

## EDITORIAL

**E**DUCATION FOR PRIVACY—Something new in education—or perhaps it is something old that has just been forgotten for a while—is now being called “education for privacy.” I suppose this is what has commonly been considered “cultural education.” Presumably it is the sort of education that makes us good company for ourselves, though of course it doesn’t stop there. Anything that makes us more understanding, more interesting, is bound to rub off a little on the people around us. Certainly a mother’s education is pretty sure to reach through to her children.

How is a woman, tied at home with a young family, going to continue her education? The most obvious way, of course, is through books. A mother who had raised a most creditable family of thirteen children, so amazed me with the breadth of her reading that I asked how she had found time for it, and she said, “I never sat down to rock a baby that I didn’t have a book in my hand.”

Perhaps it is harder in these days with the many outside claims on a woman’s interest—her own organizations, her children’s extra-school activities to supervise, the public causes that claim her support—to find time for reading, but Edna St. Vincent Millay, concerned about the possible fate of a book of her poetry, appealed not to the schools and colleges to save it, but to homekeeping women in their kitchens. She wrote:

“Women at your toil,  
Women at your leisure,  
Till the kettle boil,  
Snatch of me your pleasure.

Where the broom straw marks the leaf,  
Women quiet with your weeping  
Lest you wake a workman, sleeping,  
Mix me with your grief  
... Do not let me die.”

The mother who reads to her children and reads *with* them may be absorbing more than she knows for herself. And doesn’t a woman often get a bit of vicarious education through helping children with their homework? One woman suggests that the most practical adult education for a mother is to follow her children through school, right up to Grade XIII. (If she can!)

Some understanding of art is generally considered good “education for privacy”—an understanding that helps us, not to be art critics, but to enjoy pictures and through pictures to become more aware of the beauty and interest in the things around us. A mother who wanted her children to see good pictures for this very reason, got inexpensive prints and hung them around the kitchen walls at a child’s eye level. Among them was the Avenue at Beauharnois, the well-known “Avenue of Trees.” And the mother knew she had accomplished her purpose when her little girl came running in from school and said “Why Mother, the trees on our road meet just like that.” A catalogue of prints of great pictures can be had from the National Art Gallery; and the study kit on “Canadian Art and Artists” can be borrowed from our Extension Service Loan Library by anyone interested. This kit was compiled for individuals as well as for groups.

In music, what about the women who were accomplished musicians before they were married and who dropped their music just when it could have been giving pleasure to their families; and when it could have provided a needed interest and outlet for themselves, an “education for privacy”? I think of a woman in an old-fashioned farmhouse years ago who, every winter, had the parlor organ moved out to the big kitchen where it was always warm, so that she could have a bit of music with the family—or by herself—whenever she had a few spare minutes.

It’s amazing how much of Canada’s culture has come out of its kitchens; how many busy homekeeping women have a hunger for more learning. In our last issue we discussed the Women’s Institute as an educational organization—education for homemaking, education for general knowledge, education through social service. The Institute with a well-planned programme can give a lot of encouragement to “education for privacy,” too.

*Ethel Chapman*