Put the Home Into Homemaking

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“A HOME SONG.
I read within a poet’s book
A word that startled the page:
“Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage!”

Yes, that is true, and something more:
You’ll find where’er you roam,
That marble floors and gilded walls
Can never make a home.

But every house where Love abide,
And Home is sure, and home-sweet home,
Is surely home, and home-sweet home;
For there the heart can rest.
—Henry VanDyke.

is not less true that the person, who has had the misfortune to live in a home, which, for its members, has been synonomous with a perennial meal ticket, a long-time lease, or a steady “job,” falls far short if held up to the measure of his possibilities under more favorable home conditions. Lest the analogy of the clay be carried too far, it is well to recall that the clay can, under proper treatment, be remolded and that which has been ugly can be made more beautiful. Likewise, the seed will germinate if proper food, moisture, and other essential elements are provided before it is too late. But as with the house, so with the person, enduring qualities cannot exist, if the foundation has been poor. To put secure cornerstones where insecure ones have first been placed is not an easy matter after the framework of a building has been completed, but to alter habits, tastes, associations, and ideals, which have once been established, is far more difficult. The real function of the home—that of character-building—is one which must be started at the outset.

No single factor is of greater importance in successful homemaking than the attitude and point of view of those who marry. If a long engagement period, the issuing of a permit for the marriage ceremony, itself, could be relied upon to give to the contracting parties an appreciation of the responsibilities which they are accepting, all would be well. Unfortunately, this has not been the case and all too frequently the rosier haze surrounding the engagement becomes after marriage a dull and monotonous gray, that may have been entered upon in a spirit of adventure, resolves itself into a complex problem without a ready solution. The young bride confides to herself in the secret of her chamber that things are very different and the young husband questions his earlier interpretation of marriage. It is easy and entirely possible to lay the blame upon the two contracting parties but this is not entirely fair. The community must shoulder part of the responsibility. From its members has come the interpretation of the marriage relation. So long as the popular version of this relationship continues thru the medium of the back page of the evening paper, the after-dinner story, the mis-named congratulatory greeting and the screen, the young woman will, in order to protect herself, be inclined to believe that marriage is the very answer to her problem. Very closely associated with this is the interpretation of responsibilities before marriage is the very important question of training. The home of a half-century ago, which was, in reality a factory providing for the several needs of the family, has gone and in its place has come a more complicated structure depending in a larger measure upon the community for food, clothing, and other essentials. In place of making as did her grandmother, the modern woman is spending the family income for articles made outside of the home. A placard indicating the various agencies, which perform services or provide commodities for the home has been well labeled with the question, “Madam, who keeps your house?” To believe that every young woman is fitted to carry the responsibilities of a modern home, by virtue of the fact that she is a woman is scarcely conceivable, and yet training for homemaking constantly meets with disfavor and defeat today, because it is still regarded as one of the educational frills. Fathers and mothers withhold their sanction to daughter’s marriage until they are convinced that the prospective son-in-law is trained sufficiently to earn an adequate income. Is there not reason for a similar standard to be set up, which will insure to the young man’s parents the wise spending of the income after it is earned? In that case, the mere fact that a girl had lived in a home might not be sufficient proof of a thorough course in homemaking essentials.

The time was when the state of parenthood was believed to bestow upon a man and woman all of the information necessary for the successful rearing of children. This belief is gradually giving way under pressure of research in psychology, and actual observation of existing conditions. If the man and wife are to give to the Nation citizens who are worthy of the name, there is but one way by which they can be relatively certain of the character of their contribution.
to his business, but also to his home and family, and that he can carry family obligations and privileges only when he gives to them a just proportion of his time. Home must be something more than a place to read a newspaper to oneself at the close of a busy day or to drop one’s business suit and accessories before dressing for an evening engagement. If a man lives up to his part of the marriage contract, he must be something more than a passive factor in the home. The wife is no less a poor homemaker if she lets the mechanics of housekeeping crowd out her real contact of homemaking. Dishwashing—and the manifold duties of each day—must be recognized as a means to an end and rated accordingly. Free time should be a first requisite for the wife if family life is to be cultivated. To the two major partners will fall the responsibility of simulating and encouraging the younger members. The music which they are to enjoy, the books which they wish to read, the associations which they will care to cultivate, the religious life in which they may take part, the friendships which they in turn will sponsor are all determined in large measure by the standards which their father and mother have established in the home. To those two has been given the privilege of shaping other lives not alone by precept, but rather by example. Understanding, sympathy, pliability, interest, and co-operation are the qualities which will be most essential in order to attain the goal which they have set.

Altho there is laid upon both parents the responsibility, the degree to which they succeed is dependent in part upon the younger members of the family. It takes the active interest and support of every member to attain a worthwhile goal. Each must give of his time and each must make a contribution. For all there will be the opportunity to share in the every-day duties of the home, that the mother may find more free time. Sometimes the greatest help is caring for one’s personal belongings. Again, it may be the care of a smaller sister or brother. For others it will mean bringing

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They must have the best training which it is possible to secure. Haphazard information makes for haphazard children. Surely the very greatest privilege of men and women is not to be left to chance.

It might be assumed that successful homemaking would come into being if all men and women had an appreciation of their responsibilities and were trained to carry them. There is, however, a third requisite, which must always be supplied if the highest type of success is attained. Aeroplane ideals are frequently fleeting and an objective so common to all, be it ever so humble, is to keep the eyes on the stars. Having a true perspective homemaking at all times and under all conditions is difficult even with appreciation and knowledge of the enterprise. It remains for the homemakers, indeed for all alike, to make their goal a reality in their every-day life. Maximum development of each family member can come only when each person in the great circle toward the objective, which they all hold in common, The husband must remember that he has obligations

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**THE IOWA HOMEMAKER**

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Putting the home into homemaking is not an impossibility even in the present day if each member of the family will cooperate. It may mean a living room with many of the modern comforts, good books, good music, a happy family table, picnics together, a camping trip, the entertainment of friends—these, and a great many more things. Most of all it gathers up the joys of living though, sometimes in intangible form, and if, more than anything else, makes life worth while for the individual family and for the members of the larger community.

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