

# Glimpses Into Child Problems

By Helen Herr

If you had come around the corner of the Home Economics Annex any morning this spring I wonder if you would have been surprised to hear the merry song of "Here we go round the Mulberry Bush," or to have seen, if you had peeked in the door, eager faces bent over such fascinating work as modelling a bear or cutting out a picture. These workers are our very youngest college students, but perhaps the whole affair would need an explanation.

Educators in Home Economics all over the country are beginning to realize that training a girl to be the best kind of a homemaker could not be complete without a study of the care and development of children. This was one of the main topics for the State Convention of Home Economics teachers held at Ames in July for it is a problem affecting both mothers and teachers. Of course we could let them "just grow" like Topsy, but to help them develop into the best kind of individuals possible is another problem.

To give senior home economics women the chance to observe real children was the aim in bringing a group of little children of pre-school age together. The question might be asked, "What ages were the children and why were those ages chosen?" The pre-school age, from two to five, was chosen because of its unrealized importance. The "toddler" is left more or less to his own devices and when he enters school at the age of five or six the problem of correcting bad habits or of forming desirable ones is before the teacher. Why not start him in the right path when the habit was first being formed? Little have we realized that habits, fears, formed in early childhood often are still asserting themselves in adult life. Test it by asking yourself what you are afraid of and then try and trace that fear back to its cause. It will probably lead back to some incident in your childhood. Such was the case of a girl who was unable to go to sleep in a room in which there was not light. It sounds like a silly whim, doesn't it, but it was started when as a small child she was very ill with scarlet fever. The nurse, inexcusably, told her mother, in the child's presence, that unless the room were kept very dark there would be a danger of the child's going blind. Of course it struck terror in the little girl's heart and whenever her mother and nurse were out of the room she would run to the window, and lift the blind to find out if she could still see! This same fear still came over her when she was in total darkness and it was so deeply imbedded that it was impossible for her as an adult to eradicate it.

Perhaps your fears are not of that type, but many of them turn out to be fears which could have been avoided but which were started by some careless remark or act of an older child or adult.

Besides the pre-school age being an age when mental habits are being formed it is also a time when a child's physical condition should be carefully watched. Medical inspection in our public schools shows how many defects the children have but the outstanding fact is that most of them are preventable!

When could the old adage "an ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of cure" be more applicable?

There are so many phases of the study of children taken up in the "Child Care" course at Iowa State College that I shall only try to tell about some of the problems that might be of the greatest help in our contacts with children.

Rousseau said many years ago, "Childhood is not understood. They seek for the man in the child." Children should be allowed to develop naturally. We should not try to force them to premature excellence but let them be free "to see, to hear, to stumble and recover." Of course they need guidance because they are individuals who must live with others and this leads us to the question of what we should allow children to do and how we should teach them the things which they cannot do. One psychologist says, "Let a child work out his own life. Only when those actions bring about friction should they be inhibited." Perhaps it would be best to remember that love, sympathy and understanding are the best means of helping a child to correct his faults. Even then, you see, it is really up to the child in the end and we can only do our best to help him.

All punishment should be the natural outcome of the act. If it is not you will have a case just like that of Billy, aged two and one-half, who said, "I just don't know why mamma paddles me so much." She evidently had been trying to correct some mistake he was making but he had absolutely no understanding of just which of his many actions were wrong. Surely that kind of punishment defeats its own ends. After all, the only real purpose of discipline is to correct habits which will lead to the self-control of the child and not merely obedience for obedience's sake. We should avoid "getting a child to mind" through fear, constant nagging, hard tasks or humilia-

tion. If we use these methods we are gaining our end but harming the child in making him a submissive child in the case of too much authority; a self-conscious child if often humiliated, or a rebellious child if held to illogical demands. Corporal punishment ought to be used only when one child has inflicted pain on another child without evident realization of what pain is. For social misbehavior, isolation is the best method and the child soon understands that he must control his actions if he wishes to be with others. Much will be gained if a child's mind can be kept on what he is to do rather than what he is not to do.

In observing the children as they go through the daily regime in the two hours that they spend in the Child Care laboratory, the girls note the different characteristics of the various ages and the differences in individual children. The casual observer might say that "all is play" but the children do their work with all the intent of an adult. The difference is that they add real joy to their tasks which makes us call it "play." Anything really accomplished is termed work, if it be modelling a basket out of clay or building a tower with blocks. Of course there are always rules of the game, too, and the children soon learn as a natural sequence, to put away their work when they have finished it.

The children have the privilege of choosing what they wish to work with and this helps them form the habit of making decisions. As Dewey says, "Play should not be mere amusement but should take a child to a higher plane." A child learns much more by expressing himself in his work with sand, clay, crayons and paints than when playing with a mechanical toy.

Attention and concentration are two things that we strive for as adults and

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Play Hour in the Child Care Laboratory.

are crisp and delicious with afternoon tea or coffee.

Fattig mand kager (poor man cakes) are an appetizing pastry made by adding to four beaten egg yolks one cup of sugar and eight tablespoons of sweet cream. The whites of the four eggs are then beaten and added. Flour is folded in until the mixture is of a consistency stiff enough to lightly roll out to about a quarter of an inch in thickness. Strips are then cut and fried in deep fat.

Kumla (a potato dumpling) is made by grating a half dozen average sized potatoes salted with a tablespoon of salt. To this is added the flour until the mixture can be formed into dumplings. A

piece of meat fat is put in the center of each kumla. These potato dumplings are cooked with pork shank.

Milk is used considerably in Norwegian dietary in the form of cheese and other dishes. In the summer the cows are taken up on the mountain side to graze. Here the saeter (dairy) is located. One room in this cabin is the bedroom of the girl who tends the cattle, takes care of the milk and makes cheese. In the other rooms the floors are covered with juniper twigs. In one part are rows of crocks filled with milk. In another room are cheeses ripening.

If you wish to bring a hint of the cool

and beautiful Norwegian mountains into your menu, serve cold dravela (curd). This is prepared by adding one beaten egg mixed with a half cup of sugar and one cup sour milk to one quart of sweet milk which has been allowed to just come to boil. Allow this to stand on the back of the stove and simmer for a half hour. When cooked it forms into curds and whey. The curd is very tender and the whole has a pleasing sweet taste.

If you want something delightfully new and unusual, try some of these Norwegian suggestions. You don't have to inherit a liking for these foods. Your second taste, if not your first will assure you of their palatability.

## Flowers as Decorations

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ground which has a prominent design, such as some of our wall papers and textile hangings.

Whether it be a bit of forget-me-not, a delicate lily, goldenrod or but a few clover, arranged with thought and care, they not only bring enjoyment to ourselves but bear messages of congratulation or sympathy, brighten our table, perhaps enliven our living room and bid welcome to a guest.

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still unknowingly we destroy it to keep it from developing in a child. Dr. Wooley, an eminent psychologist, tells of how when her daughter was five months old she began, one day, to explore the edge of the chiffonier drawer with her finger. Instead of hurrying to finish dressing the child she decided to see how long the baby could keep her attention on that one thing and discovered that it did not waver for twenty minutes. Of course we can never know just what the baby learned during that time, but it certainly shows us that by snatching children from first one thing and then another we may be destroying their developing power of concentration.

"Do children think?" an interested on-looker might ask and student observations reveal such instances as:

Bobby, aged two and one half was building a tower of blocks. Soon it became so high that he could no longer reach the top to put on the next block, so he went for a chair and his problem was solved for awhile. Of course it wasn't long before it again outgrew his height and after a moment of contemplation he went for another chair and placed it carefully beside the first. What a look of surprise came over his face when he put one foot on one chair and one on the other chair and still found he was no nearer the top! His method of reasoning was all right but he needed experience to help him reach the right conclusion. No adult jumped to his aid, but after a little experimentation he finally placed one chair on the other and reached the top! That was a real problem solved.

Some general rules that are given to the students are: Do not make a request unless you wish it carried out; ask a child courteously to do something instead of plainly demanding it; give a child a chance to make a choice as, "Will you

walk in from the playground or shall I carry you in?"

It is only by truly trying to understand a child and by trying to see things from his view point that we can help him to develop into the finest possible type of individual.

## "That School Girl Complexion"

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I hasten to answer—a sense of humor, without which all else would count for little. She is never dull because she sees the funny side of life and enjoys a joke on herself as much as a joke on someone else.

As I mused over these inner qualities which in the last analysis determine, more than do the outward traits, the beauty of the portrait I was reminded of a woman whom I knew. She possessed not a single good feature but she was blessed to a marked degree with those splendid mental and moral characteristics a few of which we have been discussing. A celebrated artist was engaged to paint her portrait. When the picture was finished and placed on exhibition we beheld the portrait of a beautiful woman. There was no mistaking the identity of the subject, however, for the artist had been faithful in the reproduction of her features.

What magic then, had he practiced to enable him to portray this homely woman as a beauty? There was no magic except that of a great artist—he had caught the spirit of the woman and put it upon the canvas—the light that shone from her eyes, and lines of understanding and sympathy about the mouth and the tender, sensitive lips. All the honesty, the loyalty, the quick sympathy for others, the generous spirit and the fine sense of humor, all these had burned within that woman like a white flame. They had softened and made beautiful her features, just as a glowing light inside a piece of porcelain transforms the porcelain by the witchery of its flames.

As I came to my journey's end and drove into the town thru the golden autumn sunshine, I realized that the girl of the roadside picture was beautiful not merely because of that "School Girl Complexion." Those other qualities of mind and spirit had given her a charm which mere physical beauty could not produce and which every girl can cultivate if she will.

## Attractive tho Inexpensive Hangings

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tains. When glass curtains are used the figured material is sufficiently wide to split the width. Often times it is desirable to carry the color across the top of the window. This is done by using a plain colored valence either made straight or gathered. These valences may vary in length according to the style of hanging.

Curtains for bed rooms have an added amount of styles from which to choose. The types already discussed may be used with only slight changes, but often times the housewife wishes variety and finds the bed room the ideal place for it. A most pleasing effect is secured by us-

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