

While The Kettle Boils

Dear Friends,

I thought my hobby-horse had run its course, but it has one more lap to cover.

Last week I received a letter from a busy housewife. She had read my article on hobbies, and bewailed the fact that she could never find time for anything of the kind. "I am just a working machine," she wrote, "doing the same old household round every day — and what is there in that?"

My reply might answer the same cry of many harried housewives — so here it is.

First, don't under-estimate the job you are doing. Because it has been done down through the ages till it has become an institution, above all, because it is taken for granted—particularly by our menfolk—don't delude yourself that there is nothing in it.

A housewife's job calls for intelligence, endurance, initiative, sympathy, and tact. And when all these qualities are embodied in one small woman, you are no ordinary person — and yours is no ordinary job.

Just take a look into it. My correspondent tells me she is the mother of a family and she runs the entire house.

In the first place, she is a housekeeper; the whole management of the place is in her hands. She is a buyer, and has to use imagination and selection in her varied shopping. She is a needlewoman. She is called upon to make and repair frocks and garments. She is a cook. She has to please the gastronomical tastes of her entire family, and that takes some doing. She is a full-time laundress. She is a housemaid — and a busy one. She is a nurse. With her household duties she has had to combine the care of her children. She is an interior decorator — often a house painter and paper-hanger as well. She is in turn a gardener, an emergency plumber, an electrician, and a few other things. Added to all this, she is a hostess — that must be taken into account.

And women bewail the fact that their job as a housewife means nothing — and counts for nothing! Why, their multiple talents outnumber by far any other glamorous calling! The only trouble is that the years and use have dulled our perception of it. If any male eye should stray this way, I hope he will take note. He may learn to appreciate his "professional housewife" for the gifted person she is.

A final word for my disconsolate correspondent. When you say you have a ton of work to do, you are nearer the truth than you imagine.

An understanding statistician made out this table for housewives: In a normal week's washing, a woman lifts 6,465lb. in weight. When ironing, her arms travel about 6½miles. The ironing of seven shirts alone means lifting a 3½lb. iron at least 140 times. In the

ironing of 40 handkerchiefs, 560 foot-pounds of energy are expended. On busy shopping days, the average woman walks 8½ miles, which is approximately the distance covered by golfers doing a round of 18 holes. In the course of a year she walks 3,000 miles.

Is it any wonder a poor woman sometimes feels tired? At least she must be wearied, discouraged by the repetition

of it all. That is why I ask every housewife deliberately to slice off a few hours of her working week and devote them to some outside or home hobby.

Do you know the secret of the popularity of movies? In a picture show we can completely relax; forget for a blessed space all our cares and responsibilities. Well, a real hobby has the same effect on us. It takes us out of ourselves and

provides that mental rest and refreshment that is an imperative need in a "professional housewife's" life.

Good luck!

Yours Cordially,

Cynthia

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