

## PSYCHOLOGY

## Modern Youths' Ideals

Fewer youngsters today want to emulate historical characters, turning their hero worship to figures in sports and movies, poll shows.

► NOT so many boys and girls today want to grow up to be like George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Clara Barton and other historical figures, as did 50 years ago. The following of hero worshippers lost by historical persons of eminence has been absorbed by Babe Ruth, Gene Autry, Jack Benny and Betty Grable.

The modern trend in personal ideals was revealed by a study of over 1,500 children aged around 13 years who were in the seventh and eighth grades of Massachusetts public schools. Dr. Lawrence A. Averill, of State Teachers College, Worcester, Mass., who conducted the poll, compared his results with a similar study of 1,440 children of California and Minnesota that was conducted in May, 1898. Results were reported to the meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association in Springfield, Mass.

Fifty years ago, when their elders were "remembering the Maine," young boys and girls chose the individuals they wanted to emulate as follows: 78% from among the great people of history, 12% from notable characters in literature, and the remaining 10% from among friends and relatives, especially the father for boys.

Today, there are still one out of ten who want to grow up to be like Dad, or mother or an older brother or sister or friend. But there ends the similarity between the childhood ideals of 1898 and 1948. Less than half of the boys and girls today chose their heroes from any of the categories listed in 1898.

Literature has dropped completely from the picture as furnishing youthful ideals for emulation.

Historical characters still head the list, but their following has dropped from 78% in 1898 to just about one out of three today.

A total of 268 boys, 23% of all the children, want to be like some figure in sports. Among the boys, baseball accounted for 151 choices. Ted Williams, Boston batting hero, and the late Babe Ruth polled over half the baseball votes. Most glamorous character in the sports world for girls is the Canadian skater, Barbara Ann Scott, 1948 Olympic star.

Fourteen per cent choose their ideals from the movies or radio, radio being in the lead for boys, with Gene Autry and Jack Benny; the movies influencing the girls more, especially Betty Grable, Jane Powell, Shirley Temple and June Allyson.

Although the children were asked to name a person whom they wanted to be like 10 years from now, about one out of

five named instead an occupation. Most popular among the boys were airplane pilots, musicians, bankers, physicians, engineers, actors, tradesmen and writers or reporters. More than a third of the girls naming occupations wanted to be teachers or nurses. Next in order of popularity were columnists, musicians, writers and reporters, secretaries and stenographers, airplane hostesses and even roller-skaters.

## AGRICULTURE

## New Fiber Grown in Cuba

► KENAF fiber, a new crop in the Western Hemisphere now grown successfully in Cuba and El Salvador, seems specially suitable for sugar bags, coffee bags, cordage and burlap to replace the jute now imported largely from India.

Cuba has an ideal climate to produce kenaf, whose original home is India, and Cuba has a home market for the product. This sugar-producing island uses around \$20,000,000 worth of sugar bagging annually, and the kenaf season dovetails with the sugar season so that the same laborers can be utilized for both.

Kenaf is a fast-growing plant, distantly

Only 12 children out of the total 1,526 questioned, named a religious figure as an ideal. Four of these named Jesus Christ, two named Saint Joseph, two named a missionary, three a minister or priest and one named a nun. This shows a drop in interest in religious characters, as about 5% named the Deity in 1898.

In general, the movies and radio do not have as much allure for these children as might have been expected, Dr. Averill concludes.

About half as many boys want to be engineers as want to be Bob Hope. As many girls want to be secretaries and stenographers as to be June Allyson, and as many want to be nurses as want to be Jane Powell and Shirley Temple combined. Half as many of both sexes aspire to be teachers and nurses as want to be movie stars.

Science News Letter, April 23, 1949

related to cotton and okra. Botanically, it is *Hibiscus cannabinus*. Plants reach a height of eight to 12 feet in about 100 days, when it is ready to harvest.

The fiber is contained in the bark, as in jute. It can be extracted successfully both by mechanical means and by retting in stagnant water for a few days.

The fiber is obtained in strands nearly as long as the stalks. It is soft in texture, light straw in color, and about as strong as jute. About one ton of kenaf fiber can be obtained from an acre. In addition to fiber, this plant produces seed which yields oil.

Science News Letter, April 23, 1949



**FIBER ON THE LINE**—Part of a 100-acre commercial planting of kenaf fiber in Cuba hangs on racks for open-air drying in the sun.