1926

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Recommended Citation
Guthrie, Elsie (1926) "Esthonia Sends Us a Homemaker," The Iowa Homemaker: Vol. 6 : No. 5 , Article 8.
Available at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol6/iss5/8

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Esthonia Sends Us a Homemaker

By ELSIE GUTHRIE

N
o longer need a woman choose between a husband and children and a career; she can have both. This is being proven by Mrs. Alma Lassman Martin of Europa, Esthonia, who is now on the Iowa State College campus and in management of her own country. Mrs. Martin has been a teacher in an agricultural school and her husband is an assistant in the University of Esthonia. Her three children, of two, four and six years, respectively, are at present under the care of their grandmother.

Esthonia is a small republic on the east coast of the Baltic Sea and south of the Gulf of Finland. The country, which has an area of 18,600 square miles, supports a population of over one million people, as a result of the rapid development of the latter being due to the cooperative movement under which the 1907 constitution has been more successful in gaining control of the buying and selling of certain agricultural products. For about 200 years preceding the World War, Esthonia was a part of the Russian empire. Following the collapse of the Russian military power in 1917, Esthonia declared her independence. Germany occupied the country. By treaty later, the country was given absolute independence, became a free republic, and joined the League of Nations.

Mrs. Martin is a graduate of "The Stebute Higher Agricultural Courses" in St. Petersburg (where she attended from 1913 to 1917). She studied during the year 1921-22 at the University of Tartu in Esthonia and in 1924 "agron diploma," or the course in home economics. In the elementary and secondary schools of Esthonia homemaking is taught and there are always thirty or forty times as many applicants for these classes as there is room. The remarkable interest in education is shown by the fact that 20 percent of the state budget is being devoted annually by the state and communes for educational purposes.

Mrs. Martin says that because of the newness of the country, teachers and governors are not as powerful as they were in Russia. She has heard some stories of farm women, who often work from 3 a.m. to 10 p.m. in summer. "It is my main problem to relieve this situation," she says.

In Esthonia the houses are large, with large windows that give more light. People do not use shades and curtains at the windows. Houses in the cities have furnaces and electric lights, but electricity costs more than it does here. The common fuel is a red brown stone called "Esthonian slate." Most buildings are of wood construction, not stone. Farm homes do not have modern conveniences. Some tractors are found on farms, but most of the work is done by horses.

Housewives in Esthonia use much meat and have bouillon every day. Fruits and vegetables are not canned, but pickled, dried and preserved in salt. Mrs. Martin thinks our small cans very tiny in comparison with the barrels used in Esthonia for spinach, cabbage and beans.

The farm housewife manages her household, cares for the children, spins and weaves and does much outdoor work, which consists of gardening, caring for poultry and hogs and milking. Those who can afford it have maids to do the housework while they spend much time at the coffee houses. Most of the clothing worn by the country people is spun and woven in the home. Wool and flax are the fibers used in home manufacture, the cotton garments being factory made. The city girls wear factory made suits instead of homespun. The dress of all people is very similar to that of Americans except that not so many colors are used. The native costumes is worn only on special occasions, such as a national holiday or festival.

Steam railways and electric cars are used for travel in America, and there are three classes of passengers; third class, with uncomfortable wooden seats; second class, with upholstered seats; and first class, very fine. The dining cars are equipped with large windows that give more light. The country grows.

In Esthonia, when a woman and a man meet on the street he greets first by tipping his hat, she then speaks and he speaks to her. Mrs. Martin says it would be very embarrassing for a lady to speak to a man first, as he might not remember her.

As yet, the country has no traditions of its own, being only eight years old as a nation. The customs of the inhabitants are those of the neighboring countries, Germany and Russia, but national customs will come as the country grows.

Children in Esthonia usually do not start to school until eight years of age. Before that time, if the parents can afford it, the child has a governess to teach him different languages. Mrs. Martin's two daughters, of 4 and 6 years, have a German governess, who teaches them German, and she herself has lost in a degree her Russian language. The eldest loves to dance, accompanied by her father's guitar or her own singing, and she often composes her own dances. Since the country is so small, she is able to get to know many languages she can speak, answered, "Just as many as I am years old."

She says she is too busy to get home made, or housewifely, and that she can not but admire her courage and persistence. She says she has English to Russian and Russian to English dictionaries, for there does not exist an English-Estonian dictionary. It is necessary for her to use her dictionary from 15 to 20 times per page of reading.

Between quarters Mrs. Martin hopes to see something of the extension work here and when she has completed her master's work, plans to go to Cornell University at Ithaca, N. Y., for special methods of teaching.

SCHOOL LUNCH ROOM AN EDUCATION IN FOOD SELECTION

(Continued from page 5)

three breads. The dessert counter is filled with a set of youthful customers, and instead we see many more bowls and cups held up for soups and hot chocolates. Where once the small boys and girls hastily ate a bit of sandwich and gulped down a cup of chocolate only to dash out to play, now we see happy little groups of members gathered around a friendly table eating their lunch with the proper amount of leisure.

We who are working with these little people in the hope of molding them around a friendly table eating their lunch with the proper amount of leisure.