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Calling for Versatility

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Calling for Versatility

LIFE at Ivorydale amidst a pleasant scene of factory activity is energetic, interesting and extremely satisfactory. An experimental kitchen and an experimental household laundry comprise the laboratories of the Home Economics Department of the Proctor and Gamble Company. I am in charge of the activities here, where my official designation, if anyone ever got around to giving it, would probably be "assistant director."

The foods work has two main phases, regular checking of Crisco for quality and performance, and recipe testing and developing.

Samples of Crisco from the various plants come to Ivorydale for checking and although very carefully controlled tests are carried on by other departments, kitchen testing is used frequently to check and amplify their results.

A regular program of recipe testing is carried on to supply new recipes for advertising. A carefully selected small group of testers pass on new dishes which are the essential part of simple luncheons served two or three times a week in the kitchen. Recipes for magazine and newspaper advertising, as well as for cook books, are checked in the Experimental Kitchen before being approved.

The laundry work is divided into two classes; fine hand laundering and regular family laundering. A regular Ivory washability service is maintained for textile manufacturers and retailers. Half yard swatches of fabrics which they submit to us are tested for shrinkage and color fastness by six washings. Fascinating materials of all kinds are sent in for this test, and if they come up to our standards, they are approved as Ivory-washable. Several girls are kept busy all the time in the testing of these fabrics and making of the "approved" cards.

In addition to regular swatches, many miscellaneous articles are sent in to be similarly tested, such as: knitted garments, underwear, dresses, men's socks, babies' rubber panties, bandanas, bathing suits and almost anything else you can imagine.

As a cooperative project with the Laundry Research Department, a small family laundry is maintained to test laundry soap products under typical conditions. Two regular washwomen do two regular family laundries a day. From this work, soap consumption is recorded and test pieces are run through for a constant check-up on the efficiency of the soaps being tested. The actual operation of this laundry, especially the washing and drying procedures, are the responsibility of the Home Economics Department.

A more detailed description of my work will give a better idea of the variety of problems that make up the Home Economics Department activities. This day I start as usual at 8 A.M. dressed in the simple wash dress and white shoes which are my laboratory "uniform." Supplies are ordered and then the household laundry is visited to see that the bundles for the day are all in and the laundresses well started. Incidentally, the "bundles" are regular family washes brought in by various members of the plant and office.

Back in the experimental kitchen a box of knitted garments sent from New York is waiting to be tested. In this I find three pairs of beautiful Angora mittens, a skein of yarn, and a knitted rayon boucle dress to be washed, color fastness noted, and the garments blocked back to their original shape. All are very satisfactory, although the dress has a tendency to stretch, which will be noted in the suggested washing directions.

The washing test finished, cooking is the order of the day. A new pie and an interesting French fried dish make a typical combination which is served, with a salad, toast, and tea to be wired. Plans must then be hurriedly changed to include the new emergency tests. They are run on the foods or fabrics submitted as quickly and completely as possible to meet the request of the sender. Work of this type takes precedence over the previous plans for the afternoon.

Several long-time problems are usually going on, but they are frequently interrupted by such short problems as these so that they do not become monotonous. New ideas and an increased enthusiasm are the results of a short vacation from the longer problems.

After going through this representative day with me, you will agree that these are a variety of problems which we are called upon to meet in experimental laboratories.

—by Elizabeth Myers, '36

April, 1938