

HOUSEHOLD.

Rest and Recreation.

(By Lena Orman Cooper.)

Many of us, mothers of families, are too apt to deny ourselves proper rest and recreation, in order to keep the family coach running on well-oiled wheels. We only defeat our object if we overstrain ourselves. I dare put it, that many of the sharp words which darken home life are due to overstrain of nerves. I never see a woman shaking or abusing a child, without being tempted to say, 'My good friend, do go and lie down for a bit.' These shakings and fault-findings you will see (if you are on the look-out) nearly invariably take place in the afternoon.

Now, it is manifestly unfair that our children should suffer from our heedlessness. A few moments' rest will generally soften our voice and quiet our hand. Let me advise every mother in the many sweet homes of our land to set apart a bit of time to recreate in the matter of rest. After dinner, for instance, Baby is generally fast asleep, elder children are satisfied and quiet. Come apart and rest awhile then, dear mother. Lie down. Take no book with you to read. Shut your eyes. Let every limb relax. Do not worry about Tom or Jim or Mary Rebecca. They will come to less vital harm than if you were 'charing' round. At the end of a quarter of an hour you will be a different woman. Refreshed and strengthened, you will find washing up the dinner things, sweeping up crumbs, laying the afternoon tea, no burden at all. The rest will have re-created your muscles and nerves in the best sense of the word. Most women fly to tea when overworn. It is the worst thing they could resort to (barring spirits). Tea may over-stimulate and produce a false sense of relief. It pricks on the jaded horse: but it may do real damage in other ways. Take rest instead of tea, and you will act wisely and well.

Overstrain produces that pain at the back of the head and neck with which many women are only too familiar. To alleviate this, before lying down, squeeze out a sponge in very hot water and lave the affected part. All our nervous system starts from the nape of the skull. A hot application behind the ears and along the upper part of the spine works wonders. It rests as well as relieves. In hot weather, again, nothing relieves wearied feet so much as lying down with shoes and stockings off. I was told this by an old lady of eighty-five. She had been a governess all her long life, and knows what she recommends by experience. After running about all the morning, go upstairs as recommended. After bathing the back of the head (if necessary), remove stockings as well as shoes. Cover your bare feet, of course, warmly, and take your ease. Many a case of flat-foot might be avoided if this were better known.

A sofa is almost a necessary in every bedroom. So often we do not take the 'lie-down' we feel we really need, because it rumples and spoils the bed. A couch at the foot of it quite does away with such an excuse. To make such does not mean large outlay. For a couple of shillings you can get a frame from any second-hand dealer. Stretch over it some sacking. Measure accurately and make a bag long enough to lie from one end to the other. This bag must be made, in fact, six inches longer than the frame. Fill it with chaff. This can be had for the asking from any mill or flour store. It makes a delightfully clean, springy mattress. Put this in your bag of 'bley' cotton (costing about 3d. a yard). Cover it again with cretonne or chintz (the latter, though more initial expense, is really cheaper in the long run, as it can be cleaned over and over again). Put it in position. Pillows can be made either long-shaped or square. The latter are cosiest for tucking under aching backs, and the former for hunching behind one's neck. Fill the tick with torn-up papers. All the young fry will gladly tear up for you. There is something indescribably delightful in destroying anything! See that the pieces of the daily papers are torn up very finely. Stuff the scraps into the pillow and you will have the coolest, 'givingest' cushion you can wish for. For a 'couvrepied,' three sheets of brown paper can be

tacked together. You do not want to sleep, so rustling will not annoy you. Slip these into a slip of Turkey twill. Blanket stitch the edges. Here and there work stiletto holes for ventilation, and you have a cosy, safe covering for nothing at all.

Women do not seem to think that the proverb, 'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy,' applies to the Jills of creation at all. I must decide otherwise. The dullest, most unsuccessful mother I know has never taken an hour's pleasuring away from her children for over ten years. She is a well-to-do-person, and she ought to be ashamed of herself, instead of boasting of the fact.

The Influence of Pictures.

It was at a meeting of the Monday Reading Club, and the ladies were waiting, as usual, for one of the members who was always invariably the last to arrive.

'What a pity it is that Mrs. Smith can't be a little more prompt,' said the president. 'She's so bright and well informed that she is indispensable to the life of the club. I never like to begin without her, and yet it doesn't seem right that one person should waste the time of so many others. This lack of promptness seems to be her one fault, and I confess it is so inconsistent with her character that I don't know how to account for it.'

'I think I do,' said jolly Mrs. Kittredge. 'She didn't grow up in a house where a picture called "Procrastination" hung on the wall. My shortcomings are numerous enough, as you all know, but being behind hand isn't one of them. I believe I have never in my life been late to an appointment through my own fault, and I often thank that old picture for my habits of promptness.'

'Do tell us about it,' said one and another. 'What kind of a picture was it that could accomplish so much?'

'Only a little framed engraving, taken probably from some magazine where it served as frontispiece. Very likely some of you may remember having seen it. It was in the days of the old-fashioned stage-coach, and a family, laden with satchels, bags and bundles, ready for a journey, arrived a minute too late. The lumbering coach is visible in the distance, and the father is frantically waving his umbrella in the vain attempt to stop the fast disappearing horses. The mother looks as if life had few more charms, while tears stand in the eyes of one of the children. At least, this is my recollection of the picture, though it is years since I have seen it. As a child I must have spent hours pondering over it, wondering where they were all going, whether they took an earlier start next day, and made the visit after all, or whether they were going to a wedding which wouldn't wait for them, and so they missed it altogether. But I never failed to conclude my meditations with the resolve that I would always be on time, and the little old picture has held me to my resolution.'

'Yes, I can remember having seen the same picture,' said Mrs. James, 'but, as I didn't grow up with it, I can't recall it quite so vividly; still I believe Mrs. Kittredge has touched upon an important truth. People often fail to realize the influence of pictures upon a family, especially upon children; if they remembered it, I'm sure we shouldn't see so many ill-chosen, and often atrocious creations on the wall of otherwise well-furnished homes.'

'I believe you're right,' said another. 'I'm sure the beautiful paintings with which my father adorned his home had something to do with my becoming an artist. In those days good pictures were less common than now, and I can remember often feeling a sense of relief when I went to see my friends that I didn't have to look at their pictures every day.'

'I often have that same feeling now,' said Mrs. Brown, 'and I sometimes think that more people fail in the selection of their pictures than in any other part of their house furnishing.'

'I had never connected the two things before,' said little Miss Wilder, 'but perhaps my love of animals is partly due to the wonderful pictures of horses, dogs, and cats which made our home remarkable.'

'Of course it is,' said Mrs. Kittredge. 'And no doubt every one of us has been more or

less unconsciously influenced in this way. People don't think much about it. If they did we should see articles by famous people on "The Picture That Most Influenced Me," although I confess to thinking that that sort of thing has gone quite far enough already.'

'There comes Mrs. Smith now,' said the president, 'and for once I feel grateful to her for her tardiness. This talk has suggested many new thoughts to me. I shall go home and study my pictures with a fresh interest, and I fear that a "divine discontent"'

But by this time Mrs. Smith was fairly in the room, and the Reading Club promptly began the regular work of the day.—'Congregationalist.'

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