

The Country Homemakers

Conducted by Francis Marion Beynon.

A WORD FOR THE KIDDIES

Because I know from experience that the annual Sunday School picnic is the great event of the year to small country folk I want to put in a plea for their unalloyed enjoyment of it.

If you parents who read this mean to take your little ones—and of course you do if it is at all possible—don't spoil the treat by threatening not to do so every time Tommy or Jennie look sideways for a month before. Punish them, if you think it necessary, some other way, but don't wipe out their childish happiness and cast a reflection on your own reputation as a teller of truth by making threats which you have no intention of putting into execution.

It means so much to the little people to strut about in their good clothes and swing under the big trees and run races and play ball with the kiddies from all the other districts within a radius of many miles that I can't bear to think of their pleasure being even tempered by a thoughtless threat.

FRANCIS MARION BEYNON.

ESPECIALLY FOR MOTHER

A very able writer on the subject of child training points out that the regular feeding, bathing and dressing of the tiniest infant have the effect of instilling methodical habits into the little one. I wonder if any mother who reads this has observed the same result.

The guests at the table of a certain mother whose children are noted for their good nature were given something to think about when she leaned over and took the baby out of his high chair at the first whimper. "I never leave him until he is howling," she said, "because it suggests to him that the only way to get attention is to howl." We don't mean to suggest that a baby should be picked up the minute he whimpers, but that when he is really uncomfortable there is no object in arousing his temper and indignation by delay.

In a household visited by scarlet fever, one of the little ones had been taken off and the baby, only a few months old, had rather a bad attack. His mother nursed him, the two being shut off in quarantine together for weeks.

Partly to pass away the tedious hours and perhaps also to soothe her sorrow, the mother broke through her established custom and rocked the little one to sleep every night. When the illness was over and the household had settled down to its accustomed routine again there was trouble. Little son demanded in no uncertain terms that the rocking continue. The mother, however, was determined, and put him upstairs alone and left him. His cries for about three nights were deafening, after which he gave in to the inevitable and his retiring gave the family no further inconvenience.

The following interesting Mother's Notes appear in McCall's magazine.

A young woman art student whose home was in a nearby town recently said to me: "I am going out home this evening to spend a few days. A family council has been called."

"A family council?" I queried. "What is that? Something like the Mothers' Council or the Council of Jewish Women?"

"Oh, no, nothing so big and important as those. Just an urgency meeting of our own little family circle."

As I still looked unenlightened, she went on. "There were five of us children, two brothers and we three girls, and from the time I can remember the government of the family was vested in what we called the council, with father and mother as the court of last appeal. When any of us children were naughty, mother did not punish us offhand. Instead the meeting of the council was called for the earliest possible time that the whole family could be assembled, and the case was then laid before it. The misdeed was stated and we discussed the case, trying to find excuses for the act, and if punishment was deemed necessary, it was pronounced by father, although there might be appeal from his judgment if any of us thought it too severe. After that the matter was never referred to again.

"Not only did we try misdemeanors, but breaches of etiquette were brought

before the council, and the proper conduct discussed. As we grew older school matters and business affairs were considered in the same way, and though we are all grown now, the council is still occasionally called. This time it is to talk over my youngest brother's plan to go West and buy an apple farm. Of course, he'll go if he wishes," she smiled whimsically, "but at least the project will be discussed in all its bearings and all the advantages and disadvantages we can think of or find out, will be laid before him."

As I noticed that girl's serene face and poised, self-possessed bearing, I felt that in her little circle the perfect ideal of family government had been reached. What splendid training both for parents and children! No punishment in anger, no misjudgment of the child, but a cultivation of good judgment and self-restraint on the part of the parents, while securing absolute justice for the child.

This method of rule is now in use in many colleges, where the "student senate" considers all matters of discipline and enforces the penalties. And it is said that much better order and a higher sense of honor prevails in schools thus governed than in those where the regulation of conduct is under the control of the faculty alone. In the George Junior Republic, where many children are cared for, a wise system prevails, placing the entire police and judicial departments in the hands of the members. This also works well, and develops, it is said, remarkable qualities of character in the children. Since this works as well in these cases, it is obvious that it can be applied with just as good results to family government, if only fathers and mothers have the will to do it. I want earnestly to recommend the plan to the mothers of the Query Club, who, I know from their letters, are reaching out after the best methods of making good and useful men and women out of the precious children God has put in their care.

I wish I had space to publish all the good letters containing such helpful suggestions that come to the Query Club, but I can only cull here and there those that touch upon the different subjects I think of for our monthly conference.

Orderliness

One of the subjects oftentimes discussed in family council, my art student said, was that of neatness and orderliness. It is essential to the comfort, not only of the child but that of every person around it, that it be taught early the habit of keeping its belongings in place. Mrs. E. G., New Market, Ind., writes on this topic:

"I've been very much interested in the many suggestions from different mothers, and I can't keep still any longer. I have three dear, little tots and I'm trying to raise them to be real ladies and gentlemen. Sometimes, we blame children for musing up the home. Did you ever think that it is often our fault instead of theirs? Don't you believe we should be more interested in their belongings and furnish places to put them in? My little ones have hooks about three feet from the floor on which to hang their wraps, nails near the cabinet to hang their dish-washing aprons on, and a certain handy place for sandals, etc. They also have a low desk and table for their books, papers and pencils. Then there are boxes for paper dolls, post cards and the bushel of things they are so intensely interested in just now. I make them feel that these things are strictly theirs and that they alone are responsible for the appearance of that part of the home. This gives them a feeling of ownership and pride, and they try to be as good housekeepers as some older 'ladies'."

"Our children will be what we want them to be if we are strong enough in our desire. That is strong enough to sacrifice time, energy and patience in teaching them."

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO LIVE IN LOUISIANA?

Below we give a short extract from an article on "The Protected Wives of Louisiana," by William Hard, appearing in the July Delicater.

Dear Mr. Baker:—I haven't time to write you a regular article this month. Will you put up with these travel-notes instead?

Louisiana is the most extraordinary State I ever was in, for laws about husbands and wives and children.

Do you know that in Louisiana you can't disinherit your children unless you have a "just cause"? And you aren't allowed to have your own opinion about the meaning of the words "just cause." The Civil Code decides that for you.

One "just cause" is if your child strikes you. Another is if he accuses you of a capital crime. Another is if he refuses to look after you when you are insane. If your little Charlie and Harry and Agnes keep away from temptations of that sort, they are your "forced heirs" and you have to let them have their share of your property. It is called their "legitime."

When there are three or more children, the "legitime" amounts to two-thirds of everything that doesn't go to your wife.

Accordingly, if you have three children, you can give away or will away only one-third of your belongings.

If Mr. Carnegie lived in Louisiana and had three children, he could devote only one-third of his millions to setting up book-shelves and reading-tables for the dear public. He couldn't carry out his ambition to die poor. He would have to die rich. He would have to keep two-thirds of his millions for his dear offspring. And he couldn't bequeath to them the thing that he has often called the greatest of all blessings—poverty.

Moreover, and more to come,—speaking of his wife's share in his property—since every wife in Louisiana gets one-half of all that her husband has made during his marriage to her, and since she gets it even if she dies first, it follows that you people up North would be paralyzed in your imagination by the consequences.

If Mrs. Rockefeller died before Mr. Rockefeller, she could will away all the disposable part of her half of Mr. Rockefeller's fortune—to Ida Tarbell, if she wanted to.

Mr. Rockefeller has frequently been reported as saying that he always consulted Mrs. Rockefeller about business and that her judgment had proved itself to be better than his. So possibly he wouldn't mind living in Louisiana.

By this time you will have begun to sympathize with the poor Louisiana husband. His wife's claims and his children's claims leave him little that he can call his own.

Of course if his wife is good enough to die without making a will, he can continue to use her half of what he has earned since marriage. But he can merely use it. It belongs, really, to her children.

If he gets him another wife, he has to surrender it to those children. If he remains a widower, he has to surrender it to them when he dies.

People in Louisiana are shocked by the news that in New York the wife of a man who owns stocks and bonds and cash, but no land can be cut off by him from all share in his estate. They are shocked, outraged, by the view of children's rights which prevails in every other State in the Union and which allows parents to pass by their children and to dispose of their property in favor of nephews or strangers or libraries or hospitals. They are even pained and scandalized by the thought that the laws of all other States permit a parent to discriminate between his children and to give more to one of them than to another. Here all children must share alike.

You see, Louisiana can feel sorry for New York, just as New York can feel sorry for Louisiana. These are the compensations of life.

Seriously and practically, each can learn something from the other.

The poor Louisiana husband, for instance, with whom you sympathize when he comes to make his will, doesn't need much sympathy up to that moment. His pooriness and powerlessness begin only at his death. While he lives he is one of the grandest matrimonial magnates in the country. He has an amount of authority which makes the husband from almost any other state look at him with a feeling which is partly envious admiration and partly bewildered curiosity. How does he get his women folk to let him?

I met an ex-Northern husband here in this hotel last night at dinner. You know him. He used to be with Everybody's Magazine. He is a Southern husband now. His wife sent some stock certificates to a broker to be sold. Our friend didn't know what it is to be a husband down here. The broker sent the certificates back. "Where," said he, "where is your husband's signature authorizing you to sell this stock?"

Our friend is a really, truly husband now. His wife can't sell her own property without asking him. And then if he lets her sell it, and she has the cash in hand and wants to buy a piece of real estate with it, she has to ask him again. His authorization is necessary.

"The wife," says Article 122 of the Civil Code, "cannot alienate, grant, mortgage or acquire unless her husband concurs in the act or yields his consent in writing."

In this respect the married women of Louisiana are back where the married women of most other States used to be fifty years ago. Their husbands stand in between them and their control of their own separate property.

They are beginning to take notice of that fact. When I spoke before the Era Club the other day, many members of the club commented on the laws of Louisiana, and it was clear to me that the "protection" accorded to married women by the Civil Code is ceasing to be gratefully appreciated by the women concerned.

The original idea undoubtedly was "protection." It was not oppression at all.

Just to show you how far the idea of "protection" has been carried, I must tell you that if a married woman wants to mortgage her property, she can't do it even with the consent of her husband. She must also get the consent of a judge in a court.

She goes before the judge. He cross-examines her after her husband has been sent out of the room. "You really want to mortgage this property? Why do you want to do so? Why do you want to borrow money? What are you going to do with it? Is it going to be used for your own benefit? Or is it going to be used for your husband's benefit in his business?" Thus the judge.

If the woman answers and says that she is going to use the money in her own affairs, the judge gives her permission to go ahead. But if she says that she is borrowing the money in order to give it to her husband the judge says "No." And then she can't do it.

She is "protected" against her husband. Her husband might threaten her or wangle her into an unsafe financial enterprise. (So the law and the judge will not let her mortgage her property on behalf of any of her husband's enterprises whatsoever.)

Now an old maid can mortgage her property all she pleases. But, as Miss Jean Gordon, of the Era Club, good-naturedly says, "When an old maid marries one of you men, it seems she loses all her sense."

The Era Club is one of the largest and strongest organizations of women in the United States. It makes up its name from the first letter of the words "Equal Rights Association." And it lives up to its motto, which is:

Who for Truth no sword uplifteth.

He for Error strikes a blow.

It was striking a blow against Error on the day I got here. Many of its blows have been resisted or evaded by the men. This was one welcomed with uncovered head and bared breast. The Era Club suggested to the rulers of the city an ordinance to fix the length of hatpins and to fix it short. This abridgment of one of the most extended of the rights of women was accepted by the men with such enthusiasm that two department-stores immediately installed hat-pin-shortening machines, and several thousand hat-pins were laid on the block and chopped down to the Era length amid cheers.

Cheers, not so loud, perhaps, are going to greet the bill which the Era Club and other women's organizations will present to the next Louisiana Legislature for allowing women to serve on such public bodies as school boards.

Women in Louisiana are "protected"

Continued on Page 16