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Manitoba Agricultural College

HOME ECONOMICS SECTION

HOUSEHOLD ART DEPARTMENT

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WHAT EVERY GIRL SHOULD KNOW

LET the life we live be ever so simple there are a few things that we as civilized human beings must have, and not the least of these is, clothing, that shall be a protection from the heat of summer, and the biting frost of winter.

Of all the phases of "woman's rights" that have been discussed, her right and privilege to see to it that those depending on her care shall be comfortably and suitably clothed, has, we think, never been disputed.

These being recognized facts, let us for a moment or two consider her ability to take up this important task that has been thrust upon her by nature. What is her knowledge of the subject? What training has she had?

"Oh!" we hear someone say, "Any girl can sew," and we in like manner reply, "Any boy can drive nails, but who would think of asking him to build a line fence or a piece of furniture, let alone a house without his having gone to some competent person to learn how?" "Why," you say, "he might buy the wrong lumber, and likely spoil a lot of it, tire himself out, become nervous, cross and in all probability throw the whole thing up unfinished, or if he is persevering and finishes it ten to one it will be all out of plumb, a source of annoyance to yourself and all who see it."

Now these are the very difficulties that confront the woman who has had no training in the making of garments.

In the first place she knows little or nothing of the value of materials, their suitability and durability for the work in hand, and money (often hard-earned) is spent for that which gives no adequate return; but, being a woman, she struggles on, often with headache, backache, and heartache, not from the amount of muscular effort that has been called forth, but from the nervous strain consequent upon effort put forth to do that, which, for lack of training, she is not competent to do.

Sewing, appealing as it does to the artistic sense, and because of the fact that it does not necessitate great muscular effort, is essentially a woman's work; but a work for which she must be trained if she is to have pleasure and profit in doing it.

How often and often has the writer heard married women who are faithfully struggling on, and unmarried women, who feeling the constant drain on their incomes for the making of garments, say "Oh, I do wish I had been taught to sew when I went to school. I cannot get all I really need, let alone all I want, it costs so much for the making."

Now, since it is so obvious that training is necessary, when, where and by whom should it be given?

It is a recognized fact that a girl will learn to sew quicker and better between the ages of seven and ten years than at any other period, the muscular activities being greater, while if left until she reaches womanhood the chances are she will never be able to make much progress. To the question, "who shall teach her?" some would reply—"why, her mother, of course," but we ask—"are all mothers capable? Have all mothers time?"

From the facts of the case as we see them the answer must be "No," and since sewing should be taught early it would appear that the school is the only place where all can learn and best learn.

This subject is important to every girl whether she happens to be a daughter of the rich or of the humble poor, for the rich to-day may be poor to-morrow, and furthermore it is important that all should be able to appreciate good material and work well done. Sewing is now being taught in some of the city schools, and, we are pleased to note, in a few of the rural schools of our province, for if Manitoba stands for one thing more than another it is progressiveness, and we feel sure that just as soon as those who have charge of affairs educational realize the necessity for training in this subject, every little girl shall be given an opportunity of learning that which she must know if she is to do her part towards maintaining the health, happiness and comfort of the home.

But just here arises another question. Even should those in authority decide to introduce sewing into schools where it is not already taught, are all teachers, any more than all mothers, capable of teaching it? Well, in the first place, they all can teach, and those who have passed through the Normal School during the past two years, and have taken a course at the Manitoba Agricultural College have been given sufficient instruction in this subject to enable them to at least make a beginning, and if they have the welfare of the girls at heart, can find opportunities of adding to their knowledge; and we hope the time is not far distant when the Agricultural College will be able to offer a summer school to such as wish to add to their knowledge of this and kindred subjects.

It may seem strange to some of you that one who is engaged in teaching this subject to young women in the Home Economics Department of the college should concern herself with what is being taught in the public schools, but it is just here that one has an opportunity of seeing the importance of early training.

Of course a girl will not learn all there is to learn about sewing while she is in school, any more than about other subjects, that

is not to be expected. But she will at least have been trained to use her head and hands. The foundation is being laid for future building, and just as the boy goes to business college to learn book-keeping and business methods, or to college to study the science of farming, so also the girl will require further instruction in the making of garments, but the progress will be more rapid and satisfactory.

MARGARET KENNEDY.

