
III. EXTENT OF DESERTION.....	22
Incompleteness of Statistical Data on Desertion	22
Statistics on Desertion.....	22
IV. SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF DESERTION.....	27
Effects upon the Family.....	27
Demoralization of its members.....	28
Relief from the burden of an unhappy family life.....	31
Effects upon Society	32
Financial cost	32
Moral cost	35
V. DESERTION TYPES	37
Analysis by Types as a Method of Study.....	37
The spurious deserter.....	37
The gradual deserter.....	38
The "intermittent husband".....	41
The ill-advised marriage type.....	45
The "last resort" type.....	47
The Vanished Husband	49
The Reclaimable versus the Irreclaimable Deserter.....	49
VI. TREATMENT OF DESERTION.....	51
Phases of Treatment.....	51
With reference to the deserter.....	51
With reference to the abandoned family.....	60
VII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.....	64
A Suggested Policy of Treatment.....	64
BIBLIOGRAPHY	69

“If the family, or rather the home, is in any considerable degree to social science what the atom is to physics and the cell is to biology, it is almost inevitable that social science must follow the method of those sciences so far at least as to concentrate attention on its study and discover that the home contains within it the great secret of all the social sciences. Indeed if this be true, the problems of the several social sciences themselves depend on this work for the home. Especially is it true of the problems of government, economics, religion and pedagogy, that they all need a scientific knowledge of the home as an indispensable condition of their solution.”—S. W. Dike, “The Problem of the Family,” *Congress of Arts and Sciences*, 1904, VII, 721.

CHAPTER I.

Introduction

1—THE FAMILY AS A SUBJECT FOR SCIENTIFIC STUDY.

Today, as truly as in times past, the family is the "principal social factor" in the life of man. Within it are combined activities which have as their end "the one general function of preserving the physical and psychical continuity of the race."¹ It is thus a biological fact before it becomes, with the sanction of formal marriage, a social institution.

Although the family is the most ancient of social organizations it is one of the latest to be made the subject of scientific analysis and investigation. It has escaped until recent years the searching inquiries which science is accustomed to make into physical phenomena. Whether this has been due to its very nearness, which has caused it to be overlooked as a subject for study, or to its intimate and tender associations which make scientific investigations seem akin to sacrilege, or whether the state of public opinion has been responsible for a reluctance to meddle with the delicate questions which its relations involve, it has until lately been comparatively immune from analysis and criticism.²

As recently as a quarter of a century ago Dr. S. W. Dike felt the importance of calling attention to the fact that the family as an institution was at that time scarcely recognized.

"It is not easy to find the term 'family' in national or state constitutions. It is by no means frequent on our statute books. Indeed the title has found its way into the encyclopedias only in recent years. We have come at the family in fragments and legislated accordingly. Our ideas of it are extremely individualistic, and so we are dominated by the conception of marriage as a mere contract, with little thought of the family and relations of status."³

Even those important writers who touched upon the subject of the family did not undertake to consider it in its modern aspects nor in any relation to current problems. As early as 1851 Sir Henry Maine and Bachofen had written of the family. Later came the works of Spencer, Morgan, Lubbock, McLennan, Hearn, Lyall, de Coulanges, Starcke, Westermarck and others, but

"all these dealt more or less directly with the family but in ancient or early types of society. Still there was no study of the family in any of our higher educational institutions. There was no book on the family in the English language prior to 1880."⁴

It has been left almost to our own generation to discover the significance of the family as a whole, and to consider it in its vital relations to law, education, economics and morality. That the past two or three decades have seen a marked change in the popular attitude toward the family is due, partly at least, to the fact that the machinery of family life does not seem of late years to be working as smoothly as it should.⁵

1. Small and Vincent, *Introduction to the Study of Society*, p. 250.

2. W. Goodsell, *The Family as a Social and Educational Institution*, p. 2.

3. S. W. Dike, "Problems of the Family," *Century Magazine*, XXXIX (1889), 393.

4. S. W. Dike, "The Problem of the Family," *Congress of Arts and Sciences*, 1904, VII, 712.

5. "It is mainly in recent years that the family as an institution has attracted the attention of the thinker and historian. It is so intimate a part of life, so inseparable from existence in all normal communities, that, like the air we breathe, it eludes observation, and we only notice it when something goes wrong." Helen Bosanquet, *The Family*, p. 7.

"The increase almost everywhere throughout the civilized world of the rate of divorce and the immense volume of it in the United States, the decrease of the marriage rate, and the postponement of marriage, the prevalence of unchastity and the lightness with which its offenses are regarded, the decrease of the birth-rate among those best fitted by their own training and resources to rear large families, the growing self-assertion of youth, and the lessened power of the home over character, have combined to bring the family to the front as one of the most vital subjects for practical consideration."¹

The significance of manifestations such as the ones mentioned lies in the fact that they are indicative of important changes which the nature of the family is experiencing. Whether we approve or not, we are continually being made aware that under the influence of changing social and economic conditions the character of the family is undergoing a marked modification. In many ways a process of disintegration is going on and the cohesive elements in its structure are becoming less powerful. The stability of the home seems to be less than it has been in the past, and the result, in many instances, is the complete breaking down of the family itself.

This latter day tendency toward family disintegration is not merely an interesting fact. A large importance lies in the intimate relation of the family to other social institutions and phenomena. Any alteration in the family must of necessity profoundly affect them.

"The relation of the home as a social unity, to poverty, crime, intemperance and other vice, is worthy of the search of the statistician under the direction of social science. The composition of the family, its housing, its relation to the industry of its members and society, its influence in supplying the saloon, the brothel, the almshouse and the prison with victims, or in resisting the allurements of these places of vice, as well as its own sufferings from them, are subjects of pressing importance."²

Family desertion is one of the ways in which the dissolution of the bonds which unite the members of the family manifests itself. Like divorce, it is a problem of the disintegration of the family. When it occurs the physical union which is the biological basis of marriage is terminated; the economic organization of the family whereby it normally maintains itself as an independent group is disturbed, and readjustment is necessitated for the provision of those who are left without support; the ties of affection and sentiment which have given greatest strength and most complete unity to the family group are broken down.

In the United States especially desertion is increasingly forcing itself upon public attention. The object of the present monograph is to analyze the conditions out of which it arises and if possible to discern the causes. Desertion is to be considered as one of the forms of family disintegration. What is its extent? What are its characteristics? In what variety of ways does it find expression? What is its social significance, and in what ways does it appear to be a complicating factor in questions of dependency, delinquency and immorality? What measures in the past have been employed in dealing with it? What practical conclusions may be deduced concerning its social treatment? These are some of the outstanding matters which will be considered.

2—DESERTION A PHENOMENON COMMON TO THE FAMILY.

A.—Desertion Common to all Parts of the World.

The desertion of families is not a manifestation peculiar to American society. Eighteen countries besides our own have specifically recognized its existence

1. S. W. Dike, "The Problems of the Family," *Congress of Arts and Sciences*, 1904, VII, 709.

2. S. W. Dike, "Problems of the Family," *Century Magazine*, XXXIX (1889), 386.