



MOTHER

CRAFT

No work in the world pays like mother work.

JUST BEING A HAPPY MOTHER

THREE women were sitting one day in the home of one of them, and they fell to talking about the best kind of a mother to be. They spoke of the great difficulty that all of them had experienced in living up to their own ideals as well as in living up to all the advice, good and otherwise, that a mother gets on the subject.

"Sometimes," said one of them, thoughtfully, "I almost think that the best kind of a mother to be is just a happy mother. My own mother was that kind."

"Tell us about her," pleaded the others.

"There really isn't so much to tell," she said; "it's more just to remember and to think about. I often find my thoughts going back to her in the same way that your feet turn of their own accord to the pleasant places or your eyes constantly seek a bright fire that is burning in a room. I don't ever remember that she seemed to work especially to make us happy, or to be happy herself. Her happiness was more like the way father provided the home for the family; he built the house for himself and we all lived in it. That was the way with mother's happiness. She was happy herself and we got the benefit of it."

Is there anything in all this world so dear and lovable as a happy person, especially a happy mother? The children of such a mother grow up in a sort of tropical mental climate, or atmosphere, which is favourable to all goodness and fosters the most desirable elements in a child's growing years. Quarrelling, bickering, and sullenness cannot live in such an atmosphere, and soon die out. Unfortunately, all mothers are not of this kind, and one of the opposite sort was fretting and nagging at her little son for liking the house across the street better than his own to play in.

"Well, mother," he struggled to explain in his childish way, "you see Billy's mother always seems to be glad about something. I don't know what about, but it's always something. And so—you like to go there, that's all."

Perhaps no one could have said it better, even with a larger vocabulary. Billy's mother had the happy habit. And any mother can have it, for there is always something to be glad about if you will only try to find it. Fortunate indeed are the children who in the future years can look back to their childhood days and say: "My mother was that kind."

CHILDREN'S SLEEP

"MY children are such lazy little things," said a mother. "They are in bed by seven and go to sleep almost at once, yet I always have to wake them in the morning."

The two small folk in question are excitable little beings of three and five, who live every moment of their waking lives.

"All the time the children are awake," a wise friend said, "the cells in their brains neither feed nor grow. You are careful to provide John and Myra with good, nourishing food, but it is when they are asleep that their brains take advantage of it, for it is only then that the cells both feed and grow. Children like yours, with very active brains, need an enormous amount of sleep, and should never, on any account, be awakened from their slumbers."

"But it is so upsetting to the household to have the children coming down late," she pleaded.

"Better have your household upset than the children's brains. Any doctor will tell you the same. Why not try putting the little folk to bed an hour earlier?"

"But Jack likes to see them when he comes in from the office."

"Then you must let them sleep on in the morning. Only so can their brains grow and obtain sufficient nourishment."

"AGGRAVATING" CHILDREN

"WHAT can you do with an aggravating child?" asked a mother the other day. "Sometimes Anne exasperates me. Often her things are strewn all over the table just when it is wanted for a meal. When I tell Anne to clear all away quickly she will dawdle and fiddle with different things till I feel as if I should scream."

No one denies that all children, even the best, can be very provoking at times. Some, like Anne, seem to set out deliberately to aggravate all the "grown-ups" they can.

The most effectual way to deal with "aggravatingness" is to let it act as a boomerang—*i.e.*, make sure that the aggravator and not the aggravated suffers. If you see that a child is deliberately setting out to be annoying, leave him alone in the room. In the case of a definite request, such as clearing away belongings, let a definite time be given in which to do it, and warn the child that at the end of that time someone else will clear the things, with no regard for what happens to them.

This is only a temporary expedient. Wait till you are calm and then talk quietly to the child about the fault, and point out how objectionable it is. Often you will find that the "aggravatingness" was quite unintentional.

A MODERN YOUNG MOTHER

SHE was a dashing young modern mother of three children, and she said: "Really, I don't see why a mother should be so terribly concerned about her children. Their development is mostly a matter of heredity anyway, and what I do won't make much difference. My real life is with my husband, and their real lives will be with their husbands and wives. I think people ought to live their own lives. It is very foolish for a mother to sacrifice herself too much for her children."

A dear old lady who had lived a very "real life" of sacrifice such as the speaker knew not of, who had reared four splendid, successful sons, rose from her chair and sat down beside the younger woman.

"My dear," said she in a gracious tone, "you say your children's development is mostly a matter of heredity; tell me, who is responsible for giving them that heredity?"

"Why—I suppose," she hesitatingly replied, "I suppose we are; their father and I."

"Exactly," said the older woman; "and let me tell you something about that same heredity. It is nothing in the world but clay out of which you are to mould your children's characters. Faults and weaknesses are merely heredity gone wrong; virtue and strength are merely heredity gone right. It takes but the turning of a hair in the beginning to determine whether a trait shall go right or wrong. Your real life is, as you say, with your husband; but the only real life for either you or your husband is in your children. In endeavouring not to sacrifice too much take care, my dear, lest you sacrifice everything."

"And your plan has been?" asked the young mother, for she well knew of the standing and character of the four fine sons of this old lady.

"To put heredity out of my thoughts on the day that each of my children was born, and to pin my faith solely on environment. For, believe me, there are few traits of character that cannot be traced with a little careful study to some environmental condition as a cause, and there is almost none that cannot be modified and corrected by a skilful management of the child's surroundings."

LULLABIES and "SLEEPY" SONGS for CHILDREN

by M.S.W.

*And the night shall be filled with music,**And the cares that infest the day
Shall fold their tents like the Arabs,
And as silently steal away.*

HAVE you ever realised the beauty of these lines as applied to children and their little daytime troubles? I was reminded of Longfellow's words by something my small daughter said to me the other night when we cuddled down together for our nightly talk.

"I love sleepy-song time, mummy," she confided.

I was glad she shared my joy in the most precious hour of the day.

We do not always tell fairy tales then and nursery rhymes are daytime pieces, but ever since my little girl has been capable of understanding words I have made a practice of saying, reading or singing lullabies, croons, and "sleepy-bye songs" to her at bedtime. Even before she could talk I did this, with the result that she has an extraordinary love of the beautiful in one so young. She is imaginative, and needs no one to amuse her, and, best of all, perhaps, she has no fear of the dark.

I gave very little thought to this until I had another small child staying with me, who was terrified of darkness and wanted a night-light burning after I had gone downstairs.

"I'm afraid of the boggly-boos," was her plaint, and no assurance of mine that there were no "boggly-boos" lurking in the shadows would comfort her. But she shared in "Mummy's Hour," and I let her hear the lullabies and sleep-songs we love so well, until gradually that fear of the darkness faded, and something took its place—a sensation of peace and safety.

I have been collecting lullabies and "sleepy-songs" for years, so that I have a treasure-trove for my small daughter, but these old hush-rhymes are delightful, even to older folk, whilst many of them have historical interest.

Lullabies and sleepy-songs have taught my small daughter that life is peopled with loveliness; and she has a quaint belief that all the things she may not have in the day are hers at night when she sleeps. So I think "Mummy's Hour" at bedtime is well worth while if it helps to make a happy, imaginative, contented child.