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COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK
IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICSU. of N. Agr. College & U. S. Dept. of Agr. Cooperating
W. H. Brokaw, Director, LincolnExtension
Circular
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A HOMESPUN PHILOSOPHY OF HOME EDUCATION

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Home education of adults begins with the child; but, before you can begin with the child, there must be a right attitude toward the child and life, in the hearts of the parents. The child's education begins the day he is born. Parents who don't begin that day to make companions of their children find it extremely difficult and too often impossible to make understanding confidants and companions of them when they reach the age of 12 to 20.

I am inclined to think that when men come to the marriageable age they are generally better prepared to earn an income for the home than the girl they marry is prepared to make a home.

If mother doesn't let her daughter make the bread or get the meal or do the marketing or cut out the dress occasionally, because she can do it so much more quickly and satisfactorily herself, when daughter starts in to make a home of her own her incompetency develops a situation in the new home that is a severe strain on love and too frequently is the starting point of discontent that ends in divorce.

The mother who lets her two-year-old help carry the dishes away from the table is liable to have nervous prostration, and father will have to pay something for broken dishes: but such a mother has the right idea on child education. By this process, mother will be training a helper in her own household who will relieve her of many duties at times when she needs such relief; and a girl, thus trained, will come to her marriage day more competent to make a home and to keep it a contented and happy home, than the girl who comes from a home where mother does all the work herself.

There is a physical and spiritual side in home making. Both are necessary, and the spiritual is often greatly influenced by the physical.

For example, there is the table, around which on practically all the farms of America and in the homes of most small town merchants, the whole family meet three times a day. That is the place where much of the character building of children takes place. We attach great importance to the abundant, well-prepared table. It is probably as significant in child training as is the school or church. The meeting at the table is a social event in the family. It is there that father and mother comment on the behavior of the neighbors, of other children, there that they express themselves on current topics, the church, religion, politics, character, education, prohibition: there three times daily the children drink in through the years ideas of right and wrong, the place of honesty, integrity, sharp practices in life; there they are inspired to high ideals and with ambition, to be someone and something in the world.

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It is the well-prepared table that leads to pleasant memories and a feeling of peace with the world. The ill-prepared table leads to complaint, to dissatisfaction, to quarreling. It takes wonderful parents to train children in the ways of righteousness handicapped by a poorly prepared table.

We are inclined to think that the very great importance of the well-prepared table in child training is all too little understood by parents. In our thinking, it rates equally with the school and with the church in character-building possibilities.

There at the table, all unrecorded except in the minds and hearts of those present, the family expresses itself and says what comes from the heart. There parents stand revealed before the children. How extremely important that the parents have right thinking in their hearts.

We believe in parents systematically encouraging the children at meal time to talk and tell of the day's happenings at school, on the playground, at the party, each in their turn. We believe in the exchange about the table of stories heard during the day. It is an opportune time, too, to bring up topics for discussion and seek the opinions of the children and mother and father. It is a wise father and mother who teach their children the art of conversation and the art of intelligent listening. To be an entertaining conversationalist is one of the real accomplishments in life, and the place to learn is in the family and the occasion in the family is the usual gathering about the table.

There is a difference between just having children and building a family. The first 20 years of married life must give primary consideration in the home to the children, their education, training, and guidance. And the earlier years of the children are, of course, the most important. Children do not reason much about honesty, morality, integrity, ambition to do worth-while things. They imbibe such things from the home surroundings, just as they breathe in the surrounding air; and of course, normally, parents are the most potent factor in the home in influencing the child.

This brings up another point which applies more to rural than to urban groups, and that is that if parents are going to lead and guide their children they must themselves be good observers and must themselves have wide interests so that they each may constitute a storehouse of information and experience and wisdom, on which to draw. For that reason, we always have believed in the mother of the family belonging to informing clubs and clubs that do things. For her own sake, and for the sake of maintaining the interest of her husband and children, she needs to get outside the home occasionally, just to get a rest from the family and have a chance to breathe in some new air and enlarge her horizon.

In the usual home, the husband, who is among men and affairs all day long, grows faster in his outlook and philosophy than does the wife in the home, who too frequently, is confined weeks at a time in the care of the children and household duties without getting away from home once.

Our studies have shown that in the case of farm women many of them may not stay away from home over night once in years, and, when they do go away, they too frequently have to take some of the children with them. This is all a crime, and far from the best interests of either the children or the parents. We, in our Extension work in rural areas, are consciously promoting the idea of mother getting out of the home at vacation camps or, better still, into other people's homes, so she may see and learn, rest and refresh herself and grow with her children.

One more point, and then I will close. In our own family, the six children, now grown, claim that their tramps with their parents Sundays and holidays and at other times, stand out in their memories as the happiest events of their childhood. On these occasions we learned the trees, noticed the birds, tasted the wild sassafras and red sumac, smelled the spice bush, found the first wild flowers of spring, hunted for the crickets, gathered nuts, listened to the frogs, and watched the high-circling hawks float lazily in the sky. Besides that, we floated chips on swift-running water, played they were enemy submarines and tried to drive them ashore with stones before they got beyond a certain point in the stream. If we drove the ships ashore, we won; if they floated beyond the chosen point, the enemy won.

If you begin these trips in wood and field early enough with your children, say as soon as they are big enough to toddle, and keep it up till they are 12 or 14, you will have put something into their lives that they never will get over, something that soothes the nerves and puts them at peace with the world, wherever, in whatever country they may be, clear up to the time they are parents and grandparents.

The **four** points we have tried to bring out in this paper, and which we would leave in your minds, are:

- (1) The strategical place for the training of children is around the table. Make it a well-prepared table and happy occasion because all take part.
- (2) Keep growing with your children. Mother must get out and see and hear as well as father.
- (3) Begin your treks to the woods, lakes, and fields with the children as soon as they can walk and keep them up till you are 80.
- (4) Finally, every home should have a piano or organ, around which the whole family can gather and with mother and father sing the old songs and hymns that have helped build and keep wholesome ten thousand great American homes.