

1937

A Gracious Lady Carried the Lamp

Kay Hoffman
Iowa State College

Follow this and additional works at: <http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker>



Part of the [Home Economics Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hoffman, Kay (1937) "A Gracious Lady Carried the Lamp," *The Iowa Homemaker*: Vol. 17 : No. 5 , Article 4.
Available at: <http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol17/iss5/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Publications at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Iowa Homemaker by an authorized editor of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.

A Gracious Lady Carried the Lamp

by Kay Hoffman

BUSY people! Like the world, they are too much with us. So busy with things they have to do, they never know the sustained satisfaction of also being able to do the things they'd like to do, and they feel vaguely cheated because they can't.

So when one woman rises out of a generation, accomplishes something so outstanding as to be called the founder of organized Home Economics and yet is remembered almost equally well for her uncounted acts of kindness and her unlimited hospitality, there might be some reason to inquire into the way she did it.

Even those moderns who can write best sellers telling how to do it all on a very little would agree to that.

Such a woman was Ellen H. Richards in whose honor a special convocation is held in December 2.

We are inclined to believe that life was less hectic in the period just before 1900 when she lived, that school was simpler, that there were not so many committees and conventions, officers and organizations. But evidently we are wrong about it, at least in her case.

Picture yourself married to a mining engineer department, doing some of his reading and accompanying him on field trips, yet managing a laboratory, making water analyses, acting as an unnamed dean of women, writing articles and giving lectures on food, sanitation and better methods of homemaking. Picture yourself conducting a correspondence school for women pinned and fretting in their homes, organizing plans for some of the first school lunches, managing a scientific kitchen to give people a slight conception that there might possibly be some connection between the food they ate and the energy and health they had.

Suppose that you had an enormous correspondence to keep up, that you were regarded not only as a fountain of encouragement

but as the main source of information in a venture which no one knew how to handle, that you were responsible for the success of conventions.

And suppose that beyond and above all this you ran your own home so that it was a magnet not only for relatives and friends and struggling young students but for most of the like-minded professional people of the time.

If you had all this on your hands, even two major offices and three simultaneous committees would look a little shrunken by comparison. After all, though it may not have been a very fair arrangement, Ellen H. Richards was given just the same 24 hours that we have.

Granted that she was naturally quick although she was also frail, and even

that she had unusual executive powers—how did she do it all?

First of all she could make up her mind quickly. This may not sound like a time saving device, but it was. It is said that she would barely have finished reading a letter before she has made up her mind what she was going to do with it. A few abbreviated notations on the back and that was that.

To make up one's mind quickly and live very long to tell the tale, one must have a pretty good idea as to what one wants to decide. For that, Mrs. Richards' formula was to separate the essential from the non-essential, to leave out the obvious.

This trait showed even in her writing. She made no claim to beauty in it—only speed—and she often abbreviated.

If "wh" could stand only for "who" and not "what" or "when", she wrote only the "wh". If her idea could better be expressed by pictures, she made a crude little drawing or a quickly executed diagram. Once, when she was writing about an organization which was making little progress, she lapsed off into a line of dots which turned up and back upon themselves to illustrate her opinion of it.

She never permitted herself the indulgence of looking back, of half-sighing regrets and wishes for what might have been. For her yesterday was only a source of information as to how to change tomorrow.

These things, one might object, are mostly a question of attitude. True, they are, but it was an attitude which saved her much time.

Without the harrasing and stinging gnats of regret she was free to think thoughts out ahead of time and plan a course of action. The Lake Placid Conferences, which were the forerunners of the American Home Economics Association, were planned by her in minute detail before they were ever assembled.

She showed this ability to anticipate what might happen even in her special
(Continued on page 10)



Toyland Specials

by Doris Rooke and Jo Betty

EYES wide in anticipation, Larry Wendell at nursery school said, "Only three more Saturdays until Christmas and then Santa Claus leaves the packages and we open them and there are presents inside!"

Your gift to a child may be well chosen or it may be just something picked up in the zero hour when further postponement is impossible. From the toy news front come ideas for gifts that will make St. Nick even more beloved.

Big furry dogs with real collars and leashes are especially exciting, if Santa Claus is generous. Hobby horses are made of rag, with spindly legs and shoe button eyes. The old teddy bear, on a much larger scale, is wooly, cuddly, and lovable. Trains have gone modern. Square blocks for the cars and big circles make the wheels, all in a vivid array of colors.

Then there are the dolls, many are of cloth, stuffed to a pleasing plumpness—a dolly really adapted to the take-to-bed complex. They are of all sizes, with bright red frocks and aprons, quaint yarn hair, and rosebud mouths.

Blocks have been elaborated upon with surprising results. Many varieties of cylinders, squares, or balls are filled with removable parts that are fun to play with and good to look at.

Wooden animals, miniature houses, railway wagons, automobiles, as well as metal toys, especially marionettes



A little child with laughing look:
A lovely white, unwritten book.
—J. Manfield

and dolls, enjoy a large demand abroad, as well as in the United States.

Non-poisonous enamelled hardwood balls and pieces make funny animals

and people. Strung on heavy cord or single parts easily fitted together. The world's monopoly is held by an exclusive maker of fascinating games and wooden building sets such as miniature cities, shops, rooms, mills, railways, airplane and motorcars.

Books are a favorite gift for children. Stories of Iowa farm life by Phil Stang should be among the books read 50 years from now. Besides *Hank; the Moose*, there is his new one, *High Water*, (Dodd, Mead and Co., New York City, (\$2.00). Both books contain naturalness, humor and absurdity. Some of the same characters are present in both books, but Stang has added Mexico, the donkey, in *High Water*. The Kurt Weise drawings add spice.

For a seven-year-old girl who is full of vim, *Pepe and the Parrot* by Ellis Credle (Thomas Nelson and Sons, New York City, \$2.00) is just the thing. She will delight in the adventures of a little Mexican dog who is fooled by a parrot. The author has illustrated the book with modern dash.

Shawneen and the Gander by Richard Bennett, (Doubleday, Doron, and Company, New York City, \$2.00) will please boys or girls about ten years old who like color and feeling in writing. It is an Irish story of a boy and a gander who made a fortune.

The best way, of course, to discover what gift would please a child most is to talk to him and listen to his conversations with other children. His gift should be as pre-planned as an adult's gift. And a child is twice as thrilled to receive what he has secretly wanted.

A Gracious Lady

(Continued from page 4)

directions concerning her home. To the new girls who helped her she gave brief little typewritten notes telling them where to find this or that, where to order things, whom to call in case the plumbing leaked, or what have you. She noted the regular activities of the family, and drew up plans for the general character of the meals. All this she did in a day before it was accepted procedure for a home to be run with efficiency.

She laid out a regular weekly program (shades of the schedule coming back again!) Tuesday was her afternoon at home. Any callers were welcome to see her then and they knew it. Between the ins and outs of her visitors she checked on her household, laid her plans like a general. If she entertained she did it on Tuesday. Monday evenings she read to an uncle who had become blind, but who was very much interested in the advancement of science. Friday nights she went to the theater. Her friends knew this and they often

took seats near the Richards to have a bit of a chat during the intermissions. She stuck so consistently to her schedule, except when she was out of town, that those who knew her were soon unconsciously observing it too. Is not this a tip for a modern schedule maker who wishes to reduce interruptions to a minimum?

Each night she listed the things to be done the next day and the order in which they were to occur.

All of these suggestions showed how she disposed of her work but none shows how she made and kept her hundreds of friends. With her, to meet a person was to become interested in him. The needs and likes of her friends were with her all the time. Magazines, books and letters of introduction she distributed like a Lady Bountiful.

Long before Dale Carnegie ever said that to remember people's birthdays was a bit of good psychology Mrs. Richards kept track of them in a little book. She was undeniably a sentimentalist about birthdays and anniversaries. She remembered not only her friends but friends of her friends.

Her house, without the aid of many servants or many guest rooms, was always open. Someone who knew her said that "she made the guest feel as though he could not come at the wrong time". A rival for many modern mottoes for hospitality! She did this in the midst of engagements which complicated themselves and work which kept on piling up and up.

If her house got too full, she merely slipped out after saying her goodnights, took a room at the College Club, and then slipped back again before breakfast.

She could have been no busier, and yet somehow she seemed to escape the curse that modern times has laid on busyness. And though she has been gone these many years; her life is an inspiration to all the recurring generations of young home economists.

An efficient door holder has been made of an extremely flexible sheet of metal fastened to two rubber feet, which cling to the floor. It is easily slipped into position under the door and will prevent its moving either way.