RATIONAL HOME ECONOMICS

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Home economics, the farm home, and the farmer’s wife, like spraying the orchard, packing the fruit and coöperative marketing have been talked about, written about and, yes, fairly sung about until one begins to wonder whether the farmer’s wife is to be pitied, criticized or censured.

Home economics has been taught in the rural schools, city schools, colleges and universities. Neither time nor expense has been spared teaching and demonstrating this subject at farm institutes and still there are thousands of homes in the state of Wisconsin that have never been touched by all this excellent teaching. Just why so many homes have received no benefit therefrom is difficult to explain. It may be for the want of means, or for the lack of intelligence or perhaps merely for the lack of ambition but at any rate these conditions do exist. What per cent of our farm women attend farm institutes for women or read the helps for the farmer’s wife in the farm papers and how may those who do not avail themselves of these opportunities be reached? Perhaps it might be well while holding these women’s institutes to have at least one day’s session at some modern farm house or, should there be none nearby, one might demonstrate concretely how labor-saving devices could be installed in any house thereby making it more pleasant and comfortable. Perhaps if this work were taken right into the homes greater benefits would follow.

We hear much about concrete things at the present time—concrete pavements, sidewalks, silos, cisterns, fenceposts and innumerable other objects and we invariably and unconsciously think indestructable and everlasting. We had heard about them, read about them and studied about them but not however until we had seen these very things in reality did we realize their actual worth. School teachers are instructed to teach subjects concretely: for example when teaching arithmetic a great many real objects may be brought into use such as measures, money, bank notes, checks, etc., and a lasting impression formed, but let these things be
taught loosely and they are soon forgotten. Just so with home economics. One may attend a lecture on that subject, go home filled with fine ideas and good resolutions but it is surprising to know how few of these ideas ever materialize. Had they been demonstrated concretely, been shown in reality, effective impressions would follow.

Perhaps, too, some of the methods brought forth are neither rational nor practical. I once heard a lecture on this subject and several times during her talk the speaker said “You probably have a boy around who can turn that for you” or “a man around who will run that for you.” Not being fortunate enough to have a boy or a man at my command constantly these ideas to me amounted to naught. I was there to seek knowledge about mechanical devices. She had also planned that model 4 by 6 kitchen where one could stand in the center and reach everything without taking a step but perhaps not thinking that most all farm kitchens must have a wood range, she forgot to add that the cook would be at least parboiled while preparing the dinner. Do you suppose she had ever done the cooking for a family of six or eight in that kitchen during the month of August? Undoubtedly her experience in that line was as broad as that of the spinster who is always giving free advice to her married sisters on methods of rearing children or training husbands. Another lecturer advocated having a generous woodpile on a level with the kitchen floor. We experienced farm women do not want an unsightly woodpile on our lawn nor do we wish to carry wood from a woodhouse. We prefer to have the wood in the basement and use a wood elevator. There are innumerable patience, strength and labor saving devices within the reach of every farm house wife if she will only bend her energies in the right direction and keep at it until they are hers.

We will suppose the foundation for the modern farm house has been built either new or remodeled. This should include a well-lighted basement with cement floor a good drain, a well-equipped laundry, plenty of rooms for the family, well-lighted and ventilated and with hardwood floors; the walls and woodwork finished in some sanitary way to suit the housekeeper; storm windows and full length screens should not be forgotten. Now we are ready for the more modern necessities.
Perhaps the greatest help to the housewife and the one which heads the list of economical improvements is the water and sewage system. It may be rather complex but it certainly reduces house work to a fraction of the ordinary routine. In this, one will always find the husband a willing partner. So long as woman uncomplainingly carries the water from a well five or ten rods from the house he is willing she should, but let this task devolve upon him and he is more than willing to install some sort of water system—whether because of his mental insight or love of ease, who knows? Not only should the drinking water be accessible in the house but an abundance of good cistern water should also be at the housewife's command. Together with the water system should be included a bath room well connected, for surely the farmer needs and, enjoys a bath as well as anyone after his day's work in the heat and dust. Whether the system be air pressure, gasoline engine or hand pump may depend on the pocket book, but even the simplest of these saves many a step and hours of labor.

A pipe put through the side of a house, emptying its contents five feet away, which drives a woman from her kitchen every time the wind blows from a certain direction, and remains frozen the greater part of the year is not an adequate sewage system and in this sanitary age should be banished.

Perhaps next in importance toward making the home comfortable is the heating plant. The style of this also depends on one's personal likes and one's supply of cash but we have certainly outgrown the days of polishing stoves and the necessity of coining new phrases while putting up stovepipes and the progressive housewife has long since discarded stove polish and now has a polished steel top range adorning her kitchen. The furnace is rapidly making its way into the farm homes and has come to stay.

Just as tallow candles gave way to the kerosene lamps so are these same kerosene lamps being set aside in favor of electricity and gas. It is quite possible now for the farmer to have a modern lighting plant all his own and again he has his choice of various systems. The initial expense of installing same may seem somewhat large but the running expense, providing you consider time and energy spent in cleaning kerosene lamps, and count the numerous advantages of the
modern system does not exceed that of the kerosene lights. 
No doubt the system which can be used for cooking would find favor with the housewife and add a large unit to rational home economics.

We now have our house complete so far as the building and more costly improvements are concerned and the smaller, inexpensive ones must find their way into the home also as the demand is felt. The refrigerator is an economical necessity and many a dollar may be saved through its use. The carpet sweeper, vacuum cleaner, the gas or electric flat-iron, the bread-mixer, the food chopper and dozens and dozens of other minor articles may be purchased for a comparatively small sum. One cannot realize the economy of labor and time through the use of these simple devices unless one has seen them put into practice. In setting the dinner table it is necessary to make at least a dozen trips from the kitchen to the dining room while with the use of a serving table or wheel tray the entire meal is placed in readiness by going only twice. In how many homes have you seen one of these indispensable helpers? Another exceedingly simple contrivance is a stool, with foot rest, in the form of a step ladder which any woman would appreciate and which may be bought for $1.00 and can be sent to her parcel post. We learn of these new ideas only through observation and experience, through association with others. We must learn to think and see things for ourselves.

We must not wait for man to invent some new household virtue nor to tell us wherein we may save labor. It is woman's own personal business. By thoughtfully administering good judgment in home economics a woman can, with little outside help, keep house for a large family including farm help. She also has plenty of leisure hours for reading, for social duties and for attending horticulture meetings, besides lending a helping hand in the garden. She is not the pale-faced, down-hearted, overworked farmer's wife of some twenty odd years ago but a happy contented companion and helpmate enjoying all that nature has given her. Men have long since discarded the cradle and flail, the scythe and hand rake because they saw great benefits in the binder, threshing machine, mower, etc. Why should women still rub on the wash board by the light of the kerosene lamp? If we would only awaken to the possibilities in store for us
we would surely find the stronger sex our strongest helpmates. I have yet to meet the man who would not sooner see a fresh, rosy, neatly dressed woman than one who through overwork has become neglectful of her appearance.

THE FAILURE OF PEST CONTROL IN SPRAYING

MR. TOWNSEND.

There was a time when we knew how to control pests; in fact knew all about spraying, but that knowledge is lost to the world. This may remind you of the student who, when asked by his professor, "What is electricity," answered "I did know but I have forgotten." "That is a great loss to science," replied the professor "as no one else has ever found out."

Most people like to speak of their successes and air their knowledge, but when it comes to mistakes they cover them up. Our task is one of uncovering or rather one of exposing what we don't know. This, presumably, is because of a consciousness that we don't know anything at all; have no college affiliations to discredit, and no official dignity to maintain, consequently are free to lay bare the whole subject of pest control. To us the need is urgent, because we seem to be going around in a circle year after year. If there is any one here who thinks that spraying is unnecessary, he should for his own sake keep such thoughts to himself. Spraying is necessary and part of the time highly successful. To say that it is always successful would not be true as much of the crop from New York state west was so badly damaged this year as to be unmerchantable.

No doubt you are asking when and how does spraying succeed or fail? I don't know. We are told that the principal aim of spraying is to kill lice by contact sprays; to poison the eating and the stinging insects (which must eat foliage to live) with arsenicals, and finally to coat both fruit and foliage with a protective covering, against such parasites as anthracnose, molds, mildew, shot-hole fungus, sooty fungus, bitter rot, Baldwin spot, apple scab and so and so