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Keeping House at the Practice Cottage

By MILLIE LERDALL

BOUND ON the west by a lovely and spacious living room, on the east by a perfectly adorable snow white kitchen, on the top by the cosiest of sleeping rooms, and with a center ishmmus of a gay reading room and attractive dining room, the practice house is the fulfillment of that dream of all dreams—a lovely harmoniously furnished little home minus nothing except perhaps, the man.

More than this it is a final step in the linking of “science with practice” for the practice house is a home maintained by the college where for a brief period the senior home economics students of Iowa State may put to a very practical test the knowledge they have gained from their four years work.

The students who go to the practice house must have a general knowledge of all things pertaining to the problems of housewifery and house management along with a certain amount of patience and ability to meet emergencies. They must be able to make budgets, keep accounts, follow time schedules, make beds and clean and polish silver and all the other duties which the care of a home brings. With all of the knowledge with which they have naturally accumulated in the three years of their college career, they are ready to pack their bags and cross the threshold of the practice house without a quiver, having full confidence in their own ability to keep a house as it should be kept. Each student carries on her work just as she would do ordinarily except on the days when she is chief cook and then because her duties are particularly heavy, she is excused from her classes.

The house is harmoniously furnished through with combinations of subdued and bright blues, grays and browns predominating. In the living and reading rooms the bright colored curtains of cretonne at the windows are offset by rather neutral gray walls and white woodwork. The reading room is characterized by its gray furniture, bright cushions and well chosen pictures hung at a comfortable height from the eye. A group of interesting magazines on the mahogany table invites one to sit down in the kitchen with its spotless white walls and checked gingham at the windows that cheery atmosphere so conducive to work. The sleeping rooms above are attractively furnished, one in mahogany and three in ivory with curtains to complete a harmonious color scheme.

At present thru a system of rotation four students remain at the practice house for a period of eight days, one girl coming and one girl leaving every two days. An instructor in charge is at once advisor, supervisor and chaperone but the girls have the responsibility of managing the home.

Just as many hands make light work, so does scheduling of tasks make for efficiency. That’s the reason why, in spite of a few unforeseen and unpredictable disasters, the general regime of the household runs so smoothly. “Each girl to a task and for every task a girl!” is the unspoken yet understood slogan that prevails. The girls’ duties are divided into distinct groups of two days each and each group of days has its set of duties very clearly defined. Each girl becomes successively assistant, second cook, cook and manager.

Oh it’s so delightful to be assistant! Not a care or a responsibility to mar the whole horizon unless one deliberately ponders ahead to ‘trouble troubles before trouble troubles her.’ For no one can deny that it is quite a responsibility to cook for or try to manage a household of five or six people. But to be really and entirely assistant is to make the beds and care for the upstairs rooms. In general to be a good helper and keep the eyes and ears at attention all of the time so that when one must assume the greater responsibilities later on, the adjustment will not be so difficult.

It is then with self satisfaction and growing confidence that on the next two days of her stay in the practice house the girl assumes the role of second cook. She always looks forward to cooking for the family and plans her menus with all the enthusiasm of a young child about to hear an interesting story. But 6:15 does
come around horribly early in the morning and it's such a worry for fear she won't hear the alarm and won't waken the rest of the family on time.

At last the momentous days of "cookhood" arrive and she is surprised to find that the misgivings of the first four days were needless, that she is actually enjoying her work as cook. It is hard to miss two days of school especially near the end of the quarter when school work seems most pressing but she soon forgets that with the hum of the vacuum cleaner in the living room or the singing of the tea kettle in the kitchen. Her biggest interest in the next meal.

In planning for that next meal she must take into consideration a great number of things. She must ask herself these questions: First of all, are the three meals for the day going to fall within the cost of $2.50 for five or six people? Do they include at least one hot bread; biscuits, yeast bread or muffins? Do the calories amount to 2400 per person per day and the protein calories to 300 per person per day? Are the menus so well planned that they may be prepared with ease leaving enough time for the necessary rinsing and washing? Are the menus in keeping with the principles of meal planning and dietetics? Do they contain enough vitamins and mineral matter? Do they have an even balance of liquid and solid, protein and carbohydrates and are the flavors and color combinations delightful? Finally is the equipment easily accessible and ready to use?

With all of these factors considered beforehand the cook is ready to carry her part thru and do it efficiently. Aside from the fact that she is cook in the kitchen to the very minute of service she cooly and collectedly makes her way to the table where she acts as hostess. She leads all the conversation to topics of general interest, while all of the time far back in her subconscious mind is the fear that perhaps something will go wrong in the kitchen. Perhaps on one of these days some famous personage passing thru the state will stop in Ames for a visit and will be invited to come to the practice house for dinner. It would indeed does the cook feel proud of her responsibility as hostess.

Of course mishaps occur even at the practice house but these are to be expected. The pie burns or the cream refuses to whip, but in good sportsmanship the students take these little mishaps and receive a great deal of satisfaction from the fact that they have not met a difficulty and have been able to solve it well.

As the closing chapter in the adventure in homemaking comes the position as house manager. After having graved the perils of cook a girl feels equal to any task. She scurries around doing the marketing personally for the cook, keeping track of the bills and making all things in the budget balance.

Her account books are the pride of her life and it is a genuine pleasure for her to run around from one store to another in search of bargains. If she can buy head lettuce at one place cheaper than at another she never stops to consider the steps involved, but makes the extra trip willingly to make her daily account an economical one. She never could mend her own clothing at home but to mend at the practice house is simple and really quite interesting. It is just as easy to arrange the flowers artistically and not to forget to water them. Her only real anxiety is getting the supplies on time for the cook and seeing that the household runs smoothly enough.

And so her practice house career comes to an end. If she has been conscientious and sincere in her work and if it involves the type of things in which she is especially interested she will feel a little sad as she closes the door behind her forever. If one the other hand it has been a constant struggle on her part to maintain an interest in it, it will be with a feeling of relief that she leaves it behind to pursue work of more immediate interest to her. The departure of each girl from its life and it is a genuine pleasure for her to leave it behind to forget to water them. Her only real anxiety is getting the supplies on time for the cook and seeing that the household runs smoothly enough.

The Sunny Practice House Dining Room—Campus Visitors Feel Highly Honored When They Are Invited Here for Dinner

How to Judge of a Pattern
By NIRA KLISE

"Oh Mary," the voice over the telephone was a heartbroken wall.

"I'm having the most awful time. You know I have been trying to make a new waist and it won't fit at all, and I bought a size 32 pattern just as always do. Can you tell me what's wrong? I know I followed the directions exactly."

Mary considered a moment, then asked, "Did you buy the same kind of pattern? I mean the same make you always get?"

"Well, no. I usually get a D— but this time I got a B—. But that wouldn't make any difference would it? They were the same size."

"Of course it would, child. Wait till I come over and I'll show you."

When Mary arrived at her friend's home she found her staring hopelessly at a partly made brown silk waist which she held up.

"Now let's see! Just as I thought. It's too small across the shoulders and pretty tight in the sleeves, isn't it? B— patterns usually are for your kind of figure."

"But why, Mary? I'd think the right size would fit you no matter what kind of pattern."

"I know you would, and a lot of women who have had a great deal more experience than you have had in sewing think the same thing. So did I until I learned differently when I had to compare patterns for a project in college. Certain kinds of patterns fit a certain type of figure better than others even if they are the same size and supposed to fit the same sized person. What women really ought to do is to test out patterns till they find the make that suits their particular type of figure best, and always buy that kind, or know what alterations are necessary when they use other kinds."

"For every woman to systematically judge many makes of patterns for herself would undoubtedly require a great deal of time, but there is no reason why the practice house couldn't do it together. They could even pay one woman to do it for them, and it would be well worth the effort and expense. Shall I tell you how I worked this out?"

"Well then," as her friend nodded, "I bought the same design in eight different makes of patterns—a simple man—"