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CONSERVATION OF ENERGY IN THE HOME

Its Beneficial Effect

on the

Family

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Thesis for Degree

of

Master of Home Economics.

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THESIS

CONSERVATION OF ENERGY IN THE HOME;  
Its Beneficial Effect on the Family.

First, our definition of energy in its deepest significance, taken from the philosophy of Aristotle: "Actuality; realization; existence: state of being no longer in the germ but in life". Thus we consider our problem, not as the mere saving of footpounds of work, but as conserving the vital spark of life itself.

To this end we must look for enlightenment in both poetry and practicality. We must approach with open minds, clean hearts, and strong hands; for the way is unaccustomed, and the by-paths are many.

Next, let us decide upon the meaning of home. Is it a house with its usual equipment of furnishings, and time-honored system of duties; its master, mistress, and their probable offspring? Or, is it, in a broader, better sense, a home: a living, working, inspiration for the best there is in human beings? We naturally choose the latter when it is so boldly put before us, and discover that the elements of such a home cannot be

summoned in a day or a year; but that some of them must come down the ages; others must be born of endeavor; and still others burst into being as the rose unfolds to the warmth of the sun. Thus the deeper we delve into our problem the greater we learn are its complexities; and in order to consider the conservation of the ideal we have chosen, we must presuppose its creation. A word, however, as to the influences that tend toward the making of this ideal home, and the perpetuation of its living organism.

I once heard a father who scornfully refused his four-year-old boy's request for a doll; saying that boys should play with dogs and guns; that only little girls should play with dolls. The lad was crestfallen and, creeping up to the nursery, when he thought that no one was looking, bent over his sister's doll and kissed its rosy cheek. Can we expect an appreciation of the sweetness and sanctity of fatherhood when we teach boys to scorn the first instincts in their innocent child play? Then, too, there is a time in a boy's life when he takes to clean collars and bright ties of his own accord for the benefit of the curly haired miss who sits behind him in school; but the teasing of his family at home and jeers of school-

mates outside will, as a rule, cheapen and destroy this very real boy sentiment, and turn an influence for good into channels of coarseness and vulgarity. Later, when the growing youth feels the virility of young manhood urging him to exploit his health and strength; God pity the mother or sister who discourages his fads and restrains his natural, wholesome impulses; for the current of the stream will force it on: if the right way is dammed up, it will find another way: too often seeking lower levels for its easier progress. The world would be a cleaner place in which to live if mothers could only realize that their sons might better be killed by the cherished automobile or drowned from the coveted canoe than drift into a life that is not only a shame and a sorrow to their families but also a menace to themselves and all they stand for in relation to humanity. We must not repress Nature's forces; we must harness them. We must study the needs of the fathers of the race and, by substitution of healthful exercise and interesting projects, lead Nature to fulfillment in the magnificence of her strength, rather than force her to the ignominy of weakness.

Ages of prudery and convention have established

traditions of life in the minds of women, rather than actual knowledge, even in the face of experience. They have believed to be true what preceding generations have told them, and few have dared to question the vital issues or to seek new interpretations of their own emotions. This is a problem in itself deeply significant to the building and perpetuation of the ideal home. To this end must the education of girls and women be considered, not only the training of the mind and the perfection of the body, but a clarifying of the sex soul too long steeped in the superstition of fatality. This so-called "woman's lot" should be glorified in its possibilities for triumph rather than its probabilities of martyrdom.

Our greatest fault in the training of girls from childhood seems to have its root in our own ignorance of the meaning of little things, our failure to get the child's point of view, Secrecy, suppression of facts, wilful misinterpretations on our part lead to mischievous curiosity and, in the end, to misinformation, establishing false ideas, cheap sentiments, and a wholly distorted view of the most sacred association of human lives. In its first inclination the mating instinct of girls shows itself only in the

silly, romantic desire for admiration, attention, and caresses. Their ideas are gathered from books, plays, picture shows, and the experiences of older girls told in the usual conventional terms where the story ends "When they got married and lived happy ever afterward." Beyond that the maiden mind must not presume to go. The great mystery of life and death remains a mystery to millions of women even after their children are born. "It is a woman's lot and must be borne, if not with fortitude, at least with resignation." These women, through no fault of their own, are only half human; Their lives are drab and ineffectual; Their children are not born of love but of submission to an inexorable fate.

High school and college courses for girls should be planned to encourage and develop physical perfection and mental poise. Girls must have experiences that will teach them to think. They must have initiative and practical training in business transactions. They should be taught to understand and use common forms of banking, transferring of property, insurance policies, administration of wills and deeds, and, above all, should be drilled to a fine sense of

honor in business as well as in personal relations with other human beings. Our social fabric is very frail and thin in this one quality of womanhood. Girls who fib and resort to tricks to gain their ends will grow up to be women who cheat at games and lie to their dearest friends, believing themselves to be wise and clever. Our double standard of morality demands, of the man, that his word shall be as good as his bond and, of the woman, that no breath of suspicion shall rest against her fidelity or virtue. Nither may sin with impunity against the sex law of the other.

When the time comes for a young woman to plan a home, let not her eyes be blinded with too much fine sewing, but rather be opened to the beauty and truth of the power she holds in the hollow of her hand. Let there be no mystery or misunderstanding about the meaning of marriage. Youth should meet it with smiles and arms full of roses. But when a girl has been humped over fine sewing for months, then rushed through a season of social events, and torn to shreds by dressmakers and tailors, what has she left of strength or spontaneity with which to meet the great adventure? A tired, worn-out brain and

unresponsive nerves make a sorry gift to a bridegroom, and the golden honeymoon too often proves but dross in reality. Naturally, having no life in herself, the young wife is disappointed and oppressed and, finally, becomes embittered and the first seed of discord is sown, from which the divorce courts reap the harvest. Unfortunate, neglected children are cast adrift, or else are brought up in an artificial atmosphere of false standards. All of this because we must have fine embroideries; we must have gay times and a grand wedding. Mothers say of the bride, "Well, it has to be sometime. I went through it and so can she, though I pity her from the bottom of my heart." Dressmakers cheapen and shock her ideals with coarse suggestions; and practical jokers blaspheme the purity of the marriage relation with their crude pranks; until it is small wonder that brides come to the altar in fear and trembling; and learn to regard their husbands as beasts of prey, disguised in the semblance of man. All of these things must we drive out of our homes as Christ scourged the money-lenders from the temple.

If anything could be more important than the

health and happiness of a bride, it is the health, strength and common sense of the expectant mother. Books have been written that will tell better than I can here, of ways to gain and keep health and strength under those conditions, but I may add a few truths born of common sense. First of all is the mental attitude: the adjustment of one's whole personal interest and endeavor to the great achievement. That done successfully, the rest is easy. It spells fresh air, sunshine, exercise, healthful food, agreeable companionship, uplifting diversion. But, mothers of dear little doll-babies, which would you value most highly; the tiny wisp of humanity or its expensive outlay of handsome handmade finery? You must choose; for, the more work you put on the one, the less you may put on the other. It is better to have a strong, rosy child in ready made clothes than a frail, endemic birdling, smothered in lace and embroidery.

Life should have an upward trend as the years add their experiences. Failure, as well as success, should give us strength and understanding for our next endeavor, or point the way for others.

The woman with the sad, sweet face has been

taught that virility is immodest; unwomanly. This woman is only a protoplasm. She cannot hope to reproduce her own individuality. She has no vital forces to transmit. She was either born wrong, or else she has been taught wrong from childhood.

The woman with hard lines in her face has met misfortune without her rightful weapons for self defense and her life is marred by it. It would be impossible for her to give her children a joy in life, the immortal radium of existence. She too, was taught wrong from girlhood. She should have been trained to understand and explain her own wishes and desires, and to insist upon a recognition of her personal needs.

Why should the Truth be such an uncleanly, un-Godly thing that we hesitate at no despicable subterfuge to evade it? Why not try the experiment of regarding it as the epitome of the Beautiful; holding it up as a cherished hope-"a consummation devoutly to be wished." Blessed be the mother who can breathe into the soul of her child God's pure air, golden sunshine, and a spirit of everlasting life that will go down the years, creating and re-creating itself in succeeding degrees of perfection.

We live too much indoors, both physically and mentally. We should encourage our youth to be Boy Scouts and Campfire Girls. Self reliance should be more than a virtue. It should be a foundation for all else. It was not meant for us to trust in the Lord to the extent of dependence. He trusts in us to do our best with what he gave us and that was, first of all, our bodies. The care and conservation of Nature's great gifts should be a sacred duty to be studied as our needs demand. We must let the sunshine and fresh air into our minds and souls as well as into our lungs. The books we read; the friends with whom we talk; are all building those plastic things we call our individualities-ourselves, which we in turn expect to pass down to the next generation, saying:-"Here, this is the best I could do, this is the mark of my life's achievement, can you improve it"? Shall we be satisfied with anything less than our best? How can we know what is our best? These are some of the stumbling blocks in our quest for superlative endeavor.

Now, how may we interpret and apply these high aspirations-these things so greatly to be desired? We must study our own conditions first. We must look

into our own souls and question: Are our homes complete? Are we getting all out of life that we may? Are we giving all to life that we can? Does life ring good and true? Can we meet our problems bravely and study them steadfastly, face to face? Do our pulses tune to the loved ones at home, and can we meet in warm fellowship the ones outside? Are there true friendship and peace in our household? If not-why not? We must face the issues of life and give battle with a zest.

Housekeeping is not homemaking. Conservation of the vital spark has nothing to do with the preservation of the hall rug or the proper rotation of kitchen towels. It means keeping alive that wonderful something that holds men and women one hundred per cent efficient in the business of life.

Homemaking and housekeeping must be a partnership, a combination, a trust, with equal shares of stock and equal dividends. If the wife helps her husband in his work, he should help her in hers, and vice versa. They must give and take as the pendulum swings harmonically from side to side. Each will usually be superior to the other in some special qualities but both should recognize that these differences will balance. One should not be compelled



to feel himself inferior to the other. Overbalanced admiration and respect may lead to union but it cannot weld. The home partner must be firm and frank in the discussion of her personal necessities. The provider must be equally frank as to his limitations and resources. Extravagance is too often the fault in an otherwise perfect home.

A pitifully common picture is the home of a woman who is too tired to go out with her husband, or to spend a few hours in relaxation with friends. She is a slave to housekeeping- and forgets that the house without her family would mean nothing to her - therefore the family should come first. She thinks she is showing her devotion by working for them all of the time, while, in reality, she is working away from them, for she destroys the spirit of youth in her heart and robs herself of the richest thing in the world.

We have a right to the beauty of the world and we can make the humblest home a beauty spot, if our heart and soul and common sense are in it. Of paramount importance is that last named quality. It chains us to the earth perhaps but, after all, earth is our mother and we must needs be loyal. Common Sense is the goddess who bids us choose serviceable

furnishings for our homes: simple designs that will not tire the eye: strong furniture and plain rugs - that can be used and romped upon. Common Sense whispers to get inexpensive dishes that can be easily replaced (a dish is a dish after all); good pictures; few ornaments; and no unnecessary bric-a-brac to gather dust and get awry. Common Sense has many other bits of good advice about the management of the house and planning of the meals and even in the cooking of them, but her suggestions must be of such a personal nature that we could not apply them universally. We must bid her give way to her merry-eyed comrade, the Sense of Humor, who follows close behind to cheer us over the rough places and lead us to the greatest of all teachers, Philosophy of Life; to whose ministrations I commend the souls of unhappy women. It is not given to many to reach the throne of Philosophy early in life. Failure to reach it at all may mean that the germ; the essence of life itself has been left out of the human beings who make the unsuccessful effort. And this brings me back into the main current of my theme; the conservation of that vital spark.

Let us believe in and strive for it in every way



that we can find, for only in that can we realize the spirit of eternal youth. There is nothing so potent in tis uplifting influence. Will power, dogged and persistent, fights and wins until its strength is spent, and then dies, bequeathing unfinished work and unfilled desires to the next in succession. Religion subdues, pacifies, and presses into the background the glowing ego of vitality; and its offspring is too often ineffectual and unproductive. But Youth begets Youth. Its spirit is eternal. It goes to battle and, if stricken down and the earth shell is destroyed, the spirit lives, for the vital spark is everlasting.



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