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Learning To Be Wives

SCHOOL-GIRLS RUN REAL HOME

Teaching Art On Dingy Peninsula

("Sydney Sun.")

This is how the Pyrmont Public School trains girls to be good housewives: It puts them into a two-storey house and says to them, "Here, run it!"

In most schools, of course, there are cookery classes, and sewing classes, and domestic science classes. But there is nothing quite like the

Pyrmont idea. There a dozen girls are planted in a real home and told that they must manage it, from cooking the ham and eggs for breakfast to putting the imaginary husband's slippers in a little cupboard in the quiet of the evening. They do this for a week. When their week is up they go back to their ordinary classes, and another, dozen are drafted in. It is worked out on a roster, so that all the girls from about 13 to 15 get their opportunity to run a home. Of course they have a supervisor, Miss Mary Butler, a genial young woman, watches over them and guides them away from the dangerous errors of swiping Bhudda off the mantelpiece with the duster, or or standing on a lump of floor-polisher to clean the windows. Then there is a cookery instructor Miss Ruby Grant. She sees that the meals are up to standard and that nobody gets a chance to eat their

allotted peck of dirt before they die.

Shopping.

But apart from this general supervision, the girls actually run the place. They even do the buying. They go out and make bargains with the vegetable man, and like all good housewives argue with the butcher over the price, of suet. The house was originally a private home, but now belongs to the Government. It stand right alongside the school, and though it is included in the boundaries, it is a distinct sphere of activity on its own. It is a proper home-the same as yours and mine. The furniture and fittings are not elaborate. There are no extravagant carpet squares and rugs with inches of delicate downy stuff where your feet sink in. Everything is just plain -but clean and tidy. That plainness is really part of the scheme. Pyrmont is an industrial suburb, and no one expects that the girls will grow up to be autocrats of majestic bungalows with sloping lawns and palms and those delicate downy carpet squares -where your feet sink in. Most of them won't, anyway. No phase of the housewife's work, is overlooked. These girls cook and dust, and mend and clean and wash and feed and titivate-they do everything. Any day you can see them at it. They are always dressed in spruce little uniforms (made by themselves), and they are forever busy. While someone is cleaning the bathroom window, some- one else is polishing the sitting-room floor or making sponge cakes. Once a month they have a gala day. Their mothers

come to see them. The girls are always prepared for them. They have baked the best delicacies on their recipe lists. The mothers are thus entertained as guests at afternoon tea. There are some other interesting features at Pymont School, too. Besides a big, well-equipped gymnasium there, is a bath-house where there is plenty of water and soap, and where the policy of a good wash a day is paramount. There are three showers and half a dozen tubs..This place is managed not by the head master or the assistant head master. It is controlled by two of the youngsters. They take charge of the keys and keep a book, recording the names and dates of all washes. According to the headmaster, there is no need to force the boys into the bathhouse. They rush it. In the summer, it means a wild scramble and bruised shins-or no shower. Running right through the school, through all the classes, is an obvious determined idea to brighten the lives of the children. The head master and his staff realise that unless they do something to lift up the youngsters' outlook their lives will be slowly stunted and deadened by the ugly environs and the sickly miasma that belches out each day from the tall chimneys and the workshops and the factories on Pymont Peninsula. So they are led along to appreciate the beautiful and delicate in life.

Their Fairy Princess.

Right from the start this scheme works - from kiddies of four years. The statutory age for commencing

school is five, but in Pymont there are dozens of unfortunate mothers who must go to work each day-or starve. For these people Pymont School has made a special concession. It allows them to send their children along at four years.

Of course, they don't learn, spelling and figures. But they learn what is perhaps more important in Pymont-they learn to be kind and to love each other. You can see them at it in the kindergarten section-learning this love business. Some of them have no boots, some no socks-most of them in rags. But boys four years old learn how to bow to the girls and dance with them, and how not to pull faces at their cobbers.

A young woman with kind brown eyes teaches them. They look at her with wondering faces. Her smart clothes hypnotise them-not a patch anywhere-not even a smudge or a lump of jam. She must be the fairy princess they hear so much about.

