

1924

Better Homes

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Recommended Citation

Ford, James (1924) "Better Homes," *The Iowa Homemaker*: Vol. 4 : No. 1 , Article 5.
Available at: <http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol4/iss1/5>

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Better Homes

By JAMES FORD, Executive Director of Better Homes Movement

A CHALLENGE to all the communities of the United States which are interested in the problem of better homes for their citizens has just been issued by Better Homes in America, recently incorporated as a national educational institution, with Herbert Hoover, secretary of commerce, as president, and James Ford as executive director. The new headquarters are at 1653 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D. C.

The challenge comes in the form of a guide-book, just released by Better Homes in America for community use in making plans for Better Homes Week, May 11 to 18.

"Why Have a Better Homes Demonstration in Your Home Town?" asks the guide-book, and answers its own question as follows:

1. To demonstrate the advantages of thrift for home ownership. (Only 45 per cent of the families of America are home owners.)
2. To overcome the present shortage of homes—America needs at least 600,000 new homes.
3. To make a sweet and wholesome home life available to all.
4. To assist and encourage home mak-

ers and home builders. (Over 90 per cent of the women of America do their own home work.)

5. To improve the home environment, thereby helping to build character.

6. To increase the efficiency of the wage-earner of the house.

7. To stimulate sensible and appropriate purchasing for home improvement.

8. To mobilize community pride for a common objective—Pride of Home.

Approximately 1000 Better Homes demonstrations took place last year, when the movement was in charge of Mrs. William Brown Meloney, editor of the *Delineator*. Its reorganization as a national educational institution will greatly increase the scope of its activities. Participation in the Better Homes movement, and participation in the demonstrations under community direction are urged upon the American people by President Coolidge, who heads the advisory council of Better Homes in America.

"The American Home is the foundation of our national and individual well being," says President Coolidge. "Its steady improvement is, at the same time, a test of our civilization and of our

movement provides a channel through which men and women in each community can encourage the building, ornamenting and owning of private homes by the people at large. We need attractive worthy, permanent homes that lighten the burden of housekeeping. We need homes in which home life can reach its finest levels, and in which can be reared happy children and upright citizens.

"I commend participation in Better Homes demonstrations and in the other work of the movement to the American people."

There is a special challenge to students in the fact that the first prize for a better home last year was awarded to Port Huron, Michigan, where the home in question was financed, completely furnished and demonstrated entirely by a group of students in the high school. Their work so impressed the community spirit that practically the entire city fell into line before the week was over. More than 8000 persons visited their house for the purpose of learning the better-homes wisdom it offered in its equipment, furnishing and decoration. On the last day of the demonstration it was sold at public auction for \$300 more than it had cost to erect and furnish.

All is Not Silk That Rustles

By HAZEL B. MCKIBBEN

YOU'VE heard the remark that things are not what they seem? Consider silk! To how many mixtures is the word "silk" applied? For instance, silkaline is all cotton, near silk is half cotton, artificial silk is cellulose put through a special chemical process. Because of the misleading names of these materials every woman should know some simple test by which she can tell whether or not her silk is pure or mixed, or not silk at all.

For years crepe-de-chine and other crepes have been considered pure, but within the last few seasons it has been found that there is an abundance of loaded crepe on the market. That is, metal has been added to increase the weight. Even though the material is very beautiful and is priced at \$6.50 per yard, it may be loaded as well as many of the cheaper pieces. Rather than be too enthusiastic about its appearance, be a bit dubious and ask your sales woman for a sample to test.

Metallic loading is very disastrous to the material if used to too great an extent. But perhaps you wonder why manufacturers ever started to weight silk and why they still keep it up. When the silk comes to the manufacturer, it is in a state called raw silk. That is, the fibers are as they have been reeled from the cocoon. The silk worm excretes a gum or glue called sericin, which holds the silk fibers together as they come from the silk worm's mouth parts.

Before it can be made into most types of material the sericin must be boiled

off in order to make the fiber soft. Figure 1 shows the raw silk fibers under a high power microscope. You will notice that the two fibers are held together by large scales of the gum.

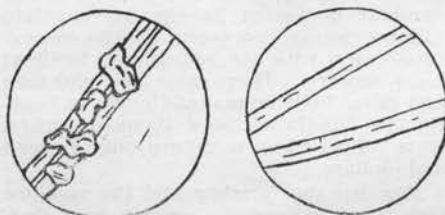
In the boiling off process, about one fourth of the weight of the original raw silk is lost, due to the sericin dissolving off of the fibrin. This washed silk, as it is called, is shown in figure 2. Notice that there is now no wax on the fibers. Since about 25 per cent of the weight is lost the manufacturers resorted to the use of metallic salts to replace the lost weight. However, they were not content with the 25 per cent, but found they could add as much as 400 per cent.

If they stopped with just the replacement, no harm whatever would be done to the fiber. When the higher percentages of metallic salts are added, the value of the material to the manufacturer is increased but the value to the consumer is decreased for it results in cheap silks that do not wear well and

soon split and crack under their own weight. Also, perspiration unites with the metallic salts causing the material to fall apart. Heavy old silks which are now heirlooms are better than most of the pieces purchased at present, for their weight is the natural weight of the silk and not an adulteration.

As stated above, every woman should know some simple test which will show her what the material is and whether or not it is weighted or loaded. The burning test is usually sufficient. The only equipment necessary is the sample and a box of matches. Ravel the sample so that there is a fringe both ways. Apply a lighted match to the threads and if they appear to melt down into tufted heads or beads, the silk is pure; if however the fringe does not burn but looks like tiny red hot wires—the fabric is weighted. What one sees there is not silk at all, but really red hot metal—the silk has been burned away. Always be sure to test the threads both ways for the material may be loaded one way and not the other.

If instead of forming the beads, the threads burn with a quick flash and smell like burning paper, the sample is artificial silk or cotton. Artificial silk is quite easily recognized because of its very lustre. If the material does not form beads or burn with a quick flash, but still burns with a slower flame, it is cotton. Combinations are often found in this testing such as silk one way and cotton the other, artificial silk one way



Silk Fibers—before and after boiling process.