

# **THE HIGH- SCHOOL AGE**

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The high-school age by Irving King

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**IRVING KING**

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# THE HIGH-SCHOOL AGE

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**CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH SERIES**

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## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Probably most people appreciate that a human being in his progress from birth to maturity passes through certain ages or epochs, each characterized by peculiar tendencies and activities. If one should ask a man whose business it is to study human nature for practical reasons which of these epochs is of the greatest importance, he would undoubtedly say the period of the teens. He would probably declare that during this period the individual is being molded into final form in body and mind, and that whatever impressions can be made upon him at this time will be likely to be permanent. People are beginning to take this view; for during the last few years much has been said by observers and investigators respecting the chief characteristics of this period. All have noted the appearance of new interests and activities, and the development of extreme sensitiveness to various influences which have been practically unnoticed up until this time. The views of the practical man of affairs and the scientific student of mental development have been in accord with the views of the poets, who never tire of describing the freshness and enthusiasm and abounding vigor, as well as the excesses and the strains and stresses of this age.

In planning the series on *Childhood and Youth*, it was provided that much attention should be given to a practical discussion of the epoch covered substantially by the high-school period. The present volume is devoted wholly to an exposition of the characteristics and needs of the high-school age. Professor King has presented in simple, straightforward language most of the more important re-

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sults of modern investigations regarding the physical changes which take place during the early teens, and the intellectual and emotional developments which occur parallel with the physical changes, or follow after them very closely. He has also discussed questions pertaining to the development of fundamental impulses in both boys and girls, and the educational problems which issue therefrom. He has considered questions of health and school work, and practical matters pertaining to the conservation of the energies of high-school pupils, and making their work in the school more efficient than it has been in the past. He has introduced a considerable amount of new and concrete material which bears directly upon the every-day life of the high-school pupil, in respect alike to his studies and to his conduct within and without the school. He has dwelt especially upon the development of the self during the teens, and he has shown that in effect the individual has a sort of new birth during this epoch—the birth of the spirit which is as important as the first birth of the body. An appreciation of this vital transformation during the teens will aid the teacher and the parent to understand and deal the more wisely with the boy or the girl who is passing rapidly from childhood to maturity.

There is probably no period in the individual's development when he has so many conflicts with adults as during the early teens. When he is changing so rapidly in body and mind, his individuality suddenly looms up in home and school; and it often arouses antagonism in parents and teachers. The reading of this volume should help any one charged with the training of youth to see what activities of either the boy or the girl are normal during this

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epoch, and so should be encouraged or at least not opposed. On the other hand, there are dangers if the individual be let follow his own plans without direction from any source. Professor King makes this apparent in his discussion of the instability of many adolescent boys and girls, and their need of wise instruction, which should not be obtrusive or offensive, but which should nevertheless be effective.

The book is designed for students of human nature and education, and also for those who are responsible for the care and culture of boys and girls during the period of the teens. It is a book of interpretation of phenomena in the first place, and one of counsel and guidance in the second place. It is written in the spirit of modern science, and so is modest and reasonable. It is written also with a view to assist the practical trainer of youth, and so the discussion centers around those aspects of development and of education which are of chief interest and importance in the home and in the school.

M. V. O'SHEA.

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## PREFACE

No period of life has been so celebrated in literature as has the period of youth, or adolescence. Nor is it a time which has interested only the poet and the story writer; the scientist, also, in his search for new fields for investigation finds in youth as many problems as he may well desire. There is no season in the life of the boy or girl which, to parent and teacher, is more interesting and more baffling than are these years which we may roughly consider as lying between thirteen and twenty. Certainly no period of life is more apt to be misunderstood by older people than is this; nor is there an age upon which, in the name of science, greater extravagancies of thought and more exaggerated assertions have been lavished.

In fact, so little do we know definitely regarding the nature of the changes of boys and girls, as they pass through youth, that we may still too easily yield to the temptation to make large use of the finely wrought phrases of the poet when we think and talk of this spring-time of life. However, it is by no means certain that the student of adolescence should entirely ignore the literary interpretations. For while the poet may yield to the impulse to become the maker of exaggerated phrases, it is yet possible that he has an understanding of the heart of youth that the scientist will never get if he sticks to his technical descriptions and to his bald tables of statistics.

The purpose of these pages is to lead to a study of the period of youth, especially in its school and social relationships. While we shall in every case hope to present facts, our method will not be con-

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fined to that of abstract science but will make use of sympathetic description as well. We shall hope, if it may be possible, to picture the real boys and girls of the teens and specifically of the high school with the direct purpose of determining how school work may be more fully adjusted to their needs.

Modern civilization has not been so successful in dealing with the problem of childhood as it has been in the extraction of gold from the rocks or in the building of battle-ships. Possibly our age is more intelligent in regard to its children than the world of a century ago was. As to that we can not say. We only know that we are not so successful as we should be, compared with our advances in other lines of endeavor. A superficial interest in childhood is shown in the vast sums spent in education, but there is general lack of interest in those finer adjustments of the educational process which are absolutely essential to their real efficiency. It is much easier to induce the legislature of a farming state to appropriate fifteen thousand dollars for the study and prevention of hog cholera than to induce it to give a single dollar for the study and prevention of immorality among its boys and girls. Corn and hogs, stocks and bonds, seem to loom large in the minds of the masses, while the problem of child-welfare can take care of itself. We are slow in casting off completely the doctrine of *laissez-faire*, the "let-alone-and-it-will-take-care-of-itself" doctrine of the older economists. But less and less can the problems of child-welfare *be* let alone. In fact, the policy of neglect has not a single prop to support it in the intense life of the modern world.

And yet the American public *is* interested in the education of its children. Its interest, however,