

# Priceless Pointers for Poor Pater

What to Do When the Family's Away and More Particularly—What to "Don't"

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Illustrated by FERGUS KYLE

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DEAR FATHER:

You will no doubt be surprised to hear from me and, to tell the truth, you would not be hearing from me if it were not for the fix that I am in. The Editor of Everywoman's World has asked me to contribute something to her paper. What do you think of that? I have contributed to all kinds of publications from a Sporting Extra to a religious monthly, but this is positively the first time I have ever been invited to contribute to a magazine that appeals exclusively to women. I doubt if a young girl was ever more surprised by a proposal than I was by that invitation. Instinctively I gasped:

"This is so sudden."

When I recovered from the shock I hunted up a copy of Everywoman's World, and tried to figure out just what I could do that would fit in. As I turned over the pages I made a discovery that gave me an inspiration. I found to my amazement that there was no Sporting Page, Market Reports, Political News, or anything intended to appeal to the father of a family. Yet it is safe to assume that there is a father in every family that takes the paper. Of course I realize that we men folks do not amount to much in family matters, but still, as a matter of business I think the editors should have something intended to interest fathers of families. Clearly, my opportunity was to fill this long-felt want, and if the editor will stand for it I shall certainly do it. Heart to heart talks between fathers might result in the interchange of many valuable hints that would make for the peace of families. If you meet me half-way in this matter we may start something that will bring comfort and happiness to the heart of many a down-trodden husband and father. Here goes.

At this moment I have no doubt you are sitting with your boots off warming your feet in the oven, after doing the chores, while the children are crowded around the lamp doing their homework. If I dared I would ask you to fill your pipe and have a smoke with me, but I am afraid that is against the principles of the paper. However, if the boy gets his head out of the light you may be able to read what I have to say.

Now what shall we deal with first? Considering the nature of the paper I think that Helpful Hints of some kind would be about the right thing—and perhaps a few recipes. I confess that I am so rattled that I find it hard to get my thoughts in order, so my letter will probably be somewhat rambling. Still you may find something that will start a valuable train of thought.

I find that the crying need among fathers at the present time when there is an election in progress, is for a lot of new convincing excuses for being out late. Lodge meetings and sitting up with a sick friend have become so thread-bare that a fellow is ashamed to offer them. I am sorry to say that I haven't been able to invent anything new, though I did spring a story about stopping out to watch a flight of airships go over—and got away with it,—but now that the United States has joined the Allies I doubt if it would go with a really discriminating wife. If you happen to have hit on a new one I wish you would send it to me privately at the above address, and I will pass it along to as many as possible of the right kind of fellows. Sometimes we may be able to get together somewhere and by exchanging experiences get "Forty Sure and Safe Ways of making the Grand Sneak," but if we do we will not be foolish enough to tell about them in a Woman's paper. During a political campaign a fellow simply must get out occasionally and it is very important to have an excuse that will not rip at the seams or ravel at the edges.

NOW let us get to something more practical. Have you ever stopped to consider the domestic value of binder-twine? When working about the barn I find it a good idea to have a ball of binder-twine within reach at all times. It is when working about the barn that a man usually does the kind of lifting that "busts his suspenders" and binder-twine is about the handiest thing you can get for mending broken galls. I have even known a man to make a serviceable belt out of a few strands and for tying up rat-holes in bags it makes a fair substitute for patches.

Binder-twine can also be used instead of shoelaces, but is better to confine its use to farm shoes. When you happen to use it in your Sunday shoes and wear it to church or to town it is apt to attract attention and may give rise to gossip. A man who has a farm to look after has enough to do without being looked upon as a leader of fashion. I have

also found that is a good idea to have a few nails at hand when a button flies off. An eight penny nail cunningly stuck through the waist-band of a pair of trousers has been known to serve for a button for many months.

Come to think of it, most of a man's problems arise when the family goes to visit some relatives for a holiday and leaves him to look after the farm and "keep bach." Having had some experience I shall offer a few hints for what they are worth.

Don't bother sweeping the house while the folks are away. No matter how well you do it, the first thing your wife will say when she comes in through the door will be:

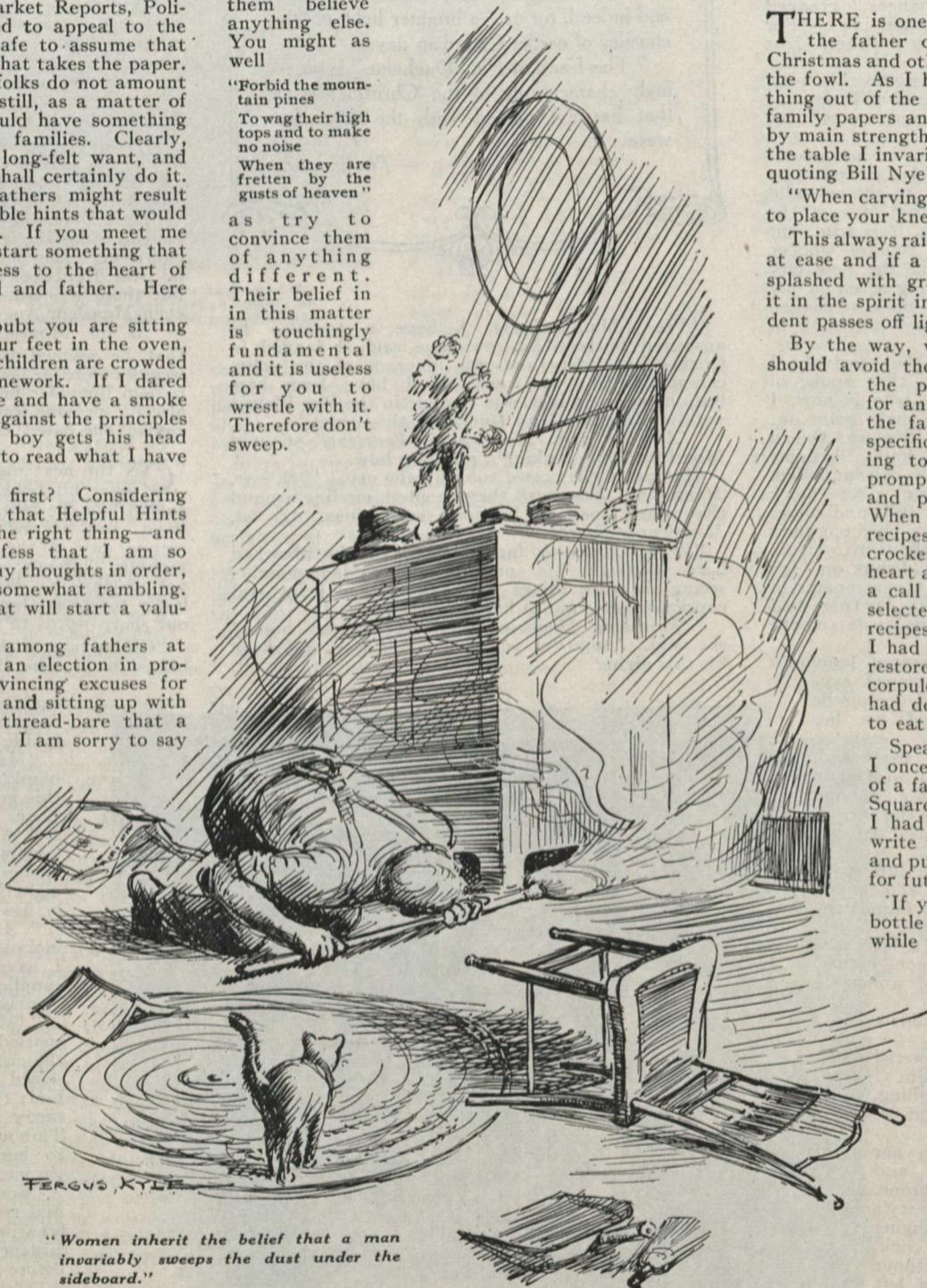
"O what a mess! How on earth will I ever get the house clean again?" Another argument against sweeping is that women inherit the belief that a man invariably sweeps the dust under the sideboard or under the bed, and nothing will make them believe anything else. You might as well

"Forbid the mountain pines

To wag their high tops and to make no noise

When they are fretten by the gusts of heaven"

as try to convince them of anything different. Their belief in this matter is touchingly fundamental and it is useless for you to wrestle with it. Therefore don't sweep.



"Women inherit the belief that a man invariably sweeps the dust under the sideboard."

It is also a good scheme to use the largest dinner plates for breakfast. You can turn them over for dinner and eat from the bottoms, if you cook your meat without gravy. Supper you take from a newspaper on top of the cupboard. By conserving the family supply of dishes in this way you can make them last through a prolonged period of "baching" and in the loneliness of your life you will have plenty of time to think up a good story telling how you intended to wash the lot, but something happened that drove it out of your mind or made it impossible. A cow got sick or something of that kind.

It is never a good idea to let your women-folks think that you know how to cook a decent meal. Even though you may have had early experience as cook on a gravel train or in a lumber shanty you will find it better to assume a childish helplessness in such matters. This is not entirely because it

will make them wait on you tenderly, but because it tends to give them self reliance and more conceit of themselves to think that cooking is a mystery which no man can ever master. I have known the peace of a family to be wrecked by a man who knew how to cook, and refused to accept his wife's explanations when the bread happened to be soggy or when the potato water got scorched. It is wise to let them retain their feeling of superiority in unimportant matters of this kind.

As a father of a family I may say that I find my early experiences as an umpire and occasionally as a referee very valuable in settling disputes among the children. To city fathers who may read these words I may say that most families would find it better to hire an experienced referee than a nursery governess.

When the children are being dosed with sulphur and molasses or similar medicines the wise father gets out of the way as quietly and unobtrusively as possible. Wives are apt to be somewhat blind at such times, and if he is not careful he may get a dose out of the over-flow.

THERE is one job that always falls to the lot of the father of a family on Thanksgiving-day, Christmas and other family festivals. He must carve the fowl. As I have never been able to make anything out of the charts and blue-prints published in family papers and cook books I usually do the job by main strength. If there happens to be guests at the table I invariably put them into good humor by quoting Bill Nye's advice to carvers.

"When carving a fowl it is not considered good form to place your knee on the breast of the bird."

This always raises a merry laugh that puts everyone at ease and if a lady happens to get her silk waist splashed with gravy during my struggles she takes it in the spirit in which it was meant and the incident passes off lightly.

By the way, when you are keeping "bach" you should avoid the family cook book as you would the pestilence. One time I hankered for an omelette and indiscreetly went to the family cook book to get plans and specifications for building it. Happening to catch the book by the back it promptly vomited a shower of clippings and papers all over the kitchen floor. When picking them up I found newspaper recipes for everything from mending crockery to hints for healing a daughter's heart after the young minister has accepted a call to a distant parish. I also found selected poems, early love-letters and recipes for mixed pickles. By the time I had picked up the scattered debris and restored the cook-book to its former corpulence I had lost my appetite and had decided that I didn't want anything to eat anyway.

Speaking of recipes reminds me that I once saw an article in the family circle of a farm paper which told "How to serve Square Meals on Round Doolies." If I had known that I would be asked to write this article I would have clipped it and put it away in the "Veterinary Guide" for future reference.

If you happen to use an empty vanilla bottle to store a little supply of varnish while your wife is away and the cake she cooks for the Woman's Institute after she comes home doesn't taste right, just lay back your ears and sit tight until the storm blows over. Remember Disraeli's advice, "Never apologize and never explain."

If you happen to be nosing around in the cup-board for a left-over piece of pumpkin pie for a late lunch, and happen to run across a bottle of stuffed olives, by that token you may know that high-toned company is going to be entertained in the near future. By using tact you may be able to learn just when the function

is to be held, and have a previous engagement in town with the horse doctor or the hog-drover.

I see by the millinery advertisements that bustles are coming in again. I have nothing to say for publication on that subject, but if I happen to meet you down at the livery stable I may make a few remarks.

Bur oh, but oh, father there are real troubles ahead of us that I am afraid I can't deal with in a short letter like this. Has it dawned on you that Woman's Suffrage is coming just as sure as shooting. As far as the straight political aspects of such a change are concerned I can't say that I care very much. There may be times when we will have maternalism instead of paternalism in our legislation, but that will not matter very much. Giving the vote to women will only dilute authority still more so that no one's vote will carry much weight, but that will be a move in the right direction. In a democracy

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