

The Country Homemakers

Conducted by Francis Marion Beynon.

INSPIRATION

O young Mariner,
Down to the haven,
Call your companions,
Launch your vessel,
And crowd your canvas,
And, ere it vanishes
Over the margin,
After it, follow it,
Follow The Gleam.

—Tennyson.

POTATO PICKING TIME IS COMING

During this season, I venture to say, if you visited the rural schools throughout the length and breadth of the land you would find only a handful of pupils in each and the teacher would inform you with a sorry smile that potato picking was abroad and that there was a consequent fall in the educational market.

There are too many slumps in the educational market in rural districts. Jenny and Johnny and Tommy are kept home today for threshing and tomorrow to pick potatoes and next week to run errands until they completely lose the thread of their lessons. They like it! To be sure they do. The only children I have ever heard of who were really crazy about school were the ones who didn't get a chance to go.

The fact that many of them don't want to go to school is no argument against it, and is altogether beside the question. Children would like to eat Christmas cake and plum pudding three hundred and sixty-five days of the year, but we don't consider that an argument for letting them pave the way for future orgies of indigestion by doing it.

As I pointed out in the summary of Olive Schreiner's book, modern life is becoming so complicated and involved that children require a very special training if they are going to compete successfully in the struggle for existence.

So I maintain that you will be doing your children a much greater kindness by giving them a thorough education and leaving them less land than by acquiring many acres for them and sending them out into the world handicapped for the want of knowledge.

Therefore, regardless of politics, I would like to see every reader of this page aroused to the point of demanding from their legislators a compulsory education law and the strict enforcement of it.

It would help those parents whose children are inclined to shirk school by taking the matter out of their own hands and putting it into the hands of the law and it would help also by making it impossible for them to keep their children at home on every trifling pretext.

There is also, a more general reason why every loyal Canadian should desire compulsory education. School is the great melting-pot of nationalities. Through it and through it alone will we be able to assimilate the different races that are crowding into our country so rapidly. It is almost always too late to nationalize the adults. Let us try it with the children, beginning early and keeping it up continuously.

FRANCIS MARION BEYNON.

Any correspondent desiring an answer by mail is requested to send a self-addressed and stamped envelope for reply. Should you wish to communicate with any of our correspondents the quickest and most satisfactory way is to enclose the letter in a plain stamped envelope and send it to me with a note saying for whom it is intended.—F.M.B.

NEEDS HELP IN TEACHING FAMILY

Dear Friend:—I have been very much interested in your articles in The Guide, and I am thankful to have your aid in the matter of teaching my family. I am enclosing fifteen cents in stamps and ask you to please send me your booklet on "How to Teach the Truth to Children," also the one entitled

"The Most Beautiful Story in the World," and greatly oblige,

FLORAL.

I would like to have you write a nice long letter for our page some day if you can spare the time.—F.M.B.

STRONG FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Dear Miss Beynon:—Enclosed find 5c for one copy of "How to Teach the Truth to Children."

I have read your page with interest from the very start, also Sunshine Page, and when "Margaret" conducted it often sent small gifts for her different schemes which were all so good. My little boys loved to hear of the Toy Mission; we miss her very much, but feel that her successor is also doing a good work and enjoy the helpful articles she gives us every week.

I am one who feels strongly in regard to woman's place in the world. Being a homemaker must enable her to be a nation-builder, for homes are the foundation of nations. It is useless to prevent thinking women taking a part in politics. They must hear and see what is going on about them and when they see young boys of 21 years, ignorant men, often foreigners, who have only been in the country long enough to comply with the demands of residence, etc., but who cannot talk intelligently about politics, voting as someone has told them to or paid them for doing, it certainly arouses indignation.

I say women should vote, and it will not make us neglect our homes. Last year I had one of the petitions for "Homesteads for Women" and men of all positions signed it willingly. I believe honest, broad-minded men will be glad to have women go with them to the polls. I have never heard whether the petition was presented to the Governor-General.

The more independent women are, the better for them and their husbands also. Women are not cauldrons and should not allow themselves to be treated as such. If they hold their place as their husband's companion, they will find their rights respected both in the home and out of it. Trusting these few remarks may not be out of place, I will sign myself

HALIFAX.

SOME COMMONSENSE ADVICE FOR MOTHERS

Dear Miss Beynon:—I like the way your correspondents commence their letters, brief and to the point from the start, thus avoiding using valuable space for telling of "good taken from the page."

I would suggest that mothers (as well as fathers) not only tell their children how to do a thing but also why it should be done that particular way. If more parents did that, there would be a smaller number of careless housekeepers, nay, ignorant ones, and fewer "don't care" farmers. When I was a small girl of about ten years I wanted to do things "worth while," as I termed it, and not only be good and help wipe dishes and wash them, but turn the meat and especially make the gravy. But somehow mother was always in a hurry and did the mixing of the flour and water part and then I was allowed to stir it in sometimes, but somehow I knew I had not made

the gravy. Finally, one day mother was not very well and she stayed in bed a good bit of the day. In telling me what to get for dinner she concluded by mentioning the gravy and said she knew I could manage

Well, when it came to the gravy I took the little bowl mother used generally and put about a cup of flour into it and then took the dipperful of water and poured in about half of it. Stirring the mixture a little I saw I had too much flour, so I took some out and put some more water in. Well, I kept on stirring till I was quite out of patience and proceeded to finish by pouring it into the boiling stock. It was all lumps and I was very cross at papa and brother John for their "toasts." Mother said I would perhaps believe her now, that I was too young to learn those "difficult things," but I kept on wanting to do things that I could not do.

It was months after that I solved the mystery of "mixing." The house was to be papered and mother said I could mix the paste. (When I think of it, how much more difficult, is it not, to mix paste for such purpose than for a little gravy?) I was all joy. I started with a little dab of flour, next, a little water, a little flour, a little water, etc., until I noticed the secret—that for a smooth paste, add water gradually, stirring it all in before more is added. Finding out this, as well as other common ways of doing things, by myself, has saved me many gravy dishes and made me look for more "good ways" of doing things, and I shall admit without boasting that I am a good practical housekeeper, still I am willing always to give up any old way if I find the newer is the best.

But I know of housewives of 10-15 years' experience that are quite lacking in those lines, even in the little way of making smooth paste, who, if their mothers had told them and showed them and made them do it "just so" they might have been as good a housekeeper as could be expected. Yet they are now so in the habit of getting along with lumps in their gravy as well as lumps in their mended stockings that they think it is too much bother to learn to have them both smooth with less time to do it in. Yours in any good work.

MRS. W. J. H.

Allow me to heartily second your motion to teach children how to do things properly. It may be the making of their future lives.—F.M.B.

WILL SEND SLIPPER PATTERN

Dear Miss Beynon:—Seeing your generous offer about the booklet entitled "How to Teach the Truth to Children" I am enclosing five cents for same. I think it is going to be a great help to puzzled mothers.

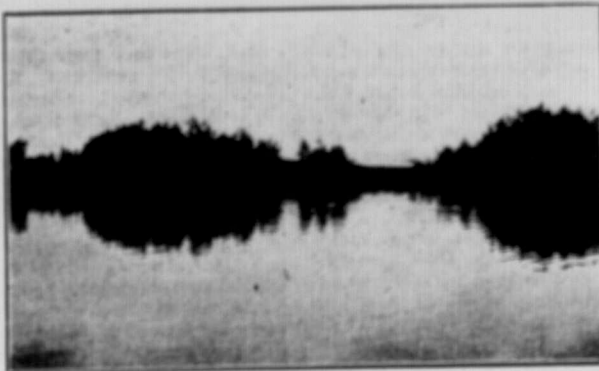
Like most farmers' wives I have not much time to spend in letter-writing just now. I could send a crocheted slipper pattern to anyone wishing it, also some lace patterns.

Will promise to call again and try to bring a few helpful hints along. My baby is calling for me and my boy, 1½ years is trying to help me so.

Bye-bye and best wishes.

FROM YOUTHFUL MA.

P.S.—I would like very much if Lone Mother would write to me. Miss Beynon will forward the letter.—Y.M.



Near Morningside, Alta.

THE KINDERGARTEN IN THE HOME

A great deal has been written about the foolishness of refusing to answer children's questions or putting them off with evasive replies, but this is not the main point in their home education. The great essential is that the parent should be not only willing to answer all reasonable questions and to demonstrate the silliness of unreasonable ones, but to be able to give facts authoritatively. And it requires a higher degree of self-education for the parent of today to do this than it did for the parent of fifty years ago. Fifty years ago, long before the extraordinary industrial development of the United States, the thoughts of children ran in simpler channels. They were concerned more with Nature and natural objects. Today, whether it is to their benefit or not, our children are to a degree prematurely old and their queries have the mark of maturity on them. They wish to know of railways, of banks, of social conditions, and the like, and it is extraordinary at what an early age they begin to probe into these things.

In Ohio there are a number of communities where mothers meet socially once or twice a month in company with the school teacher to discuss the questions of children. Each mother brings in, in writing or out of her memory, the perplexing questions which have been put to her. Each mother also describes her manner in meeting that question and the state of the child's mind at the time it put it. The meetings are not permitted by the tactful school teacher to run into discussion of the varying personalities of the children, but are held closely to the question problem and how to provide the child with a preliminary education before it reaches the school.

In certain of the school districts of New York City, similar meetings are being held regularly and are proving of great value in solving an important home problem. One of the New York teachers said to me of their experience with these meetings:—

"I have had a score of mothers tell me that through learning how to answer the child's question and rationally satisfying its curiosity a new kind of home discipline has been discovered which is far more effective than the cross word or the rod. In the growth of their own minds as they seek for information, they aid the child. The mothers find that the child is growing through them, perceptibly advancing upward every day. One mother came to me with tears in her eyes and told me she was positively ashamed of her conduct; that she had enjoyed greater contentment of mind and greater happiness since she had turned her thoughts towards honestly meeting the natural curiosity of her child."

Professor E. G. Cooley in his recent interviews on the advancing educational system in the wonderful land of Germany, repeatedly points out that the education of the German parent is being accomplished by knowing the necessity of home education long before school education begins. He says that in the homes where this system has been brought into play, he found not only greater knowledge on the part of the father and mother, but that indifference, impatience, unnatural development was checked. The children were more easily managed than those in homes where the system did not prevail and the books, the pictures and the useful toy articles of work which the children used were not isolated to them, but were part of the actual lives of the parents who brought them to life.

While it is possible for a parent to initiate a system of home education of this kind without outside help, there is more to be gained through the mother and even the father, going to the school principal or the school teacher and asking their co-operation. They can readily recommend the books to be used and through long experience can aid the parent in determining what the trend of the child's mind is through its questions.