

'Look at the Record And Life, Mr. Keats'

By RUTH VOGT
Special Writer

In this month's Atlantic John Keats calls Suburbia 'compulsive'. (He calls us many more things, too.) However, before anyone rushes out to stick a "for sale" sign into the soft spring ground of his front yard, let's break down, by bits, a few of the accusations Mr. Keats threw at the stupid people living in Compulsive Suburbia.

HE DECLARES that we don't really have anything of substance but "bedrooms 'n' baths," and that we live in an almost broken-down environment with the father who appears as only "an overnight guest," and that our offspring are shuttled off to nursery schools, pre-school, dancing schools, so Mamma can sip coffee all day with her other dissatisfied neighbors, and then in late afternoon plunked down in front of TV screens while she thaws out supper, (still quite unhappy about her existence) Keats fails to affirm that:

City parents and families are living differently (if this bleak pattern is true of Suburbia, of course). Does a full life bloom more freely on a city street where here, too, the houses were built in the '20's and '30's, all alike but they were

erected on lots which didn't allow, many times, for a driveway?

DON'T their Papas come home as "an overnight guest" and leave for the bus stop early next morning?

Didn't the 1900 father work fourteen or fifteen hours a day instead of eight? And wasn't he so exhausted that he barely saw or talked to his offspring? Didn't the mother labor under the impression that children should be seen but not heard by the tired father? So many critics forget this.)

Does a child gain more from life when he races off a couple blocks to a city play spot? And in his mother's waiting anxiously for him to return from school so she can guide him through the cultural centers?

THE ONES visited on week-ends held mostly the inhabitants from the hinter-lands, as far as could be determined.

Mr. Keats had a delightful time in his article deploring the 'conformity' in thinking, dressing and acting of the people living along his Suburbia Apple Drive.

How different are the folks who dwell on hundreds of city streets? Their hair-do, their gait, their make-up and dress don't vary. Check this next time riding around the area of the Fisher building.

WHEN HE tears apart the parties held he has a glorious gory time; he can't find enough terms to deplore them. Alright. Maybe some are lacking in originality on a Saturday night, but do they do things differently in cities? He furthermore insists that little hope is seen for this Suburbia situation because the second any one complains the next one speaks up with:

"What are you crabbing about? You've never had it so good." And this makes for allowing one disappointment to pile up on the other. It's a pitiful picture he paints of terribly frustrated families all living outside of town and hating every day of it.

OUR CHILDREN? Are they little lambs following along because their parents are supposed to be big sheep?

Not the ones observed running around in the back yard. There are as many different personalities and individual characteristics as are found when conversing with their Mammies when they come in to take them home for dinner.

And it isn't, except occasionally, merely a thawed out affair. (How could they appear so healthy if they ate off a tin-foil plate constantly?) Why would our markets stock such fresh fruits and vegetables daily if they weren't purchased? Mr. Keats ignores this completely.

HE CONCLUDES by saying he

can offer no remedy for being yourself . . . that this must come only from self examination and self imposed tasks.

He thinks there is absolutely no one living on the outskirts who has not forfeited his character, personality and all individual beliefs, just so he'll feel a part of Suburbia. That's too bad.

I meet the other kind every day—just circulating about and looking for 'em!

Maybe Mr. Keats should look harder. He'd find them.

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