1923

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Who Is Responsible for the Child?

By ORANGE H. CESSNA, Professor of Psychology

Y OU have kindly asked me to write the first of a series of articles by various people on the above topic. Since this is the first, I may make it a kind of introduction to the series.

I have taught child study and child training in relation to the home a number of years and yet the more I know, the less I know about the subject; and having had a practical experience in my own home, I have certainly had the concept taken out of me. I think the only people who are perfectly sure what should be done are those who have never had any practical experience and have worked out their theories in the quiet of their own secure, secluded bachelor lives. The proverbial "Old-Maid Aunt" is the only one with whom we need refer to this subject will die. However, I may give you several general convictions that have been forming themselves upon me.

I like the name "Homemaker" which you have given to your paper, and also which is given to the courses in home economics. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on the home and the joy of homemaking. This day when so many things are undermining this fundamental unit of our civilization. If this weakness and crumbles the whole social structure must go down. Mr. Forbush has called attention to what he speaks of as "the abiding functions of the home," in which he emphasizes the reasons why parents and homes are needed. He finds these in "the continuous infancy" and vital relation of the parent and home to the proper development of the child. These provide the shelter and nurture so greatly needed. It might be possible to bring children up in institutions and yet experience has proven that even the best conducted orphanage can be no substitute for the home. This is true even if there were a mother present for every child. The home is where most of the personal habits are formed. "The child learns to do, by imitation," consequently the ideals must be created largely in the home during the earlier impressionable years. The child develops his personal habits and ideals largely through imitation of those persons with whom he comes most frequently into contact. It is unfortunate indeed that the little ones ever in the home should be turned over to the constant care and association of servants frequently of low ideals and of no special refinement, and are left to take on the lower forms of culture from these daily associations.

Professor Betts in his admirable little book "Fathers and Mothers" makes this beautiful statement as to the importance of parenthood: "Being a parent seems the most simple and most natural thing in the world—but for those who have never tried it. But, to one who has looked down in awe and wonder upon that mass of protoplasm and soul that they call a baby, it is different. To him who has seen in some wee ape the replica of himself, parenthood is a serious business. To him it is new, as a first love. The red downy pill to pink toenails! To have brought out of nothingness this little mortal to try issues with the great world! To see a pitifully helpless organism of our own creation made the home of a living soul whose value we may not know and whose destiny we cannot control—is not all this enough to give one pause!"

"Then the mystery of the grip that this small person is able to get on the heart! Only yesterday we were so carefree and buoyant, so sure of ourselves and defiant of fate. Today we are sorbidly apprehensive of possible harm to the new being that has come to us. Emotions planted in the breasts of our first parents and cultivated through ten thousand generations of parenthood suddenly spring into being in us. Fear for our young oppresses the heart and we are left to take on the responsibility of caring for the little one. It may have in store for us through this babe..."

"With the ecstatic sense of ownership that comes over us there is also a new feeling of crushing responsibility. We know it is mine, bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh, it will bear my name, be part of me, come to me with its joys, and sorrow, and I am now the sole link between two forever together. No sorrow or shame or defeat can come to one that will not touch the heart of the other. When we gather the life of the one that will not cast its glow over the other. Thru all the years to come our destinies are joined for good or for ill."

This sense of responsibility increases when the parent remembers that he must guide the development of this child and that the child will be what the parent makes him. The home will supply the ideas of right and wrong take shape. Our standards and acts will set the models which will unconsciously be followed by the young learner. From the environment created there the child will receive the intellectual stimulus of mental growth. There the child will be led into the paths of religious faith and conduct.

The first and most important essential to a happy home will be the proper attitude of the parents. The completed home needs the loving solicitude and care of both father and mother united in interest for the children. "Children in the home restore it to its ancient function. The home becomes not an adult-centered project but a child-centered one..."

The proper education is not on man. Forbush terms the attitudes of the parents is being emphasized in the later discussions that are very essential. There should be the spirit of honesty. We need to be fair and thoughtful with the child. "However (Continued on page 18)"
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we may force our will arbitrarily on the child in its earlier years, with children who are coming to years of moral sense, 'mother-love' will not be sufficient unless it is found in the heart of a woman who is fair and unselfish before she is a mother."

The listening attitude is very important. It really should be the perpetual attitude of the parent, for the child which gives the most trouble now will turn out to be his most precious asset. "The child must be 'freshly noticed' each day as if we did not know him before." Always hear the child's side of every matter.

"Foresight" needs emphasis. Meet the difficulty before it comes by heading it off—foresee the common emergencies and prepare for them, put things where the child cannot reach them instead of punishing him for breaking them, keep the child busy if idleness breeds mischief; recognize the early signs of fatigue and have regard for physical conditions.

Insight is frequently over-looked. Get the inner meaning of every situation and do not forget that children are not too small to deserve the little courtesies of life. "Never appear in moral-undress, before those we love." Someone suggests that if you cannot be courteous at all times vent your spleen on the strangers rather than on those in the home and save every element of courtesy for those whose lives are lifted or broken by our slightest words and deeds. Above all things avoid sarcasm that wounds as a knife. "Sarcasm is a tempting devil, and its mischief is that it always suggests superiority on the part of the user with a corresponding weakness of the victim." Its use generally exasperates the child and closes the avenue of approach.

Another important attitude is companionship. The most potent method of influencing personality is through intimate loving association. How beautifully Guest puts it in many of his poems, in "The Path to Home" and other books. Those poems breathe the sweet fragrance of delightful home associations. Many fathers provide everything the family needs but himself. "I never had a father," said one friend to another. "Why, did he die when you were very young," asked the other sympathetically. "Oh, my father isn't dead, he's a Shriner."

Fortunate are those children who have loving companionship with men and women of general intelligence and culture and have something of the big outside world. "It is not the child of six who sits at the table and listens; it is a human spirit, ever curious, wondering, surrounded by mystery, silently taking in what it does not understand today which will take possession next year and become a torch to light it on its way." The conversation at the table should not be directed at the child or shunted for him, but should make a place for him. Give him something to do, as for instance looking up the place of some country which happens to come in during the conversation. There also may be companionship in school tasks, companionship in work, as chores about the house, companionship in excursions are most influential. These all will lead to comradeship of ideals.

Forbush suggests the following maxims as helpful in maintaining the right attitude in the face of unforeseen emergencies. It seems to be they are essentially sane and grow out of a proper recognition of the right way of helping the child to realize its own self. There is proper respect for the child's personality:

"1. Make up your mind before hand as clearly as you can what you will and what you cannot allow.
"2. Express clearly after gaining the child's full attention, what you want him to do or to refrain from doing.
"3. Let there be always a cheerful expectancy that what you want done will be done.
"4. Change your mind only when you are wrong, not because you are entreated, and not because the wise way proves..."
to be more difficult than you at first supposed.

5. Try to make your will and the expression of it always the reflection of the everlasting right.

6. Habitually connect some sort of pleasure with obedience and some sort of pain with disobedience.

I wonder if in conclusion I may suggest two or three books that will be very helpful along this line and also contain well-selected bibliographies which are very valuable:

"Child Study and Child Training," Foshay, (Scribners, Pub's.)

"The Boy Problem in the Home," Foshay (Pilgrim Press.)

"Girlhood and Character," Mooney (Abbingdon Press.)


"Education by Plays and Games," Johnson.

These books should be in the hands of every parent and thoroughly mastered.

Vacation First Aid
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cloth. Immobility of an injured part by means of splinting greatly decreases the pain caused by motion in carrying the individual.

Considering all the possible requirements for first aid it might seem that quite an equipment was essential but by careful choosing the necessities may be cut down to a fairly reasonable minimum. We can briefly summarize those which are needed and make a list as follows:

1. Aromatic spirits of ammonia.
2. Lime water or boric acid.
3. Carbolized vaseline.
4. Olive oil.
5. Tincture of iodine.
6. Two 2-1/2-in bandages.
7. 11/4-in. bandages
  1 small package sterile gauze
  1 package cotton
  1 card safety pins.

Various things as salt, baking soda and perhaps the olive oil may be secured from the cooking equipment.

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do you buy freshly sliced bulk dried beef at 60 cents a pound?

And finally, do you measure your economies by those of your next door neighbor, forgetting that no two families have the same needs? Buying in large quantities may be economy for a family of seven with a large basement store room, but would be most extravagant for a family of two living in a small apartment. The profits would go into the garbage can in the form of spoiled food.

With your own eggs and milk a bread pudding may be a very cheap dish, but in a city with eggs and milk and gas at top prices, a plain bread pudding may become a very expensive luxury.

In other words, there is no set formula or rule by which economy may be judged. It is an individual problem to be solved by each family by the use of a little careful figuring and a whole lot of common sense.