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[Release of Women from Bridgery]

Prophets and reformers have an almost universal weakness. They set too short a time for the realization of their visions. Some twenty years ago a splendid group up in Boston, announced that in ten years they expected to make that city a stainless, sinless, povertyless Paradise. They were good and able people - their plans were alluring but the ten years are long past and Boston still has its quota of dirt, sin and poverty. There are those that say it has more.

A number of gigantic undertakings to be perfected within short fixed periods are worrying the world just now, notably those of the Soviet Government of Russia, which purposes to turn all of its agriculture over to state farms - do away with the individual farm, as it is attempting to do with the individual factory - a still more startling attempt is wiping out religion - all in five years!

Now comes Mr. Henry Ford, prophesying in the columns of "Woman" that within five years the average housekeeper of Detroit, Michigan will be getting her meals through pneumatic tubes or some other species of conveyer from a centralized privately managed kitchen. I haven't the least doubt in the world but that Mr. Henry Ford - or any one of several remarkably efficient townsmen of his -

could if they set their mind to it provide by five years from now, in the city of Detroit, a centralized kitchen with conveyers leading into every one of the, possibly three hundred and fifty thousand homes, from which three hot meals a day ~~could~~ be shot out in good order onto the dining room table.

If Mr. Ford was responsible for this centralized kitchen it would be good food. One of his interests for years now has been food, the most nutritious food possible. Everybody knows his faith in carrots - raw carrots - and how acres of his big farms are planted to that vegetable. I have been told he carried them in his pocket and munched them, when he ^{was} hungry. I never saw him do it. I have seen, however, the laboratory in Dearborn, where experiments in bread-making have been carried on for a number of years and have been told by the directors of the real satisfaction Mr. Ford takes in seeing the good work that has been done there. If he does provide a centralized kitchen for Detroit you can be sure it will be his idea of what is a good nourishing bread that is served.

Mr. Ford, according to Mr. McGarry's report of his interview with him, wants this centralized kitchen to take the drudgery of cooking away from the housewife. That is a generous impulse, but if Mr. Ford knew the average Detroit household, the small household where women do their own work, he would know that heavy toil, drudgery as we call it, has been already largely removed by the introduction of electricity, hot water, the telephone, as

well as by a multitude of ingenious contrivances, lightening and simplifying the operations of kitchen, bed room and living room. It depends today largely upon the housekeeper's brains, her willingness to change her ways and use the conveniences which have been devised for her, whether or no she will wipe out practically all of the former drudgery of housekeeping. Moreover there is not a woman who has ever put her mind to utilizing fully modern inventions but what knows that it is an interesting an even exciting undertaking, that it lifts her out of her old kitchen ruts and stimulates her mind to devising things for herself, to make her work easier. That is, Mr. Ford's first reason for a centralized kitchen has been wiped out.

His second reason is his belief that cheaper and healthier food can be produced by scientific mass-production, than by old fashioned home cookery. But I fancy if that argument was made to most Detroit housekeepers, there first answer would be, "Most of the food that I use now comes to me from scientifically, mass-producing factories. There is my bread, I do not make it, I get it from the bakery, delivered at my door. My vegetables come in cans, so do my fruits, and if I am careful of my brands, I get better results for my table than I could by preparing them myself. I can even have a Virginia baked ham on my table with no other formality than warming it, so can I roast chicken, squab - almost any meat or fowl that I want." Scientifically prepared mass-

production foods almost swamp the country and are gaining, rather than loosing in popularity. That is, Mr. Ford's second generous reason for a centralized kitchen is already answered, in the minds of many women.

I do not find in Mr. McGarry's report when he talked with Mr. Ford, any hint that he realizes one of the difficulties he must overcome in putting his food into the average Detroit kitchen, is that the average Detroit housewife, as her sisters over the country, likes to keep house, likes to prepare meals, particularly to try out special dishes, to give to the food she serves a character and quality of its own. This pride in specialized cooking has increased among women, rather than decreased, as drudgery has been wiped out, conveniences multiplied and an increasing variety of excellent mass-production food put within their reach. They now can give time to the science and the artistry of cooking & make something personal and attractive out of it.

It is not only women with families, husbands and children, who now build and run homes of their own in this country, it is the business woman, the teacher, the woman with a small income. In saying this I am not overlooking the fact that thousands flock to, what are called, womens hotels, but when they do that, my observation is, that it is rather from necessity or lack of imagination, than from any fundamental preference for living in a mass of unrelated human beings.

All over the country, you find the little home of the woman without a family, multiplying. Go into any college or school town and one of your most delightful experiences will be a lunch or dinner in the home of some two or three who have pooled their means, bought or built an attractive small house and there, by the use of drudgery, saving devices, by the help of foods produced by that scientific mass-production, in which Mr. Ford believes, supplemented by and mixed with brains and taste - you find the most charming of housekeeping going on. To the many of these women, these little homes are the reward of all their struggling. I have the feeling that they could not have a more charming and satisfying earthly reward if they are to live without families, as so many women seem to be forced to do these days.

It is the fact, that the average woman wants a kitchen of her own - that is going to stand in the way of Mr. Ford's feeding the people of Detroit from a centralized kitchen in five years, or fifty, for that matter.

An eternal obstacle in Mr. Ford's path is, that the soul of a living woman, like the soul of the living man, cannot be eternally satisfied by mass-production, however good it is. I am not a pessimist about mass-production. I believe most heartedly in its value to the world. I do not believe myself, that its whole value has been touched. Mass-production means giving eventually to the people of the world, not merely to the people of the United

States, but the people of all the world, uncivilized, as well as civilized the essentials of orderly decent, healthy living, but at its best it cannot reach that fundamental necessity of the human being for some kind of an individual expression - an individual environment for his daily life. The objective to Mr. Ford's meal, sent in from his centralized kitchen, would be the same objective that we have to cars, furniture, clothing, produced by mass production. They must necessarily lack individuality and we all crave it - whether we know it or not. When it comes to the food we eat, there must be variety, there must be catering to individual peculiarities of palate, individual conditions of health. There must be something that interests the appetite - stimulates it by surprises. All of these are individual expressions fitted to individual needs. I do not, for the life of me, see how they can be furnished from a centralized mass-production kitchen, even if it were managed by so great a wizard as Mr. Ford, himself.

But what is in the back of Mr. Ford's mind? It is not merely giving women an easier time in the world - he of all men believes in work. It is not releasing her from industry and business. He thinks, according to Mr. McGarry, that there is no need for them there - which we will not stop to debate. The end he is seeing is a fine one. Mr. Ford wants to release woman-kind from the kitchen - the factory - the counting room and set them to specializing in the

education of youths, up to twelve years.

Well, there are a lot of women in the world who are utterly unfit for the educational role. They are much more useful at a counter - in a laboratory - painting pictures - writing books. As for the majority of women, they are already directly or indirectly educators.

There is not a doubt but what women, the world over, are giving more and more intelligent thought to the problem of the education and training of the child. More and more women, of the average type, of whom Mr. Ford speaks, are realizing, unless I am mistaken, that about the best education that they can provide for their child is a cheerful busy home - a place where boy or girl takes an active part in things in which the whole household are interested and which everybody discusses - where he has duties - his share in the common understanding. No school can take the place of such a home in educating a child, but it can aid, direct, stimulate such a home - and it always has done this in varying measures. Whatever was better than the interest the old fashioned district school teacher, took in the problems of the household in her district? As our educational system has developed, the relation between the school and the home, has sometimes seemed to grow cold and distant but the trend of the educational ideas of the day, seem to me to bring mother and teacher closer together.

Mr. Ford is right in believing that women are bound to give more and more attention to the education of the young - that the great social gain of the world in freeing women from the ancient drudgery is to be measured by what society gets out of her on the educational side.