

Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

2
HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Tuesday, March 1, 1932

5/H
(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "The Front Hall Closet." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

Bulletin available: "Housecleaning Made Easier."

--ooOoo--

"Mother, where's my coat 'n hat?"

"Mother, have you seen my other rubber?"

"Where's my scarf?"

"Oh, dear, I can't find my books and it's 'most nine o'clock."

"Mother, somebody's gone and swiped my best pencil."

"Who took my mittens? They aren't anywhere."

"There now. I knew it. My brief case is gone. No, it isn't where I left it last night. This house is a madhouse. I never saw such a place. Nothing anywhere it ought to be."

"Quiet, children. Daddy's lost his brief case. I'll go and look for it, John."

And so forth.

Have you guessed the title of the talking picture you've just been listening to? How about naming this scene "Home Sweet Home at School Time in the Morning?" Maybe you can think of a better title, but that's the general idea.

Perhaps you've also guessed the characters in this play. They include: A Harrassed Mother, A Cross Father, Several Hurried and Upset Children.

The scene is: A household cluttered with newspapers, wraps, books, toys, tools, and so on, scattered on chairs, couch, and floor. A half-eaten breakfast is left in the dining room. The general atmosphere is hurry, worry and scramble. Nerves strained. Dispositions irritated.

No use saying more. You've all seen pictures like this. They occur every school-day morning; sure as fate, in a lot of homes. The time lost and the tempers spoiled during the day as a result of mislaid articles total a large number of family jolts and jars.

How to prevent this kind of morning scene?

"Patience, fortitude and some strict old-fashioned discipline of the children," suggests Aunt Susan.

"A front hall closet would be better," says Uncle Ebenezer.

A closet to cut down family stress and strain? Exactly. You'd be surprised how the right kind of closets and cupboards, arranged for easy and convenient use, will help keep order in the house and prevent the calamity of never knowing where anything is when you want it. Provide proper places for possessions and then get the family in the habit of using them. Orderliness is just a habit after all. And life is easier for the children who learn such habits as self-reliance, independence and order early.

Have you ever noticed that Mother seems to be the family valet in many households? She spends hours every day picking up blocks after Tommy, muddy rubbers after Johnny, and bath towels or newspapers after Father. How much more simple and sensible it would be if everybody looked after his own things, everybody from Grandfather down to two-year-old Tommy.

That brings us to the front hall closet -- a closet to help keep peace and harmony and order in the family.

This coat closet is located for convenience near the front entrance. That means that you can step right in there as you come to the house and put away your wraps before you go a step farther. How is the closet equipped? Well, first there's a high shelf, about 72 inches, say, from the floor. That's for the grown-ups' hats. There are individual hat racks on it to hold hats in shape.

Next, there's a rod underneath this shelf, a long rod stretching the length of the closet. That's for hangers.

But the children are provided for, too, in this closet. Of course, they can't be expected to put their hats on that high shelf or to hang their coats on the big hangers and high rod.

"Shall Mother hang Bobby's coat up for him?"

By no means. There are low hooks and hangers, very convenient for Bobby's small arms to reach, where he can hang up his own things and enjoy doing it. Low shelves are also provided to hold his caps and mittens. And low racks to hold his overshoes. A place for everything you see.

Then for the grown-ups there's a rack on the closet door for umbrellas and another rack for overshoes.

A friend of mine who lives up the street advocates a place for children's play clothes at the basement entry rather than the front door. She has put up a strip of hooks there within easy reach of the children. Above these,

she has a narrow shelf, six or seven inches wide, for caps and mittens. On the floor below the hooks is a wooden box which holds rubbers and galoshes.

Then, just inside the door, there's a mat for the children to stand on while taking off their rubbers. And there's a small, easily-handled broom nearby to encourage even the youngest to brush the snow or dust off his footwear. Such an arrangement, you see, saves a lot of wear and tear on the house. Also it helps keep order and neatness. Mud and snow and sand from the sandpile isn't tracked into the house to wear out floors and rugs and to cause constant cleaning up. The children's play clothes are always ready in the same place when they want them.

So much for coat closets. Another useful storage space to help keep the home happy is a closet or a cabinet for the children's toys. This will be located in the playroom or perhaps in the living room or den, or even in the bedroom, depending on the plan of the house and which room the children use most for play. In some homes, shelves for the children's possessions are built under the bookshelves -- low enough, you see, to be convenient for the children. Adjustable shelves are the most serviceable for this purpose, and it's better to have them open than with cupboard doors.

But shelves are not all the children need for their things. They also need some definite floor space either in their own room, or in one of the family rooms, where they can keep their kiddie-cars and doll carriages -- a corner of their very own where they'll be in the habit of putting their possessions when they are through using them. Other possessions that won't fit on shelves will go in portable boxes.

These shelves and storage boxes for the children need never be unsightly spots in the room. The low shelves can be painted like the woodwork. Sometimes they are very attractive with the inside painted a bright color like Chinese red or yellow. Pleasant for the youngster who uses the shelves and a nice accent of color in the room. The boxes used to store the children's goods may also be painted and in harmony with the color scheme of the room.

It's the little useful, comfortable things that often make for family happiness and successful homes. That's why it's worth while thinking about cupboards and closets and cabinets all over the house. So important, in fact, do these items seem to modern household specialists that last fall when the President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership met in Washington, one committee reported on storage spaces -- all the way from the front hall closet, the linen closet and the upstairs cleaning closet to the convenient laundry chute and the medicine cabinet in the bathroom.

If you're interested, I'd like to tell you more about these some other day.

Wednesday, "Looking After Your Floors."

