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Episodes Concerning Evolution of Home Economics

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EVERYTHING has an infancy. It is one of the inevitable laws of a well ordered universe. I wonder sometimes if those of us who evolve so easily, or so otherwise, thru the courses in cookery, chemistry, dietetics, or design, ever wonder concerning the babyhood of Home Economics; out of what she grew; when she first stood alone on her two wobbling legs; her first uncertain steps.

Now, if you lived in say eighteen-seventy and wore a steel bustle, a basque, and your hair in rouleaux and had the courage and persistence to attend a college at all, had you thought where you would live? I am certain you haven't! Well, you will find your headquarters on the second flood of old Main Building. "Old Main" was a large brick and stone affair which stood on the very site from which central now raises her good dome, and was the very nucleus of the college itself. Most of your class room work would be done there. You would go to the basement for your meals and you would casually refer to the top floor as "Freshman Heaven"—the freshmen boys occupied this entire floor.

I may not guess how you would spend all the hours of your day, but I can tell you with annoying certainty how you would spend two of them: keeping the halls tidy or assisting in the kitchen and pantry. It would be useless for you to object. The work was required and of course you were paid for it, the stupendous sum of nine cents an hour. There would occasionally be a day when you were not entirely enthusiastic over the task and Mary Lovelace found dust in the corners and you were docked to three cents an hour! If you had the poor taste to remark that you didn't care for the work, you learned that it provided "healthful exercise, change of thought and useful experience."

This was the obscure beginning of Home Economics at Iowa State College. The plan was adapted from the Mt. Holyoke or Mary Lyon method and it endured until the boarders in "Old Main" became so numerous as to require regularly employed help.

Home Economics or more properly and according to that time "Domestic Economy," first stood upright assisted by the steady hand of Mrs. Mary Welch, Mrs. Welch, whose husband was Iowa State College's first president, was at this time assisting as teacher and frequently as preceptress. A resourceful, far-seeing woman, a model housekeeper and an ideal hostess, she felt the value to women of domestic accomplishments.

We sit in lectures, day after day taking them quite as a matter of course, but the first lectures in Home Economics were far from that. They were an event and something which the I. S. C. student would define as "unique in the history of the college." Incidentally it was the first "short course," but it differed much from those of the present day. It was a series of talks given to the seniors of the class of '73. It proved to be great success and thereafter such instruction was given to the upper class women. Presently to these lectures were added demonstration lessons and laboratory work. Imagine Mrs. Pearson's dismay if you were to hold your demonstration lessons in her kitchen, the approximate thousand of you! Yet these first lessons were given in Mrs. Welch's own home and private kitchen.

Later a kitchen was fitted up in the basement for the girls and the dishes prepared were served from table to table by the students to their fellows in the dining room. In this way the boys received "rare treats" and were no doubt thoroughly convinced of the need for Domestic Economy.

Sometime later the Domestic department moved into South hall, not the brick and mortar vision which the name conjures for you, but a vastly different affair of wood, previously used as the president's residence.
For ten years Mrs. Welch worked with her girls and then in 1883 she resigned and the work was continued by Emma P. Ewing, well known lecturer and writer on cookery. For five years she taught regular classes in the few rooms of South hall.

Then the position was again vacant, this time to be filled by Mrs. Elissa Owens, a slim dark woman with much talent and vision, began her campaign for enlargement in South hall. Eventually she added to the cooking proper more dining room work and a course in house sanitation and personal hygiene. One of her ideas was that she put in machinery, but she realized that since the appropriation was not large enough to give her even one assistant she could not possibly include it. "This is really Domestic Economy," Mrs. Owens said "for I have $300 to run on this year." This was in 1892.

And would you believe that at about this time the boys became so interested that they actually tried to classify in some of the courses they were pleased to call "dough?" Since the removal of the department to South hall their knowledge of the doings of the department had been seriously limited. They were obliged to keep on the sunny side of the senior girls in order to keep in touch with the work the "ladies' course" was doing. History tells us that they managed it admirably.

Again, expand your imagination and call on Prexy to ask if you and the "man" can walk to Ames to church this Sunday night. They did it—then. And would you believe it, they didn't always get back on time! Witness this outburst of a "noble senior" of the class of '94, composed involuntarily while returning to Old Main from church at Ames (*) one Sunday evening with a—a—companion:

Outburst
Light in the darkness, Sadie, day is at hand
But just beyond the Farmhouse there
The building doth stand.
Short has been our journey, Sadie, the steps we'll soon ascend
But within the Old Main, Sadie, will that be the end?

Chorus:
Will that be the end, Sadie, will that be the end?
Will Prexy want to see us? Will you and I suspect and snub?
Does the ray thru yonder lattice no evil portend?
When we say good night, Sadie, will that be the end?

Hold to my coat sleeve, Sadie, while yet you can,
The short remaining space too soon we will have spanned,
From some great dog, Sadie, with ease I'd you defend.
But if you run against a Prof., Sadie, will that be the end?

Chorus:
Put your hand in mine, Sadie, it seems to give me strength.
Trees and campus all so lonesome soon are passed at length.
Up the dark stairs, Sadie, we will soon ascend,
But sweat is on my brow, Sadie. Will that be the end?—L. C.

Extravagant Economies

By BLANCHE INGERSOLL, Assistant Professor of Household Science

A woman on our street who "can't afford" to have her washing done, spends hours washing out a few things at a time at a considerable expenditure of energy. She could hire her washing done by the local "cull'd lady" for one dollar, and with the same time and energy could save many dollars by making little girl's dresses instead of buying them ready made. Thus her pet economy is in reality an extravagance.

Pet economies are funny things. A real economy in one family or one town may be sheer extravagance in another. It becomes almost a sport to look for economies in the face. Turn them around and view them from the rear. Punch them and knock the wind out of them. In short—find out whether they are real economies, or merely luxuries in disguise. And then keep everlastingly at it, for economies are changeable—they vary with the seasons.

For example, the first strawberries or green peas on the market are always a luxury, not only because they are expensive, but because they lack the flavor of the same foods in season. People who are not used to eating any of seasonal strawberries, tire of them before the real season rolls around, hence they never buy them at their best and do not realize that they are cheating themselves out of a real delicacy.

On the other hand it is not always economy to wait until home grown things are on the market. People living on farms often feel that they cannot afford lettuce and spinach and tomatoes until they have them in their own gardens. Everyone needs the fresh green vegetables for a spring tonic in the early days of spring. Is it not much cheaper—to say nothing of being more agreeable to buy fresh green vegetables on the market than to pay a doctor to tell you to buy a tonic for that tired feeling?

Some economies have a way of changing character almost overnight. An economy one day may be extravagance a few days afterwards. There is a definite time when old potatoes cease to be an economy and become an extravagance because of the amount of waste, and also because the flavor is so poor that no one wants to eat them. At the same time, new potatoes—alothey may cost more per pound—are the best to buy because they have very little waste and everyone enjoys the new, fresh flavor.

Every housekeeper should do a little detective work and investigate the real character of her economies. The following lines of investigation might be suggested:

Do you economize by buying a large quantity of one variety of food, and then serve it so often that your family not only refuses that food but demands more expensive foods by way of reaction?

Do you buy inferior or small prunes because they are cheap and then wonder why your family begs for grapefruit? Try buying a good grade of 30-40 prunes and watch them disappear. Even 80-90 prunes are not cheap at any price if you throw part of them away and make your family hate prunes in the bargain.

Do you buy a cheap cut of round steak and then add butter and tomato and onion and flour and use a great deal of gas and time making a Swiss steak? Figure the cost of the finished product and see if it is more or less than top round would not be as just as cheap in the end.

Do you buy "just a few chops for dinner" at 30 cents a pound without realizing that these same chops will cost all the way from 53 cents to $1.68 a pound by the time they are ready to serve, and the bone—at 30 cents a pound—is reposing in the garbage can?

Do you grade at a cash and carry store, saving 15 cents, with a cost of 19 cents for car fare and a quarter to the girl who stays with the children while you are gone? It is always a good plan to select your own perishables and to get acquainted with the stores occasionally, but unless the store is just around the corner, very few women can afford to do all of their shopping in person.

This question of time is a most important one. Do you consider it worth your while to spend an hour or more making a freezer full of ice cream which will cost you only five or ten cents a quart less than the commercial ice cream, and perhaps not as good?

On the other hand it is not very much worthwhile while to make potato chips at a total cost of 12 cents a pound, when the commercial product sells for 15 cents a bag or one dollar a pound—eight times as much as the homemade product?

Is it a waste of time to make brown sugar syrup at a cost of four or five cents a pint rather than to use the table syrup which sells for nearly 50 cents a pint? Give your family the two kinds at one time without telling them which is which and see if you don't get more votes for your own syrup.

Do you talk about the high cost of living and at the same time buy rolls which are twice as expensive as bread when you figure the cost per ounce?

Do you buy meat at an unsanitary market or milk at a questionable dairy just because their prices are lower, and then bemoan the fact that you have to spend so much more for doctor bills because someone in the family "just isn't strong?"

Do you boast that you always use X-brand peaches when a second or even third grade might do as well, and cost about half as much, when you are making a sherbet or gelatine dish?

Do you buy dried beef in a glass at $1.28 a pound—2 ½ ounces for 20 cents—(Continued on page 19)