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The New Domestic System

By CLAUDE L. BENNER, Institute of Economics, Washington, D. C.

ALL STUDENTS of the social sciences now realize that whenever a significant change takes place in the technique of production, the whole manner of our living is vitally affected. All the revolutions in the world's history have not exerted one hundredth the influence upon the way men live as has the industrial revolution. It is no exaggeration at all to say that there has been more industrial progress in the last one hundred and fifty years than took place in all the other centuries of recorded time.

We are all so in the custom of thinking of this great revolution as being primarily concerned with the production of goods in the factory and on the farm that we frequently forget what it has done to our household economy. Starting as have been the changes outside the home, those inside have been equally as revolutionary. In fact, in some respects a good deal more so. Until the beginning of the nineteenth century the home was the center of our industrial life. The modern factory of today was quite unknown.

The typical American of George Washington's time was still clad in homespun cloth made from wool sheared from his own sheep, spun, dyed and woven in his own home by the women of his own household. Blankets, towels, sheets, and many other articles of household furnishing, were made by the women in their homes. Nor was this all, for practically everything for the table was prepared in the home. The butter and the cheese were made there. Bakeries for furnishing the housewife with cakes, pies, and bread were not to be found. In short, none of the prepared foods that now crowd the grocer's shelves were then in existence. Even during the nineteenth century the new bride couldn't rush home from the movies to prepare a ten-minute supper by opening a can of Campbell's tomato soup and a tin of sardines. Neither the soup, the sardines, nor the movies were to be had.

But those days are gone forever. Slowly but surely during the nineteenth century practically everything of a manufacturing nature was taken out of the home. Production was more effectively carried on in the factories and there it went, until today nothing of that nature remains to burden the life of the housewife. We no longer have to make our own clothes, wash them, or even wear them out. The factory furnishes them ready made for us and the steam laundry does the rest.

It is very illuminating as well as amusing to read some of the articles that were written by the critics of the time as to the effect that this change was going to have upon the women folk of the country. A certain clergyman by the name of Coleman spoke with regret about the decline of the household manufacturers because "the healthy exercise of domestic labour has been exchanged for the idleness and frivolities of pride and luxury." Idle hands were always considered the devil's workshop, and of course if these hands were woman's, then it was all the more dangerous to

Tho Mr. Benner is not in college work at the present, he prefers to be remembered as a teacher, a friend of all students and a consistent defender of young people in general. Just now he is busily engaged in writing a book.

He says: "My purpose in writing this article is to raise the question and not to settle any problem. Moralists rave about flappers, divorce, lack of marriage among university women. Now my thesis is, that we are just as good as any generation has ever been. If there is a change, it is being forced by changing economic conditions."

have them idle. The historian familiar with the exhausting toil of the women of the past might have remarked that they were entitled to a rest.

But there are always those who view any lightening of the burdens of mankind with alarm. Hours of labor, say these people, must not be shortened because the workers will not know what to do with their leisure. Only recently when the great Steinmetz predicted that the time would come in the future when a four-hour day would be all that mankind would have to labor, the newspapers were filled with horror at the prospect. And when Henry Ford in 1915 reduced the working day in his factory to eight hours, and at the same time increased the wages of his employes to five dollars per day even some professional economists viewed the proceedings with the greatest alarm. The high wages would be wasted in riotous living and the leisure time would be spent in sinful idleness.

However, as usual, the prophecies of the pessimists do not come true. Laborers haven't been ruined by their high wages, nor have women lost their virtues because some of their grinding toil has been abolished. It is not the decreasing of the deadening routine of woman's work in the home that gives cause for worry. That process even yet hasn't gone far enough. On the farms especially there is the most imperative need of better facilities to lighten the work in the home. When we realize that on less than 10 per cent of our farms is water piped into the house, and that the merest fraction of one per cent of farm houses have any power driven machinery at all to aid in doing the household work, it is rather evident that in many aspects the new domestic system in the country is somewhat like the one of the olden days.

The situation in the city homes, however, presents a striking contrast to this. It is here that we see the new domestic system that the industrial revolution has been slowly bringing about. The coming in of the machine industry with its cheapening process of production took away from women a large part of their former economic activity. Household articles of almost every sort have

become too cheap to be made by the old domestic time-consuming methods. It actually is less expensive to buy nearly everything used in the modern household ready made from the stores than it is to make these goods in the home. The home woman is gradually being crowded out of all industrial activities in our modern society.

Whatever economic justification the home had in the past, outside of the farm, it has very little economic utility today. More and more its only function is limited to mere consumption and spending. This means that only those who can afford luxuries can maintain homes. Under the old domestic system the woman was a real economic producer. Under the modern system except in the poorer classes of society she can hardly be so considered. It is true that the function of rearing children is still hers. But that, too, is gradually shifted to the farmers and to the less wealthy groups of society. It is hard to defend the economic dependence of women by the test of children. Our vital statistics show that children are in an inverse ratio to the room for them. Only the poor seem able to have them.

For this situation women are by no means to be blamed. The modern woman is more ambitious if anything than her grandmother was. Witness the thousands that are daily seeking employment in every phase of our economic activity. And even those who stay at home are not willing to be idle. They succeed in complicating the keeping of a home to such an extent that even with the aid of all modern improvements they are busy from morning till night. Keeping up with "social duties" in a large city drives many a woman to the doctor. So much of our spending is competitive in nature and merely for conspicuous display that there is a large element of futility in it all. Women being no longer economically active in the process now becomes *decoratively* so.

In this inadequate presentation of the problems the writer knows full well that he has only painted one side of the picture. And he has done so purposely for he wishes to call attention to a social condition that is not yet fully understood. The new domestic system has released women from the old burdensome labor of the past. However, it has not furnished her with any other type of economic activity unless she leaves the home. Worse than all this, there is a social ideal that, in some manner or other, it is a little disgraceful for a married woman to work outside the home. This is even felt keenly in some labor circles. Our peculiar ideal of living denies to a married woman the role of economic producer and thus makes marriage very expensive. And yet if the woman because of this is unable to make a desirable marriage she is pitied just a little by society. The attitude is illogical and its results unfortunate to all concerned.

Because we are still so dominantly agricultural in our outlook we see our domestic life mainly as it exists there.

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Shrubs as a Garden Background

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green mass of peony foliage after the peonies have ceased blooming. Gladiolus (in variety)—Sword Flower. Kniphofia pfitzeria—Red-hot Poker Plant.

Liatris (in variety)—Blazing Star. Lilium—Lily.

Physostegia virginiana—False Dragon Head.

I know of a small backyard garden which has been enclosed with a lattice fence and a planting of shrubbery. Facing the shrubbery and bordering the oval grass panel, perennials and annuals lend touches of color thruout the garden season. And could you have seen the dear little old white-haired man, sitting fast asleep on the garden bench, with the lavender flowers of the Butterfly Bush covered with golden butterflies and a humming bird flitting among the larkspur and columbine—then truly you would have felt the spell of charm and contentment brooding over this little garden on a hot summer afternoon.

'Tis Egg Time Again

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Tomato and Eggs Scrambled.

6 eggs
1½ c cooked tomatoes
Seasoning

Method—Beat the eggs slightly. Add the cooked tomatoes strained thru a coarse strainer to remove large pieces. Turn into a greased frying pan and cook over a slow fire stirring slowly. As soon as the eggs set remove from the fire and serve at once. Over cooking gives a curdled watery product.

French Toast With Eggs.

Dip a slice of bread 1/3 inch thick into a beaten egg to which a tablespoon of milk has been added. Cut out a circle 2 inches across from the center of the toast. Saute until a light brown. Break an egg into the hole in the toast, sprinkle with salt. When the toast is brown, turn the whole slice of toast and brown on the other side. Serve at once.

Potato Nests and Baked Eggs.

On a buttered baking pan make nests of hot mashed potatoes. Left over mashed potatoes may be used. In each nest break an egg, being careful to keep the yolk whole. Dot with butter, season. Put into a moderate oven 10 minutes or until the egg is firm. Do not over cook. If the nests have been made on a pyrex pie plate, they may be served at the table from this plate. Eggs may be baked in stuffed baked potatoes in the same way.

These are but suggestions to the menu makers. One need not fear lack of variety in the meals with fresh eggs in the market at 25 cents a dozen.

The New Domestic System

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The small town, of course, is its duplicate. But the large cities are changing rapidly from that agricultural ideal. We can only begin to see some of the re-

sults that are flowing from this change. It is of the utmost importance that home economics colleges appreciate this movement. For it is their function to prepare girls to take their places in this domestic system. And there is no efficacy in training them to meet conditions that are rapidly passing away.

The Cooking of Meats

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either colorless or slightly yellow. A condition between these two extremes is indicated by the term medium rare. In this case, sufficient heat has been applied to change the color of the center to a light pink. The gray layer underlying the crust is therefore extended considerably toward the center and the free juice is smaller in quantity and lighter in color than in the rare meat.

The degrees of cooking just indicated are dependent upon the temperatures reached in the interior of the meat during the cooking. To many housewives the roasting of beef seems to be largely a matter of chance. A roast may, when judged from its external appearance seem to be sufficiently cooked and yet prove to be very much underdone when cut. Even long experience fails to make judgments of the exterior more reliable, so that many cooks would rather prepare all the rest of the dinner than to roast the meat. Therefore to the inexperienced housekeeper a method of judging the condition of the meat regardless of its ex-

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