

HOW TO TAKE CARE OF THE FAMILY

“Take care of Mary,” said the family friend to the happy bridegroom, as they stood together in the minister’s parlour after the knot had been tied.

“And ain’t she goin’ to take care of me, too?” answered the bashful swain.

Don’t laugh. The bridegroom was right. He, and everybody else in the house, needs your care, Mary dear.

“I never knew how a Father felt till the children came running to meet me when I came home that first day from teaching school again, after my husband died,” said a woman who had been left a widow with four little children, the youngest six months old.

“Yes, I went back to teach school again. I taught before I was married.”

“O yes, I kept on nursing the baby. Every four hours, you know.”

“But I never knew how a Father felt till the children came running out to meet me that first day.”

How the Father Feels.

Don’t forget how the Father feels. He is bearing the burden and heat of the day. He carries the big responsibilities of life. He comes home tired. He wants to be at his best to you and you want to be at your best to him. To make him welcome and to keep him comfortable, happy and healthy is a great achievement and a great pleasure. And one sure way to make him feel welcome is to look nice yourself and have the house looking nice. A clean, tidy, well-kept house, with a bright fire and something pretty wherever you look, even if it is only a little looking-glass or a few buttercups in water, or a brightly polished teakettle makes a good welcome. Never mind all the hard knocks you have had. Things don’t matter if you don’t let them matter.

Who’s Coming to Tea.

“Who’s coming to tea?” said the young husband when he saw that his wife had changed her dress and put one of the best tablecloths on the dining-table.

“You,” promptly answered the young wife.

She had forgotten lately to do these little things, but an old friend had been in that day, found the young wife rather untidy, told her she was “heading for trouble” and the young wife had taken the hint!

“Why, I thought you were going to have company,” said he.

“Yes. You are my best company,” said she.

Beguile Father of his cares. Forget, and help him to forget, anything hard or disagreeable in the day. Don't be afraid to do things for people. Hang up his coat. It won't hurt you unless it is very heavy! But see that he does things for you. Never refuse to let him help you, Keep it up!

Are his feet wet? Give him dry socks and slippers. He is the Head of the Family and the Chief of our Strength.

Feet.

“How often will I tell you that a marching man is no stronger than his feet—his feet—his feet,” as one of Kipling's Sergeants says. In taking care of the family begin at the feet. You know how. Don't do it yourself. Supervise it. Teach them to do it. Just as soon as they are old enough. Clean, comfortable, well-shod feet. Have you a boot-cleaning place? Good. Who makes and mends the socks? The sailors in the British Navy can knit and patch and darn as well as we can. On the farm, or anywhere, it is a fine thing for all the boys and girls to be handy with a needle.

A Fair Deal.

Give a fair deal all round. Let the girls do things for the boys, and the boys do things for the girls, and let them all do things for you. Children about four years old begin to want to “Help Mother” and “Help Father.” Let them. Let them help, and let them keep right on all through life. Don't discourage them. For the first five years they will not be much real help but think of the next sixty years after! The useful people begin young! Always let everybody in the house help to take care of everybody else.

The Older Generation.

There may be an aged person in the family. One of the older generation. They are getting fewer. It is a great thing for the children to have Grandfather and Grandmother. The aged need extra warmth, quiet, consideration, and simple, good, easily digested food. They should rest longer in the morning than the rest of us. Tommy can take up Grandma's breakfast and do a great many other things for her. Rachel will always remember to put a hot stone, well-wrapped-up, in Grandfather's bed at night—about half an hour before his bedtime. Everybody should be specially courteous to the older generation. They don't like things to be changed as much as we do. Some day Tommy will belong to the older generation himself. There are always three generations in sight and we should keep close to each other.

A Chance for the Children.

Don't suppress the children too much. Don't say—"Children should be seen and not heard." We should be willing to hear them if they have something to say. Little children often say lovely things and true. Your children have gifts. Can't you find out what they are? Bring them out, and let them work away at something and don't make them silly and spoiled.

As for the Baby—of course everybody wants to help Mother with the Baby. It is a privilege to do anything for anybody in our family.

Meals.

Good food has a great deal to do with health. Meals should be regular, sufficient, nourishing, varied, well-cooked and eaten slowly. Food habits are very hard to change. Begin right. Eat slowly. Teach the children to begin using their teeth to chew properly as soon as they have any teeth and keep the teeth clean until the child is able to use a tooth brush and keep them clean himself. As for regularity, everybody in our family comes when the bell rings.

Mother must not be kept waiting. She has everything hot. Father will say Grace—or perhaps one of the little children. Teach the children manners. Good manners are beautiful to see. They are a valuable asset, and such a help to character, conduct and success. That's the way to get your salary raised.

Most of us Canadians are hungry for our meals, and we know that we should stop when that hunger is reasonably satisfied. Don't keep on eating till you don't want to eat any more. You have eaten too much when you feel that way. Don't hurry off to the hardest work right after meals. Help Mother to clear the table and wash the dishes. If it is not your turn to help then read for a few minutes.

Sleep.

Then there is sleep. The baby will sleep twenty-two hours out of the twenty-four, and then eighteen or twenty till about one year old. Father should have at least eight or nine hours—say, 10 p.m. to 7 a.m., or 8 p.m. to 5 a.m. on the farm. Mother should have nine hours, the same as Father, but ten is better. Perhaps she could rest an hour in the afternoon. Little children need fourteen or fifteen hours of sleep. They should have twelve hours or more up to eight to ten years of age and a good sleep in the afternoon. Eight years old is young enough for school. At twelve years of age they may do with eleven hours but they should not sit up as late as Father and Mother until they are about eighteen years old. School lessons that cannot be learned before bedtime, (but study while you are at it), may be left till another day.

Children that sleep long and well usually have good nerves and good health. They will have some reserve strength and be equal to the burdens of life when they grow up.

Clothing.

Clothing has something to do with health. If the feet are all right and a woollen garment, (combinations are convenient), is worn next the skin, you are pretty well all right and can wear what else you like. The beaver wears his fur all the year round and never takes cold. Of course in summer he resides under water a good deal. You may change your winter flannels for lighter ones about the 24th of May, if you are too hot, but soft light wool is the best thing to wear next you all the year round if you really want to avoid Doctor's bills. Underclothing should be changed once a week. If the thermometer gets up to 90° Fahr. you may wear cotton next you for these few hot days. But in winter, do not follow foolish fashions and have your children's legs bare and cold. Girls need warm clothes as much as boys. A girl's health may be impaired for life by wearing insufficient clothing.

Ventilation.

The whole house and every room in it and every corner of it should be flushed out with fresh air every day. Don't sit in a close, stuffy room. Mother should be able to open every window in her house with a gentle touch of two of her fingers. Windows in bedrooms should be open during sleeping hours—wide open in summer and a tiny crack open in severe weather. There will always be a current of cold air near a window in very severe weather, but this usually does not come from outside and therefore is not fresh air.

Habits.

Regular habits are essential to good health. Bed-time should be regular—also rising time. Bed-clothes should not be too heavy. Be sure that every one in the house has a regular, definite time for going to the toilet and never neglects it. That is the best way to prevent constipation. Health usually depends very much on attention to these regular habits.

Baths and Teeth.

Everybody needs a bath every day. If you cannot manage that at present in your family, do the best you can and work towards it. But with a bathroom, which we hope every Canadian home will have before long, you can manage it. Give everybody a definite time for the bath. A bathroom saves so much work in carrying water. If possible have two places downstairs where hands and faces can be washed, and teeth can be brushed twice a day at least. Watch the children's teeth.—First set and second set too. Clean teeth will not decay.

Everybody needs three drinks of water a day. The best times are before breakfast, in the middle of the morning and the middle of the afternoon. This is your internal bath. If you have a cup for general use, teach everybody to wash it out well before and after drinking.

Weight and Height.

Keep a record in your Diary or on the back of the calendar of the height and weight of each of the children, every month if convenient, or at least twice a year, to see how they are growing

Health Hints.

It is also important to know the weights of the other members of the family. A satisfactory weight is a good indication of health. Everybody ought to be well and there is some cause for any ailment we have: Take headache. The commonest cause is eye-strain. Get the advice of a doctor who is an eye specialist. Not a jeweller, nor a pedlar nor a general merchant, but a doctor who is an eye specialist. Nothing is so precious as sight. If there is anything wrong with your eyes, see the doctor who is an eye specialist or oculist. Do not neglect a cross eye, a “squint,” especially in a child. See an oculist at once, just as soon as you notice the squint or it will be too late.

Do not neglect a “running ear” or repeated sore throats or “mouth breathing.” Ask your family doctor. Health is all important. Hold yourself up. Sit up. Don’t be round-shouldered.

Exercise out of doors is necessary to health. The children need play. It is part of their birthright. Your good neighbour’s children will always be welcome visitors to help to play games. Get them started. Children should play. See that they know how, please.

To Cheer Up.

Mother must have a walk every day. If she can walk to the field or down the lane or down the street to meet Father and walk back with him she will like that best. He will make her a nice little seat under the old beech tree on the farm, about a quarter of a mile from the house, where she can sit in the summer. Besides, Mother and Father must get “off the lot” sometimes. Always have a holiday in sight, even if it is a year off. Where do they go for picnics in your part of the country? Invite your neighbours and go. Farmers know how to manage a picnic and city people like a picnic in the country.

Have some fun. Have a change. Read a good novel. Take a rest. You deserve it. All work and no play makes anybody dull. What do you really care for? Music? Theatre? Travel? Baseball? Save up and have it. It will do you good and it is really your duty to keep your mind alive as well as your body. Don’t starve your mind or murder it. Hurrah for a Holiday!

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