

THE COST OF LIVING AND HOUSEHOLD MANAGEMENT.

Those who study the cost of living among wage earners - the class where it means most must always be amazed by the different results obtained from different households from an equal wage. Again and again one finds two families living side by side, the men of equal earning capacity, equal steadiness, yet one lives in disorder, badly fed, badly clothed and shiftless, the other is always clean, food abundantly and well cooked, clothes tidy and an nest-egg in the saving's bank. Study the two cases and you will find not necessarily a shiftless and idle woman on the one side and an energetic one on the other. The intention and effort of the two women may be almost equal, but one has never been taught to cook, sew or care for a house, while the other has had a good training in all these things. The difference in results is the difference that comes from knowing and not knowing how to do a thing.

This observation is backed up by all the studies of wage earner's budgets which we have - those of ^{Mr.} state and federal ^{of} More, Mr. Chapin and of the ^{labor} bureaux and of the various commissions. They all note the difference.

results between the good and poor manager. The truth is the provider in the household is only one-half of the firm - the other half is the manager. The dollar badly spent is only half-a-dollar.

The rise in the cost of living, which ~~we all~~ experience, becomes acute in the wage earning class, largely in proportion to the kind of management which the wages receive. As a rule the price rises faster than the wage - now this can only be met by management. It is disastrous to try to meet it by sending the mother to work. Here wage can never make up what is lost by careful housekeeping.

*The heaviest of the double
burden - from an economic standpoint:*
There are three points in household management which seem to me to be weak in all classes. The first of these is the matter of selection and substitution, largely because of ignorance of food wealth certain articles of diet are considered indispensable whatever keeps their price. The fact that demand ~~keeps~~ ^{keeps} up through scarcity makes it possible for the dealer to lift his price still higher. There are few, if any articles of food for which substitutes can not be found, but you must not only know them, but you must know how to use them. - Rice, dried fruit, salted fish, stews, soups and chowders

are a house-wife's weapon against exorbitant prices, caused either by scarcity or by manipulation. One likes his morning egg, but if you refuse to eat it at 50 cents a dozen you're done something to bring it down to reason - and if enough of us refuse, down it will come. This has been proved again and again this winter in different cities through the activities of the Housekeeper's League. Don't buy the thing which is lifting the cost of your living beyond your limit - select something else. This is meeting the cost of living with brains ~~and saving it for you individually, but~~ ^{the} ~~this means~~ an unwillingness to be succumb to ^{circum-} ~~stances of prices and the knowledge~~ ^{show that you know} that it is unnecessary to do so.

2. The cost of living is kept up to a degree at least by ignorance and careless purchasing - the ease with which the seller can put off on the buyer underweight and adulteratives. Of course, it is obvious that if we had in the country a race of careful and intelligent buyers it would never have been possible for the false weight man and the adulterator to have come to flower. He has been made by us - the buyer.

We have been a fertile soil for him, nor can the best law and the best inspection ever devised un-root him - it is the educated watchful purchaser only that can spoil his business. It is a race of women who know when they have full weight and whose civic consciences are developed to the point of protest, when they don't get it, that will put an end to the manufacturing and use of false measures. It is only such women who can end adulteration in food and cloth. Already the pure food law is being evaded by clever tricks - who is going to find these evasions out promptly if consumers are too stupid to detect them, or detecting, too inert or consciousnessless to report them. ^{More intelligent} Consumers are what are needed to bring down the high cost of living in the household.

The matter of quality in clothing is of all importance in making a small income go far, but quality is one of the things we have lost an interest in - lost our sense of - and this fact helps no little in the long run to increase the cost of living. It is the cut and finish we seek. This is what makes it possible for the manufacturers to put over the substance substitutes for

he suspects

wool for example that he does. It looks right and we are too ignorant to know the difference.

clue
A curious person can easily satisfy himself as to the quality of ~~wool~~ *wool* "all wool" garments by boiling them in caustic alkali. The experiment is very simple and quite conclusive of the amount of wool in the article. If it is "all wool" the alkali makes short work of it, no residue is left after the boiling. Silk will also disappear. Cotton is untouched. Take a baby's shirt for which you pay 50 cents with the solemn assurance that it is "every stitch wool". It is well-shaped, finished with a neat shell ~~stitch~~ edge apparently of silk, a ribbon down the front for the buttons, three rows of silk stitching around the sleeves. Cut the garment into two pieces and boil one for twenty minutes in a strong solution of alkali. The pieces treated compare now very favorably, fleecy lining shell edge and all, with the piece untouched. The ribbon alone has disappeared. There is not a thread of wool in it.

Try another experiment with a girl's sleeveless vest for wearing over the gown under the coat. This garment will cost \$1.25 in an East Side shop. It feels like wool and is sold for wool, but it comes out of the pot intact, a strong, durable cotton yarn vest which could have had but a small fraction of wool in it in the first place if, indeed, it had any. Its real worth is not over 25 cents.

This same experiment will show similar adulteration in many of the blankets and much of the dress goods and suitings sold to the unknowing as all wool. Vast quantities of so-called "cotton worsteds" are manufactured annually. The amount of wool in these goods has been steadily decreasing in the last few years, falling from 50 per cent to 25 percent, and from there to practically all cotton, immense quantities of the last being manufactured for boys' and men's wear. It is from cotton worsted and cheap shoddies that the \$8.00 and \$10.00 suits for women, the \$10.00 and \$12.00 suits for men, are generally made. The goods may be sold by the manufacturer for what they are, but at the counter the purchaser receives the express or implied assurance that they are all wool. To such lengths has the adulteration gone that it may be laid down as a fact that people on

small incomes to-day rarely if ever wear anything but cotton and shoddy mixture.

Now, that things have changed is not proof that they are worse. Because a great number of us in the United States cannot get the woolen blankets, shawls, and clothes which we once had and which are still accessible at low prices to the European laborer and peasant is not proof that we have not a better substitute. May it not be that woolen garments, blankets, and suits are a superstitition? Are we not just as well off clothed in cotton substitutes?

There is no doubt cotton knit goods are admirably cheap underclothing, most of them are well fitting, and some of them are durable. Where light clothing is sufficient - and with the general heating of houses, factories, and shops and cars, there is no longer the same need, for many people, of heavy clothing as in the old days - they are adequate. There is no doubt the young girl's cotton worsted gown looks well at the start. The cotton warp "all wool" suit of the laboring man has a finish, color, and style, better perhaps than of old, for finish and cut are demanded by the poorest and are achieved remarkably by the cheapest clothiers. But in two particulars the cotton substitutes fail. It has not the warmth, and it does not keep its appearance. True, if a man puts on enough cotton garments he can get the same warmth. But he cannot get from cotton the same protection against storm and wet, the same safeguard where his labor subjects him to excessive perspiration. He cannot get the same comfort at night. Moreover, his garments become shabby, lose its shape, in much shorter time. Women can no longer make over with satisfaction the gowns they once wore a series of winters. The man's suit is no longer respectable as "long as it holds together." Those of us who must buy cheap clothes can find them at the long established popular prices, but we no longer get the warmth or the satisfaction from them."

It is this submission to poor quality - if the effect is right, that brings up the cost of living. What we really need to meet this is a crusade in the

household in the interest of quality.

The third point at which the average household management side in the high cost of living is its slowness in adapting itself to modern ideas. It insists on buying in small quantities and it insists in remaining a solitary unit. Wholesale and co-operative is being applied to every industry. It is through them that the cost of production is brought down in many cases though not always as yet primarily perhaps because of over-capitalization. Unnecessary over-head charges and general lack of scientific management. But in time, I believe, the cost of every necessity will be lowered by co-operative large scale production. But if the purchaser remains too indolent to go directly to the source of supply for his goods - if he continues to buy in single pounds instead of by quantity - to act always alone as a purchaser supporting a succession of middlemen instead of securing himself direct - of course the cost of living will remain high. I think it is no exaggeration to say that coal costs the poor who buy it by the bushel two and

even three times what it does those who can buy it by the ton, but you rarely find a half-dozen families combining in buying a ton of coal and dividing it up. They don't know that it can be done. There is no reason why an group of individuals - the operatives in a factory town, the employees of a great shop should not combine for purchasing. We have score of groups - societies - clubs - organizations of all kinds and for all purposes, that might use their machinery to instruct and aid their members in the value of co-operative buying though as yet this is being done only sporadically. It should be a principle of all household management - and will be I am convinced from the way women are beginning to tackle the matter.

As I look at it Scientific Household Management is of basic importance in handling the matter of the high cost of living.

Unless the manager of the house - the buyer and user of what comes into it is trained in purchasing - knows values - has a keen sense that it is her duty as a citizen not to be cheated, respects quality, has

learned the possibilities of co-operation, she is not going to be able to meet her individual problem. The cost of living will always get ahead of her. We may reform the tariff to the point of Free Trade, harness the trusts, so that they serve the public as well as they do themselves, reform the currency, increase production, but unskilled hands and brains will continue to work confusion in the household budget, the wage will never be equal to the demand, however, cheap and abundant we may succeed in making necessities and even luxuries. Housekeeping is a many sided business calling for training in theory and practice for scientific management. It needs as varied qualities as any business known to human beings and yet as things are now girls and women are getting only the most superficial artificial training in it. It needs to be formulated and professionalized and every girl rich or poor should have at least its principles-- at the same time she should be taught its relation to all economic and social problems and in particular to the problem of the cost of living.