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Old Fashioned Equipment

The Iowa Homemaker

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Old Fashioned Equipment

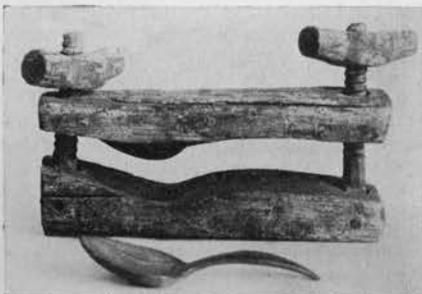
It is a far cry from the interesting old pieces of equipment shown here to our modern devices for the same purpose. Imagine making all your own spoons, or grinding all your own coffee, or even having to bother with filling a lamp every time you needed a light.

And yet, in addition to caring for large families and doing the sewing, knitting and mending which was expected of every true homemaker, our grandmothers and great-great-grandmothers cheerfully performed these operations every day or every week and thought it only a part of the household routine. Can you picture the modern woman taking a part of her valuable scheduled day for, say, making a new set of spoons for the family, especially if she had planned upon an afternoon at bridge or the Country Club?

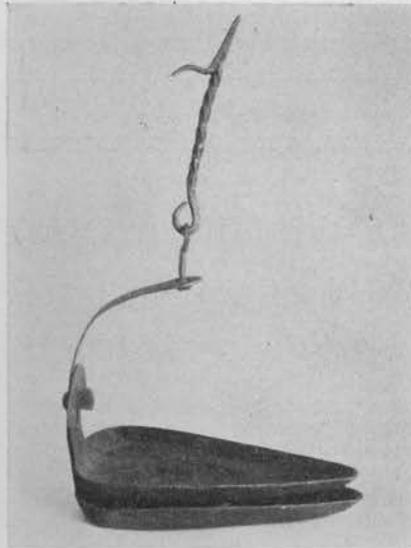
Three hundred and fifty years ago in Norway the housewife was using the same spoon mold pictured here to make new spoons for her family. It was a simple process, but imagine what the product must have been like. The modern woman would not tolerate such a short-handled, bunglesome spoon as a part of her kitchen equipment and yet I am sure that was the piece of resistance of some Norwegian housewife's culinary equipment some three hundred years ago.

The spoons were made from the horns of cattle. (Seems queer to us, I know.) The horns were heated until they melted and then poured into the mold. They were taken out when the horn had hardened and cooled and were carefully polished after they had been trimmed evenly around the edges. On the whole, these horn spoons were very successful. If any of you happen to have an old horn handled knife among your possessions you know how much wear such a spoon would resist.

While great-great-grandmother was waiting for a spoon to harden so that she could mold another one, there was always plenty for her to do. One daily duty was grinding the day's supply of coffee for her large and active family. The coffee was ground in a hand coffee mill like the one pictured here. This one was also made in Norway and is about one hundred and fifty years old.



Spoon mold.



A "Kala" lamp.



Ground coffee was collected in the wooden drawer.



An old chest.

It has been in constant use until one year ago. Even our modern equipment would be sorely strained to live up to such a record!

The coffee mill was made of a substantial hard wood. The metal parts were all of iron. The coffee is put in at the top and the ground coffee is collected in the wooden drawer. The odor of freshly ground coffee is so tempting it is no wonder our grandmothers were so proud of their coffee mills.

Cod liver oil, to us, with our present day connotation, sounds like dietetics and babies, but to our grandmothers it meant "Kala" lamp. Even before candles were used in Norway, light was derived from "Kala" lamps like the one pictured here. In the top tray was put cod liver oil. The center of a certain weed which grew in Norway was laid in the oil with one end out and served as a wick. The bottom tray caught the extra oil. We would put up our noses at the thought of how the burning oil would smell, but our ancestors without doubt considered the "Kala" lamp a great luxury.

Old, battered treasure chests are greatly prized today and proudly exhibited in homes that are fortunate enough to have one. They have many interesting uses which depend upon their size. Handkerchiefs and gloves hide gratefully in the depths of smaller chests, while an excellent storage place for larger articles of apparel is afforded by the large containers. The one in the illustration is very very old and shows signs of use.

Aren't these old pieces of equipment interesting both from the historical and economical standpoint? What great steps have been made in the field of household equipment since the days when these articles were in use. We prize them highly when we think of how our grandmothers used them day after day and year after year, but we turn to our silver chest, our finely ground coffee and our electric lights and thank our lucky stars that we were born in the twentieth century.



A coffee mill.