

And How Are the Children?

Among the many fabled and accomplished tribes of Africa, no tribe was considered to have warriors more fearsome or more intelligent than the mighty Masai. It's surprising, then, to learn the traditional greeting passed among the Masai warriors; "Casserian Engeri," one would always say to each other. And what it meant was, "And how are the children?"

It is still the traditional greeting of the Masai, acknowledging the high value the Masai placed on the children's well being. Even warriors with no children of their own would always give the traditional answer, "All the children are well." This meant, of course, that peace and safety prevail; the priorities of protecting the young and the powerless are in place; that the Masai people had not forgotten their reason for being, their proper function, and their responsibilities.

"All the children are well" means life is good. It means the daily struggles of existence, even among poor people, include the proper care of the young and defenseless.

I wonder how it might affect our consciousness of our own children's welfare if we took to greeting each other in the same daily question, "And how are the children?"

I wonder, if we heard that greeting passed along to each other a dozen times a day, whether it would begin to make a difference in the reality of how children are thought of and cared for in this country. I

wonder what it would be like if every adult among us—parent and non-parent alike—felt an equal weight of responsibility for the daily care and protection of all the children in our town, in our state, and in our country. I wonder whether we could truly say without hesitation, “The children are well. Yes, all the children are well.”

What would it be like if the President began every press conference, every public appearance by answering the same question: “And how are the children, Mr. President?” If every governor of every state had to answer the same question at every press conference: “And how are the children, Governor? Are they well?” Wouldn’t it be interesting to hear their answer?