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Economy, Or A Wrong Idea

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A T THE time an electric washer was brought into our home I agreed with the neighbor lady who said, “Well, it surely is a mighty fine thing, but don’t you think you would feel as if it were taking up all my extra time for six years to scrubbing clothes on my old tin washboard and I guess I can stand it another six anyway until we are able to buy something that’s really good?”

Today I think of that woman who bends over the hot, steamy soap suds, scrubbing and rubbing the dirt and grease from the clothes of those six boys and who comes to the table so tired and cross she can’t eat. Then in a vision I see my mother who has her washing out long before lunch hour, and by meal time she is rested and has the appetite of a hungry school boy.

I remember one Monday morning, the usual wash day, father came in from the office for some papers he had left at home. He found mother sitting in a comfy chair reading the women’s page in a popular woman’s magazine.

“Decided not to wash today?”

For answer, she took him to the laundry. The electric washer was doing the work while mother was enjoying a good rest.

There are not many power washers in our community. Why? Well just because there are a few people that think they can afford the luxury. They think, “It’s not necessary to have one. I have so many other places for my extra money.” Are they correct when they think the washboard and tub is more economical?

One day I asked mother if she thought her new way of washing was more economical than the old method. “It’s such a COMFORT, girlie!”—and I was left to infer from the tone of her voice that the washing machine belongs to the class of luxuries, but after all was well with the “horrible” expense.

And mother worked under this delusion for months—in fact until I handed her one day the result of a study of washing machine costs which I had made as a research problem in a home economics class at Iowa State college. These results were based upon a period of ten years, each year 12 weeks long.

With electric power:

Average electric machine $150.00
Interest at 6 per cent for 10 yrs. $90.00
Supplies (soap, starch, bluing) 25c a week $135.00
Electricity, 1.5-2c per hour for 2 hrs. a week $20.80
Housewife’s work for 40c per hour 3 hours a week $54.00

Total $1184.80

The life of the machine is considered to be ten years.

By washboard and tub:

Housewife’s work for 6 hours each week $1248.00
Supplies (soap, starch, bluing) 25c a week $125.00
2 tubs @ $2.00 4.00
2 washboards @ $1.30 2.60

Total $1397.60

It’s $252.80 more to her credit.

In favor of electric washer.

How about it? Is it a greater luxury to have a washboard and tub in your laundry room, or an electric washer? Wouldn’t it be wonderful if the people who dream of money could give their imagination to every housewife? She could imagine living through ten years of enjoyable life plenty of time for club, plenty of time for rest, and then come out with $384.80 more to her credit.

Why isn’t it that more families do not have an electrical power washer if it is so much more economical and efficient? I can imagine many of the readers asking.

Let us attempt the solution. Perhaps it is because so many people find it harder to look into the future than it is to look into the past, or it may be because so many women have given up hopes of getting away from the drudgery of washing.

But for those women there is hope. There are only two steps necessary to climb out of the spirit of drudgery and to make “play” the laundry motto. One step leads to the basement, to store the old tub and board away, and the other step leads to the little electric shop around the corner to order a standard type washer.