

A FLAPPER'S APPEAL TO PARENTS

BY ELLEN WELLES PAGE

IF one judges by appearances, I suppose I am a flapper. I am within the age limit. I wear bobbed hair, the badge of flapperhood. (And, oh, what a comfort it is!) I powder my nose. I wear fringed skirts and brightly-colored sweaters, and scarfs, and waists with Peter Pan collars, and low-heeled "finale hopper" shoes. I *adore* to dance. I spend a large amount of time in automobiles. I attend hops, and proms, and ball-games, and crew races, and other affairs at men's colleges. But none the less some of the most thoroughbred superflappers might blush to claim sisterhood or even remote relationship with such as I. I don't use rouge, or lipstick, or pluck my eyebrows. I don't smoke (I've tried it, and don't like it), or drink, or tell "peppy stories." I don't pet. And, most unpardonable infringement of all the rules and regulations of Flapperdom, I haven't a line! But then—there are many degrees of flapper. There is the semi-flapper; the flapper; the superflapper. Each of these three main general divisions has its degrees of variation. I might possibly be placed somewhere in the middle of the first class.

I think every one realizes by this time that there has been a marked change in our much-discussed tactics. Jazz has been modified, and probably will continue to be until it has become obsolete. Petting is gradually growing out of fashion through being overworked. Yes, undoubtedly our hopeless condition is improving. But it was not for discussing these aspects of the case that I began this article.

I want to beg all you parents, and grandparents, and friends, and teachers, and preachers—you who constitute the "older generation"—to overlook our shortcomings, at least for the present, and to appreciate our virtues. I wonder if it ever occurred to any of you that it required *brains* to become and remain a successful flapper? Indeed it does! It requires an enormous amount of cleverness and energy to keep going at the proper pace. It requires self-knowledge and self-analysis. We must know our capabilities and limitations. We must be constantly on the alert. Attainment of flapperhood is a big and serious undertaking!

"Brains?" you repeat, skeptically. "Then why aren't they used to better advantage?" That is exactly it! And do you know who is largely responsible for all this energy's being spent in the wrong directions? You! You parents, and grandparents, and friends, and teachers, and preachers—all of you! "The war!" you cry. "It is the effect of the war!" And then you blame prohibition. Yes! Yet it is you who set the example there! But this is my

point: Instead of helping us work out our problems with constructive, sympathetic thinking and acting, you have muddled them for us more hopelessly with destructive public condemnation and denunciation.

Think back to the time when you were struggling through the teens. Remember how spontaneous and deep were the joys, how serious and penetrating the sorrows. Most of us, under the present system of modern education, are further advanced and more thoroughly developed mentally, physically, and vocationally than were our parents at our age. We hold the infinite possibilities of the myriads of new inventions within our grasp. We have learned to take for granted conveniences, and many luxuries, which not so many years ago were as yet undreamed of. We are in touch with the whole universe. We have a tremendous problem on our hands. You must help us. Give us confidence—not distrust. Give us practical aid and advice—not criticism. Praise us when praise is merited. Be patient and understanding when we make mistakes.

We are the Younger Generation. The war tore away our spiritual foundations and challenged our faith. We are struggling to regain our equilibrium. The times have made us older and more experienced than you were at our age. It must be so with each succeeding generation if it is to keep pace with the rapidly advancing and mighty tide of civilization. Help us to put our knowledge to the best advantage. Work with us! That is the way! Outlets for this surplus knowledge and energy must be opened. Give us a helping hand.

Youth has many disillusionments. Spiritual forces begin to be felt. The emotions are frequently in a state of upheaval, struggling with one another for supremacy. And Youth does not understand. There is no one to turn to—no one but the rest of Youth, which is as perplexed and troubled with its problems as ourselves. Everywhere we read and hear the criticism and distrust of older people toward us. It forms an insurmountable barrier between us. How can we turn to them?

In every person there is a desire, an innate longing, toward some special goal of achievement. Each of us has his place to fill. Each of us has his talent—be it ever so humble. And our hidden longing is usually for that for which *nature* equipped us. Any one will do best and be happiest doing that which he really likes and for which he is fitted. In this "age of specialists," as it has been called, there is less excuse than ever for persons being shoved into niches in which they do not belong and cannot be made to fit. The lives of such

people are great tragedies. That is why it is up to you who have the supervision of us of less ripe experience to guide us sympathetically, and to help us find, encourage, and develop our special abilities and talents. Study us. Make us realize that you respect us as fellow human beings, that you have confidence in us, and, above all, that you expect us to live up to the highest ideals, and to the best that is in us.

It must begin with individuals. Parents, study your children. Talk to them more intimately. Respect their right to a point of view. Be so understanding and sympathetic that they will turn to you naturally and trustfully with their glowing joys or with their heartaches and tragedies. Youth has many of the latter because Youth takes itself so seriously. And so often the wounds go unconfessed, and, instead of gradually healing, become more and more gnawing through suppression until of necessity relief is sought in some way which is not always for the best.

Mothers, become acquainted with your children. Be the understanding, loving, happy comrade of your daughter. Become her ideal. And strive to live up to the ideal you set for the woman who is to become your son's wife. Be his chum. Be young with him. Oh, what a powerful and wonderful influence *you* are capable of exerting if you only will!

Fathers, find out what is within the minds and hearts and souls of your children. There is a wonderful, an interesting, and a *great* treasure-house there if you will take the time and pains to explore. The key is yours in return for patient understanding, sympathetic encouragement, and kindly wisdom. Make love to your daughter if necessary! Make her realize the depth of your love and make her feel that you have confidence in her ability to live up to your standards of upright womanhood. Be your son's best pal. Make his interests your interests. Encourage him to formulate a workable philosophy of life. And remember this: A little merited praise means so much! A little encouragement goes such a long way!

Oh, parents, parents everywhere, point out to us the ideals of truly glorious and upright living! Believe in us, that we may learn to believe in ourselves, in humanity, in God! Be the living examples of your teachings, that you may inspire us with hope and courage, understanding and truth, love and faith. Remember that we are the parents of the future. Help us to be worthy of the sacred trust that will be ours. Make your lives such an inspiration to us that we in our turn will strive to become an inspiration to our children and to the ages! Is it too much to ask?

Questions for “A Flapper’s Appeal to Parents”

1. What, according to the author, are the defining characteristics of the flapper? (par.1)
 - a. How is she a typical flapper?
 - b. How is she different?
2. List some of the “older generation’s” complaints about the flapper. (par. 1-4)
3. What does the author want the older generation to give her generation? (par. 5)
4. What has created the Younger Generation? How? (par. 6-7)
5. Why do young people need sympathetic guidance, according to the author? (par. 8)
6. Paraphrase in one sentence what the author wants parents to give their children (par. 9)
 - a. What should mothers do? (par. 10)
 - b. What should fathers do? (par. 11)
7. Which of the author’s ideas do you agree with? Why?
8. Which of the author’s ideas do you disagree with? Why?