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A CHILD'S RIGHT TO HAPPINESS

Florence J. Ovens, B. S., A. M.,
Editor, National Kindergarten Association, New York City

More than a decade ago Dr. Lyman Abbott expressed himself most emphatically on this subject. He said: "The Declaration of Independence declares that all men have an inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. This is one of the inalienable rights of children - the right to a full, free and happy childhood. There is a familiar saying, 'Be virtuous and you will be happy'. It might with almost equal truth be said, 'Be happy and you will be virtuous'. Crime produces wretchedness, but wretchedness also produces crime." If this is true how much depends on us! Do we encourage our children in "the pursuit of happiness" and give them the help they need? Do we ourselves understand how to seek and find happiness? Is happiness a will-o'-the-wisp, a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow? Or is it something really attainable and retainable? The rich, as a class, are said to suffer less but also to enjoy less than their poorer cousins; the indolent, the selfish, the cruel do not find real joy as readily as the industrious, the generous and the kind. Why? And how shall we help our boys and girls in this "pursuit?"

The articles attached will assist us, if, instead of reading one after another casually, we take each as a lesson and make application of the leading idea to our own individual problem, varying the circumstances and conditions but keeping the governing principle unchanged.

For instance, take the little story by Lillie M. Saunders. Perhaps you haven't a nine-year-old boy, and if you have very likely he is not interested in making cookies. This does not prove that the story has no value for you. Study it carefully and you will find it contains suggestions which are dependable guide-posts in dealing with boys and girls of all ages and dispositions; but you will need others. Elsie F. Kartack has a word of warning and Edith L. Reid another.

The directions given in these three articles do not conflict. Suppose we turn from our subject for the moment to the homely art of cooking. For the best results one must have the best ingredients, but the assured quality of these does not promise success. The proportions must be correct; the manner of combining and cooking must be taken into account. The making of happiness, too, requires care in many directions - and really it is more nearly correct to speak of making happiness than it is of finding it.

Not much of a religious nature can be included in a circular of this sort, though Henry Turner Bailey gives us some very inspiring thoughts. Let us not forget that there still is truth in the old couplets:

"'tis religion that can give
Sweetest pleasures while we live;

'tis religion must supply
Solid comfort when we die."

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Each of the articles introduces a kindly caution and some of them more than one. The breaking of any habit which hinders happiness should be painless, but it seldom is. Our understanding and our ways of working are too imperfect. Whether the hindering habit is our own or the child's the fault is probably ours, so it is our job to see that it is exchanged with as little suffering as possible. But the change must be made. The child has a right to be started on the happy road and to be kept there. And when we consider that all unsocial conduct - from the merely careless to the cruel - is the result of ill-advised efforts to experience this condition known as happiness, can we think of any better way to spend our time than in really producing the condition and in teaching this art to our children?

THE CHILD'S RIGHT TO HAPPINESS

By Supt. Nathan G. Schaeffer

A man in middle life once wrote to his parents, "I shall never cease to be thankful for the happy boyhood which my father and mother gave me. It is a treasure house of memories more valuable than gold and silver."

Fathers sometimes forget that children have the right to be happy at home as well as at school. Let fathers become the friends and companions of their children, share in the Sunday walks and talks, evening games and stories, help with studies or take an interest in inspecting some achievement. The right relationship between father and child will increase when mothers cease to resort to the father's discipline and punishment as a threat for disobedience. Any man prefers to work and sacrifice for an affectionate, confiding child than for one who has been led to consider him a harsh judge and strict disciplinarian.

Almost anything which a child can claim as his very own and can protect and care for will serve to develop his affections, and increase his sense of responsibility and self-respect. A dog, a cat, rabbits, guinea pigs, pets of any kind are a source of joy to any child, for it takes very little to make healthy children happy.

Playmates are helpful in adding joy to the child's life, and an only child should frequently have playmates. Little friends should be invited to the home and the child encouraged to share his toys with them. Every child, too, should have the opportunity to go to the social kindergarten, for in its democratic atmosphere, little people of all types come together. The over-indulged, the neglected, the shy and the backward all meet on common ground and learn adaptability and self-control in their happy activities.

There is nothing which a boy despises more than idleness and inactivity. On the other hand, toil and fatigue, day after day stunt growth and take the joy out of life. A certain farmer once complained that the school enticed all his children away from the old farm. Upon inquiry, it was found, that he assigned useless tasks on rainy days to keep them busy and that they never had any time for play or recreation. The leisure and the companionship of the school were the only relief from drudgery which those children ever knew, and only through compulsory attendance laws was that relief insured them. "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." On the other hand, all play and no work is the curse of the rich man's son.

Every child finds satisfaction in work for which he receives pay. So called projects from which he derives an income and for which he is responsible, give him a taste for work and develop an appreciation for the value of money. "I'll pay you back when we get home," whispered a self-respecting son of nine as he watched his father pay the family carfares one Sunday morning. A smile crept over the kindly face of the father as he replied, "No, Son, but thank you for the offer."

Both city and country children have opportunities to earn money. Though a farm may be the graveyard of talent, it is the best place to spend one's childhood if life there is coupled with good school advantages.

A HAPPY BOY VERSUS A SPOTLESS HOUSE

Lillie M. Saunders

"Mother, may I make some cookies?" asked nine-year-old Billie Dean.

"I should say you may not!" quickly answered his mother with startled surprise. "What in the world ever put such an idea into your head?"

"Well," replied the lad in rather a shamed tone, "Tommy Rogers' mother let him make some and they tasted awful good 'cause he gave me a whole handful of them. He said he made 'em all by himself and I know I could too. Please, Mother, let me try just once an' if they are not good, I'll never ask again. Honest I won't, Mother," he added earnestly.

"Well, I'm not willing and that settles it. I'm not going to have you messing up my kitchen. Go on out and play with your wagon."

"Oh, shoot!" exclaimed the disappointed boy. "I want to make some cookies. I'm tired of playing with that old wagon."

"Billie Dean, that's not an old wagon and you know it," said his mother. "Why, shame on you! You've had it only a week. Now go on out and keep still, I say." Billie slouched out, shutting the screen door with a bang that caused his mother to exclaim impatiently, "That boy! What shall I do with him?"

Her aunt from another town happened to be visiting her. In answer to the mother's perplexed query she replied, "Mary, I think you are making a serious mistake in not permitting Billie to make those cookies when he wants to so badly. If he were my boy I'd be only too glad to have him want to do such things."

"But, Auntie, just think what a mess he'll make," protested Mrs. Dean.

"I don't see why he should," returned the older woman, "and even if he did he could clean it up, couldn't he?"

"Oh, maybe he could, but he wouldn't."

"Well, have it understood that if you let him make the cookies he is to leave everything just as clean and orderly as he found it. Anyway, Mary dear," continued her aunt, "don't you consider it all a part of your job as mother and homemaker? You can't just feed and clothe your boy and call him raised. You've got to study him, live with him and for him, love him and show him you do. I've

been here three days and I've not once seen you play with Billie, or show the least interest in his affairs. He's such a fine little fellow, too, I wish he were my boy," she added wistfully.

"Oh, I don't," quickly replied the mother with a laugh. "I want him myself, but he does drive me half frantic sometimes--always wanting to be doing some unheard of thing."

"Well," returned her aunt, "that's the way Columbus happened to discover America. You'd not want him sitting around like a dummy, would you? Anyway, I like to see a boy take an interest in housework. Mary, if you let Billie make those cookies, I'll see that he leaves everything in good condition."

"All right, Auntie dear, you win. I'll call Billie." She found him sitting disconsolately in his wagon back of the house.

"Oh, Billie, come here," she called.

"What you want?" asked the lad, sulkily.

"Well, come and see," returned his mother. "I've changed my mind about those cookies. You may make some if you want to and will clean up afterwards."

The lad gave a bound and let out a yell of joy. "Oh, goody, goody, Mother! You bet I'll clean up afterwards! You'll see. And I'll make you some good cookies too."

SPOILING THE CHILD

Elsie F. Kartack

One often hears a mother say, "Let the children play now because they will have to work hard enough when they grow up." Does she stop to think that a childhood spent in play is inadequate preparation for the work to be done in manhood or womanhood? To be sure childhood is the time for play and we should not expect a child to do the things that an adult does, but he should be trained to assume small responsibilities, gradually increasing them until he is ready to go out into the world fully prepared to take his share.

Mothers think that they are helping their children by waiting upon them, but they are in truth harming them. I have in mind a young girl whose mother was so devoted to her that she never allowed her to do anything for herself nor to share in the responsibilities of the home. She was scarcely allowed to think for herself. The mother assumed the working out of each of her problems. When she finally left home to go away to school, she was helpless indeed. She was tardy at classes, lessons were improperly prepared, she lost her books and purse, and, in general was a sad trial to her teachers and others with whom she came in contact. Finally, her training completed, or supposedly completed, she secured a position as teacher in her home town. On the opening day of school she overslept. Her mother did not awaken her, and she entered upon her duties an hour late, thus making a poor impression for herself at the very beginning of her work. Then, unaccustomed to seeing things to be done unless pointed out to her, she failed to note many matters needing her attention during the first days. The principal did not find her in her room one morning, but after a search he found her in the school yard, playing with the seventh grade children. And that was where she belonged; she could assume just about as much responsibility as a seventh-grader.

A child's training with regard to responsibilities should begin in baby-hood. As soon as he can walk across the floor and play with a ball, he should be taught to put that ball in its place before he goes to bed. As his playthings become more numerous he should, gradually, learn to take care of each in the same way.

As he grows older he should be taught that each one in the family circle has his work to do. Father earns the money for food; Mother cooks it; Brother and Sister run errands and wash the dishes. And, if the mother constructively instructs, corrects and praises, he, too, will soon look for opportunities to prove himself an active member of the family circle.

WAYS OF HAPPINESS

Edith L. Reid

All mothers have the secret hope that their children will always be happy and that their lives will be free from heartache. This is of course a natural longing born of love. Yet sometimes mothers do not use the surest means for bringing it to pass.

George was pulling his little wagon about the yard none too carefully when he bumped it against a tree and knocked a wheel off. He began to cry loudly and stood gazing helplessly at his broken toy. His mother, hearing his wails, ran quickly from the house, noticed what the trouble was, and immediately gathered him in her arms.

"That's too bad, dear," she consoled, at which sympathetic tone George boo-hooed louder than ever. His mother continued, "Don't cry any more, and we'll take the wagon down to the corner shop and have the man put the wheel on again." So George stopped his sobs, the wagon was repaired within a short time, and he was, as his mother felt sure, entirely happy once more.

This is one example of how to give a child happiness. But such a course fails to provide for happiness in the future when Mother, or some other person equally indulgent, is not present to sympathize and to relieve the trouble.

In contrast to this, let us notice the boy next door to George, in connection with a similar incident. Clarence was running a small mechanical automobile which operated by winding a spring. He was having great fun with this when it ran into the wall of the porch and bent one of the front fenders so that the car would not run straight. Try as he would Clarence could not make it follow the right course.

"I bent my auto," he called to his mother, but with no thought of crying or complaining.

His mother asked casually, "What can you do about it, Son?"

"I don't know yet, but I'll do something," replied Clarence stoutly, and there was no more said about the accident for some time. But Mother heard Clarence in the basement rattling tools and wire, and at length he came hurrying towards her exclaiming, "See what I invented!"

The invention was not perfect, to be sure, but it comprised a front bumper to the auto. It was made of a stout piece of wire that the small boy had bent with the pliers and twisted into place across the front of the car. He had also straightened the bent fender. "Now if my car hits the porch rail the fender won't

bend, for my bumper will protect it," he said, and his eyes shone with the true joy of accomplishment. He had met a difficulty and conquered it, thus employing his own natural powers of vision and intelligence. He was not helpless, as George had been, in the face of what to a child was nothing less than disaster. Clarence had gained happiness in winning a victory over adverse conditions.

So it is in all phases of child life. We can either hand out temporary happiness because it is within our superior power to do so, or we can direct children towards achieving happiness by preparing them to solve their own problems without the supervision of adults. The teaching of resourcefulness is the wisest and surest means of insuring continued happiness with regard to all the things which such resourcefulness can reach.

A JOY STORE
Grace Archbold.

Not long ago, it fell to my lot to take a little family of nephews and nieces to their parents who were settling out west. A friend of mine, the mother of four children, found time to see me off. As she bade me farewell, she handed me a mysterious looking bag. In the excitement of departure, I tucked it away and promptly forgot all about it.

The novelty of the train soon wore off with the children, who were already tired out by the wrought-up atmosphere of those last few days.

"What can I do, Auntie?" wailed a plaintive voice.

The question was repeated more and more insistently. Our neighbors frowned and fidgeted until I began to feel conspicuous and uncomfortable. In desperation I dived about in our numerous packages and finally came across the forgotten parcel. It contained all kinds of amusements for the little ones. Imagine my relief! There was a neatly labelled surprise for each day of the journey. Such a delightful variety!

That parcel made all the difference in the world to us. Instead of the trip being a tedious affair, we were able to enjoy it. The interesting spots on the way were a delight because the children were happy. Some grown ups were attracted to our group and were glad to watch the children solve their puzzles and to join in their very real fun.

As the train moved over the sparsely settled country I thought of the difficulties of many a mother there, trying to bring up a young family in a home without neighbors. How would my sister manage after the resources of a large city?

"I know what I will do," she remarked, when I was telling her about our experiences, some days after our arrival. "Why not work out the same idea for emergencies in daily life?"

That was the beginning of her "Joy Store" as the children called it. I remained on with her for several weeks and together we put in the first items.

She had the good fortune to possess an old family chest with a quaint gilt padlock attached. In it we put all sorts of contributions, keeping one division for girls, the other for boys. It is astonishing, if you bear such a purpose in mind,

how the treasures accumulate. For instance, when we were sewing, an otherwise useless remnant was cut into a doll's garment ready to be worked upon by small fingers. Odd crayons and pencils were saved, pictures to cut out or color were collected, simple games and puzzles were made. Beads were put in a box with needle and thread and bright bits of note-paper, on which the children would like to draw or to write letters in their own particular style to enclose in Mother's letter to Grandmother, were put into the chest. A short story, culled from a magazine or newspaper, which we knew would have a special appeal to Jack or Freddy was made more personal by printing the boy's name upon it. This individual touch was used often, as we knew it would draw interest at once. The blessings we put in that box were endless.

Of course these treasures were not intended to interfere with the usual allotted tasks of each child, but to save awkward situations, to avert quarrels on wet days, and to relieve the tiresome periods of convalescence. Then, again, they would prove a boon before a meal unavoidably delayed, when the appetite is sharp and the tongue sharper.

My sister, writing me later, spoke of being able to add frequently to her "Joy Store" and said it was the greatest help to her. She did not make too constant an inroad on it, and she kept a second box as a depository for games or articles that could be used continuously.

This certainly is one way of avoiding the eternal "don't, don't" which everyone agrees, nowadays, spells ruination to the disposition of a child. It is a salvation, when the cry, "What can I do, Mummy?" comes as the last straw to the ears of a driven parent.

BY THE PLEASANT ROAD OF PRAISE
Jessie L. Jackson

Mrs. Kingsland looked up with a smile as Mrs. Matthews, worried of face, came around the corner of the house. Suspecting the cause of the frowns she asked as she placed a chair, "How's Dorothy's ironing coming along?"

"Oh, dear!" groaned Mrs. Matthews, "I made her rinse the things out and hang them on the line again. Now she's in her room crying. I don't know what to do. She's been six weeks doing a little sewing--had to rip two garments and do them over."

"Well, well, poor child! She's had a hard time from start to finish. Maybe you're too particular, my dear." Mrs. Kingsland's kind old face was fairly tremulous in her desire to attack her neighbor's methods and yet give no offense.

"I am particular. I want her to be superior in every way."

"But one must remember, you will agree, that superiority in a child is very different from superiority in you or me."

"Yes, but--the essentials! Look at your Margaret! You trained her. I wish you'd give me your method."

"Yes, I taught her the essentials. I also taught her what the essentials are--two very different things."

"I don't - "

"That is, I painstakingly taught her what to slight and how to slight it."

Mrs. Matthews gasped, "You taught her to slight - "

"Yes, to slight the non-essentials. You asked for my method - "

"Yes, begin with sewing."

"Almost from babyhood, Margaret wanted to run the sewing-machine."

"So did Dorothy; but, or course, hand-sewing comes first."

"I didn't insist upon it with Margaret. When she was twelve I let her make an apron. I cut it out and showed her how to run the machine. That was all, except that when she asked for help, I gave it, and I made the buttonholes. The result wasn't the superior work you insist upon; but I was well pleased."

"Yes - "

"By the time she was sixteen she had made three complete sets of undergarments, two dresses and many other things. She had learned to sew and had been happy through it all. Wait," and Mrs. Kingsland hastened into the house.

"These tell the story," she said as she came back breathless, a book in her hand. "Her brother took these pictures for me. Here she is in her first apron. See, her age is written beneath."

"What a sweet little dear!"

"Here she is wearing the dresses she made before she was sixteen. And here," Mrs. Kingsland's eyes glowed, "here is a picture of the machine her father gave her on her sixteenth birthday. I remember she threw her arms around his neck and cried, she was so happy. She has that same machine in her own home now."

"Oh, I wish I had tried some such way," cried Mrs. Matthews, "I wonder whether I could make it work now!"

"Of course you could. Begin with those very things on the line. Iron them yourself. Tell her you thought she'd worked hard enough. Then praise some of those she did. I'm sure some of them must be all right."

"They are." Mrs. Matthews' face quivered.

"Now my dear, my whole method was this: I didn't ask for perfection, and I praised when I could. When I couldn't, I remembered that she was just a little girl preparing herself to do the hardest, but also the noblest work in the world, and I encouraged. Praise and encouragement will carry one far toward perfection--and you yourself say that my Margaret is a perfect housekeeper. She is. She keeps her little home in charming condition. Her three children are clean and sweet and well-behaved; she herself is cheerful and in good health, and she finds a little time to keep up her music and painting. Just praise, nothing else. You go home and try it."

"I will--and thank you." There were tears in Mrs. Matthews' eyes, but her voice was full of hope.