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The Homemaker's Bookshelf

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First of all, why should a homemaker have her own bookshelf—books conveniently at hand in some corner of her kitchen, or arranged neatly on her house (office) desk, or standing invitingly on the family bookshelf or fireside table? The question answers itself. The books are at hand when the homemaker wants them. Perhaps it is a question in food preparation, or a stain removal. Maybe there is need for some first aid; perhaps a decision to make in rearranging the furnishings of a room. More than likely it is a longing for a bit of advice which will aid in understanding and dealing wisely with a "naughty" child; and it may be a desire for information on her status, the status of all women, in this old world of ours. Whatever the housewife's need for a book, surely it is extremely desirable that the book be at hand just when she wants it, else she may never consult or enjoy the book at all.

Homemaking is a profession and one which is given more and more emphasis as the years progress. At this stage of advancement, it is generally conceded that the bookshelf for such a profession should provide material on food, clothing, children, home management, family relationships and health.

Just as there is no infallible procedure in the matter of making friends, there is no certain way to choose one's bookshelf. Every choice depends upon the individual, her background of training, her understanding and her personality.

One book adviser insists that books, like soap powder for hard water, should stand two tests—"the analytical test which a chemist alone can make, and the performance test which we who use it make." It was with these two tests in mind that department heads in the division of Home Economics at Iowa State College, each an acknowledged expert in her field, were asked to assume the role of analytical chemist and make suggestions for this booklist. Each was asked to imagine herself in the position of a homemaker with children confronted with the necessity of choosing a book, or books, which would cover best the scope of her department, realizing, of course, that whatever is selected now may be supplanted by newer and better material in the future, in fact, that it is sure to be. No bookist endures forever, though the principles which underlie its selection may enjoy a long life.

The food interests of the homemaker include in general, the problems of nutrition, cooking and serving. In the field of nutrition two books go hand in hand, Dr. Sansum's "The Normal Diet" ($1.50. C. V. Mosby Co., St. Louis) and Mrs. Rose's "Feeding the Family" ($2.40. Macmillan, New York). Dr. Sansum's book sets forth in a simple, straightforward manner, the fundamental principles of diet, while Mrs. Rose's book possesses the faculty of helping the ordinary home maker to adjust this modern knowledge of the science of nutrition to the needs of the individual members of her family.

For a cook book, the homemaker is advised that she may choose from three: "The New Butterick Cook Book" ($2.50. Butterick Publishing Co., New York), the latest edition of "The Boston Cooking School Cook Book" ($2.50. Little, Boston), or Janet M. Hill's "Practical Cooking and Serving" ($2.50. Doubleday, Garden City, N. Y.). These three books share honors as representing the best general, practical manuals for cooking. It is entirely possible that the homemaker will find no special need for a cook book, particularly if she is a high school or college woman who has a card recipe file.

Two books, Miss Bailey's "Meal Planning and Table Service" ($2.00. Manual Arts Press, Peoria, Ill.) and Mrs. Lutes' "Table Setting and Service for Mistress and Maid" ($2.25. Barrows, Boston) cover the other phase of food interests. Miss Bailey's book tells the homemaker in the servant area how to plan and serve meals in good form. Mrs. Lutes' book is a 1928 publication, hence, more nearly the last word on the subject.

For the homemaker who can afford only one book in the food department, Margaret Hargart's book "Foods and Cookery" ($1.25. Collegiate Press, Ames, Ia.) may answer. This book is broad in scope and at the same time authentic in material. It contains something on nutrition, marketing, meal planning, recipes, cooking, and serving.

Another 1928 book, "Hows and Whys of Cooking" ($2.00. University of Chicago Press, Chicago) is suggested as a desirable early addition to the bookshelf. This book tells accurately and exactly how to prepare really good food, records the reason for each step in preparation, and gives an explanation of the chemical changes which take place in the cooking process.

Clothing for the family involves three considerations on the part of the housewife—selection, construction and design. As in all other divisions of the housewife's interests her background of experience and her present practices will influence her choice very largely. A knowledge of clothing materials is essential to any individual, and most of all to the homemaker. Johnson's "Textile Fabrics" ($5.00. Harpers, New York) is the last word in this field, no doubt, having come from the press only last year. It covers selection and care from the standpoint of use, wear and laundering.

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ability. However, Elizabeth Dyer's book "Textiles (1.75. Houghton, Mifflin, Boston) may be chosen. It covers the same field and is approved by the Journal of Home Economics as "rich in practical suggestions."

Either Miss Baldt's "Dressmaking Made Easy" (25c. McCall Co., Dayton, O.) or Clara Brown's "Clothing Construction" (1.72. Ginn & Co., New York) will serve as a very effective help for the woman who does much or little of her sewing. Miss Brown's book is a comprehensive text covering the fundamental processes of clothing construction while Mrs. Baldt's book is a simple, easily understood publication. Both may well be on the bookshelf of the homemaker who sews.

"Art in Everyday Life" (3.50. Macmillan), a book written by the Goldstein sisters, was suggested in this division of the housewife's interests though it applies equally to the "home" phase. This book sets forth "the principles of balance, design, symmetry and good taste as applied to dress as well as to interior decoration."

When the homemaker comes to select a book which will help her in the care and training of her children she is advised to choose either Groves' "Wholesome Childhood" (2.00. Houghton) or Thom's "Everyday Problems of the Everyday Child" (2.50. Appleton, New York). In either case she will have a book which will serve her well. The former gives practical suggestions for building character from infancy to adolescence, and the latter tries to show parents their part in making the environment of children most favorable to their normal growth. Both deal with bodily health, habit formation, and the cultivation of desirable traits in a child.

An outstanding book devoted to child health is that by Lucas titled "The Health of the Runabout Child" (1.75. Macmillan). This book is a plea for a happy, healthy journey of the child from his mother's lap to the school gate, emphasizing such practical subjects as common disease, nutrition and diet, recreation and character training.

Miss Shih's "Biography of a Baby" (1.75. Houghton) is recommended as a desirable book for those interested in a more detailed psychological study of the baby during the first year of its life. However, the homemaker with a baby may decide upon Mrs. Fenton's book "A Practical Psychology of Babyhood" (3.50. Houghton), which presents a month-to-month record of the mental development of the author's own child from birth to two years.

The homemaker considers many details when she selects books for that division termed "home." She thinks of interior decoration; the management of time, energy and money; general family life; and the development of the individual members of her family as well as their relation to community life.

"A Study of Interior Decoration" (2.50. Doubleday) gives a logical presentation of fundamental principles and their practical application to complete decorative schemes for every room in the house. Yet, for the homemaker able to purchase only one of the two books, "Art in Everyday Life" is advised since it includes help on both dress and house.

"Housewifery" ($3.00. Lippincott, Philadelphia) by Miss Balderston and "Successful Family Life on the Moderate Income" ($2.50. Lippincott) by Mrs. Abel are recommended as the two books which cover best the other details noted under the "home" phase of the homemakers' interests. Miss Balderston's book, written "for women who do their own work," treats housewifery as a business, discussing plumbing, heating and lighting, equipment and labor saving appliances, household supplies, household furnishings, storage, cleaning and care of rooms, renovating, disinfectants, and household pests. Mrs. Abel's book is written for homemaking men and women and is "not only a work on home economics, but is also a broad-minded study, both analytical and inspirational, of the fine art of living."

The three books last noted should be the homemaker's first choice if she starts out with very little information along any of the phases covered by them. For more detailed study on management of the home, particularly in the principles and practices of household accounting and budgets, Taber's "The Business of the Household" ($3.00. Lippincott) should be added, followed, perhaps, by Miss Champion's "Spending the Family Income" (1.75. Little, Boston). From the sociological standpoint, the homemaker may wish to follow Mrs. Abel's book with that of Miss Spencer, "The Family and Its Members" ($2.50. Lippincott), later adding Mrs. Gilbreth's book "The Homemaker and Her Job" ($1.75. Appleton), and then Miss Spencer's "Woman's Share in Social Culture" ($2.50. Lippincott).

The health of the members of the family, individually and collectively, is of primary concern to the homemaker, and yet it is inextricably linked with all the other phases of homemaking. Food, clothes, surroundings, activities and ideals very definitely affect the family's health.

Accompanying such aid as may be obtained from books already noted, there should be included on the homemaker's bookshelf, some book for keeping fit. "A Handbook of Positive Health" ($1.25. Women's Foundation for Health, Inc., New York) is recommended to serve in this capacity with Fisher's "How to Live" ($2.00. Funk, New York) as a close supplement. For use in accidents or illness the "American Red Cross First Aid Book" ($1.00. Blakiston, Philadelphia) is recommended.

The fourteen choices noted, together with the six supplementary ones suggested, represent the recommendations of the home economics experts consulted. The primary list will cost approximately $30, while the supplementary list will bring the total to near $50. As suggested, the demands of one homemaker may lead to the selection of all or none of them, according to her training, her financial status or her interests. However, that the successful homemaker will need knowledge in the various phases described can scarcely be denied, and to acquire this knowledge, good books are a necessity, in most cases. John Cowper Powys maintains that "Reading is a nourishment to that something which is the nucleus of your personality." The homemaker's bookshelf most certainly nourishes that something which is the personality of her home.

Ellen H. Richards' Day.

The birthday of Ellen H. Richards, pioneer woman in home economics, was commemorated Monday afternoon, Dec. 3, at 4:00 o'clock in Catharine MacKay Auditorium with a convocation attended by home economics faculty and students. Pres. H. M. Hughes, a former student of Mrs. Richards, paid tribute to her.