

THE Household MAGAZINE

YOUR HOME
YOUR FAMILY
YOUR COMMUNITY
AND YOU

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The Editor Looks On..... 2

FICTION

She Didn't Deserve You..... 4
Thin Ice for Cupid 6
Dark Interval (Part II of Serial)..... 14
Bells Across the Snow 16

ARTICLES

When Helping Is Hurting 1
No Auditions Today 8

HOMEMAKING

Beauty 24, 27, 30
Carrie Cartwright 10, 26
Entertainment 26
Equipment 11
Fashions 25
Food and Recipes..... 20, 21, 27
Gardening 28
Needlework 28

CHILDREN'S STORY

Little Brown Koko's Snow House..... 32

VERSE 3

BOOKS 30

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When Helping Is Hurting

An Article for Every Parent

YOU would be an abnormal parent if your one consuming desire was not to help your child in the spirited struggle for fame and fortune, a struggle that apparently has an ever increasing tempo as the decades roll around. There are occasions when your assistance is vital and you gladly dispense it, but take care that you are really contributing important and valid aid and not leading your son or daughter directly into the path of an avalanche of ridicule and disfavor. In other words, there is a time and a place when helping is hurting.

To visit occasionally the school your child attends for the sole purpose of checking up on his or her studies and those problems arising out of the classroom is legitimate and strictly one of the big responsibilities resting on all parents. If you fail to do this a great gulf will soon separate you from both your child and the school authorities. The repercussions are apt to be gigantic. The school, assuming that you are indifferent to your youngster's moral and ethical development, may soon cease to care. Nothing is so deadening to those who serve our needs as disinterest. Even a dog will discontinue assuming the few responsibilities he can exercise if he senses that his good deeds go unnoticed.

Again, your child will take the same attitude as the school if you refuse to take any initiative. Most children gain their chief incentive for mental, moral, and spiritual growth according to the measure of interest we display. If there is no cheering section or moral supporters these young contestants of ours will quickly terminate their part of the game, and indifference with them is never static. It is very apt to move toward that other pole: indolence, rebellion, and possible crime.

Yet there is a point beyond which interest and responsibility may spill over and soon become overindulgence, shortsightedness, and dangerous meddling. You are a very wise parent if you know where the clear block ends and the caution signal flashes. History is littered with records of children who were ruined because parents could not differentiate between helping and hurting. Most of it can be laid to overenthusiasm and the pure and unselfish intention of doing what one thought was right. Here is an example of how the blunder is often committed:

I went through eight grades of school with a boy whose mother was always pursuing the teacher. At least once a month Miss B was invited for dinner and I presume she always accepted because she preferred to face the pains of patronage and flattery rather than the poor brand

of food placed before her at the boarding-house table where she resided. In between times she was invited to go riding and, besides all this, mother was a frequent classroom visitor. The farce was evident to both teacher and pupils. When our classmate moved on to the next grade Miss B was promptly snubbed but such tactics had their price. That boy's marks never took an upswing; the parental investment did not pay dividends but rather incurred liabilities. Furthermore, the teacher in the higher grade was duly warned (so we children heard our parents tell) and we, the members of the class, saw to it that the victim was not popular. He soon became a problem child. He transferred all of his battles to his parents, became rebellious, neurotic and, because he was not popular with his associates, eventually he developed a definite inferiority complex. Today he is indolent and unsocial. If at times he does any clear thinking he must harbor tremendous resentment for his father and mother.

Since our children do not receive by any means their full portion of mental and moral development in the classroom, we must turn also to those spheres where not only these factors undergo continued growth but where also the physical development is furthered. One of these is the play field where a practical and valuable type of knowledge and virtue is assimilated along with body building. Here in this area of a young person's life fathers, more so than mothers, are deeply interested and are apt to do more harm than good. Every man is delighted, quite frequently his ego inflated to no little degree, when he sees his son succeed in athletics. He is pleased not only with his ability and skill but happy if his boy displays an admirable spirit of sportsmanship. If father and even mother, who sometimes does not know the difference between a touchdown and a touch-back, take an interest in their son's achievements on the play field there is sure to be effected healthy enthusiasm and an indomitable spirit in the makeup of that boy. He will strive to act on the field in a way that will please his parents. His physical instructors will take note that the young athlete has the interest of his parents and, because of that very normal and natural incentive, they will be inspired to bring out the best there is in that boy. Yet you may be the sort of parent who fails to use your powers with discretion.

[Continued on Page 10]

BY ARNOLD A. FENTON

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