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SOCIAL TRAINING AND ATHLETICS

(Concluded from page 14.)

as a rule are too busy or selfish in these days to try by entertaining their boys more at home in the evenings to keep them in. It is easier to let somebody else entertain them. Most boys will smoke, so the duty of a mother is to try and impress on them the great truth that smoking is most injurious to their health, and a very expensive and untidy habit. But if this warning is not heeded, as it very seldom is, do not drive them to smoke on the street corners, even if their smoking in the home will injure your curtains, or is perhaps disagreeable to you. Remember the forming of your boy's character comes first, and if they are not allowed to smoke at home they will seek more agreeable company, and then the mother will wonder why her boys are always going out. I have had lots of young men come to my house Sunday after Sunday to smoke and read with my boys because they were not allowed to smoke at home. Home could be made much more attractive for the modern boy if mothers would exert themselves a little more.

Never close your bedroom door on your boys night or day, as that is the room where most of the confidences are exchanged between mother and son, big or little. Never lose your boy's confidence. If your door is open you always know how and when your boy comes in. Always have a cheery Good-night, even if they are later than you approve of, as scolding only hardens them and there are often good reasons for their being late. I asked my boy of 18, who was working hard and was self-supporting, why he was so late. His answer was that the part of the city in which we lived was so quiet and dark nearly everybody was in bed at ten, while down in the city all was life and brightness, and it was fun just to watch all the gaily dressed people coming from the theatres, going to suppers, etc. I decided to see for myself what my boy saw, so I stayed down town one night late, and I am afraid he had my sympathy ever after, for when boys have been shut in offices all day, no reasonable mother can expect them to come home and go to bed at ten night after night. I have had my three big sons in my room when I was in bed telling where they had been and what they had seen, laughing, joking and enjoying it all over again until I have had to march them off to bed. Coming in late one night one of my boys took his boots off down stairs, thinking he would disturb me less, but to his surprise I called out, "Keep on your boots, I will hear you come in anyway and would rather hear you tramping up in your boots than sneaking up in your socks."

Alcoholic drinking should not, of course, be encouraged. The great thing is to remember that "Home is the harbor from whence the craft starts out to face the troubles of life's tempestuous seas." Therefore, make home the great harbor of equipment.

A modern mother must be interested in sport, and if not naturally she should make a study of the different sports her boys are interested in, so that she may be able to talk over the games in an intelligent manner. I have always been most interested in sports, and thought I knew a good deal about them, but one day a small boy of mine came in much excited from a game of football, and I asked him what position he had been in, and he said "outside wing." I asked him by

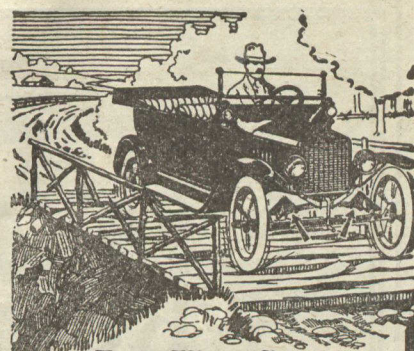
way of showing my knowledge, "Did you manage to heel the ball out all right?" But the look of disgust with which he said, "You don't heel the ball out when you are on the outside wing." I felt certainly crushed, and forthwith made a more careful study of the game. My eldest boy was captain of a champion league team, and often on Saturday when he was late coming home from the office and had had no lunch I would have hot bovril and biscuits ready, and would be pouring the bovril down his throat while he was getting into his suit. I myself love to watch a game of football. Of course, there is a certain amount of danger in connection with all those games, and a mother has many an anxious time, but when one comes to think of it there is not any more danger on the football field than there is on our down town thoroughfares. My boys all have their scars, of which they are very proud, but only one had a serious accident.

All my boys are taught to swim at a very early age, and are all good swimmers. They row, paddle, sail, and thoroughly understand a gasoline engine, having had a launch of their own for years. They always enter all the competitions at the different regattas and usually come home with their share of prizes. I can remember years ago my heart swelling with pride when I saw my small boy win the tub race at one of the summer resorts. Encourage joking and repartee at all times, it keeps the spirits up, and the dust out of their brains—competition in all things is to be encouraged, whether it is of muscle or brain. Answering the different newspaper tests, one of my boys won half a dozen of Conan Doyle's works by answering an advertisement for soap. What he wrote sounds very simple, but it did the work:

To-morrow is our wash day,
But we are full of hope,
To have a very easy time
By using Gilt-edge soap.

Have your boys join the scouts. It is a grand thing. They get so much good fresh air with their long tramps in the country, besides all the things they have to do to earn the different badges so much prized. I always think of it as a grown-up kindergarten, for instead of making paper mats, baskets, etc., they have shooting and cooking tests, and also learn about bees, flowers, animals, and other things too numerous to mention. One of my boys wrote stories for the "Scout Magazine," which were accepted, and for which he was paid. One year in our home was very exciting. I belonged to the Curling Club and each boy to a different hockey team, so one can imagine the interest we each took in the others' wins and losses. There is one thing a boy must be taught, and that is to be a good sport. He must learn to take his losses in good part and just to do his very best and not to be disagreeable when he does not win.

And the outcome of this has been that when the first call from their country came to do their "bit," one boy answered at once, and has greatly distinguished himself, and when the second call came two more were ready to take their places, as all their training had led to the one end—namely, "to do your duty in that state of life in which it has pleased God to call you."

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