

Homemaker

from

“Down-Under”



by *Abin Maban*

WHEN MONDAY rolls around in Australia, the homemaker rubs her soiled clothes with soap and boils them in a huge copper kettle until the dirt comes out. Imagine having washed that way for years and then suddenly being confronted with a newfangled automatic washer. That's what happened to Helen Morley, wife of Frederick Morley, animal husbandry graduate student from Sydney.

Life here is more complicated for Mrs. Morley than it was in Australia. She says that the majority of Australian wives would be amazed not only at our washers, but at the widespread use of various household appliances. Fewer people use washers in Australia because of their higher cost.

Cheaper Groceries

American women would envy the Australian homemaker when she goes grocery shopping. First quality loin lamb chops cost one sixth of what they cost here. Butter recently reached a high of 25 cents a pound as compared to 60 some cents in Ames. Milk sells at 10 cents per quart, and since the American quart contains 64 oz. while the Australian container is 80 oz., the Australian homemaker gets more milk for her 10 cents than the American woman does for 17 cents.

Although the Australian wife carries a lighter purse to market, she has to buy products in a number of stores. She may buy her salt and spaghetti at the grocery store and then walk to the butcher shop for her meat. She must go to the delicatessen for eggs and frankfurters and to the green grocery for fresh fruits and vegetables. Although Australian shops specialize in a particular type of foodstuff, they still don't offer the variety displayed in American supermarkets.

“Weekly pay checks in Australia are less than American wages for identical work,” explains Mrs. Morley, “but we can buy considerably more for less money.”

Cooking from an Australian cookbook in the United States is harder than it sounds, according to Mrs. Morley. Since the pints are different, cups and half cups also vary.

“Our tablespoon is one-third as large as yours, so

there are several traps for the unwary cook,” she says.

Mrs. Morley reports that Australian men are much more conservative in their dress. She speaks of an American she knew in Sydney — “A charming man, but he did seem to have the most outrageous taste in ties and socks — great daring designs in dazzling colors which contrasted strongly with the subdued tones the Australian men favor. After I reached the U. S. it didn't take long to convince me that my friend's taste was conservative compared to the majority of his countrymen.”

Australians think of winters in northern United States somewhat as we do of life at the North Pole. Mrs. Morley says there are rarely more than six frosts annually in Sydney, Australia's largest city. Native citizens have never seen snow and have never skated on ice, since snow doesn't fall in the more elevated districts. This winter was the first time Mrs. Morley had seen icicles, frost patterns on windows and children playing with sleds.

Despite higher winter temperatures in Australia, Mrs. Morley contends she has felt the cold far less in Iowa than at home. Only rarely does one find central heating in an Australian building, since fireplaces and electric heaters warm individual rooms. Australians wear more clothes when indoors and find the 72 degree temperature of American homes too warm for comfort.

High-Speed Americans

“The speed of America surprises me,” remarks Mrs. Morley. “Americans seem to drive their automobiles faster, plunge into new ideas sooner with more enthusiasm. They seem to take part in several organizations and still accomplish more in one day than their Australian cousins.”

It seems to her that American women have time and vitality to run their homes, look after children and do other work as well. In Australia, few married women work, and some organizations compel their female employees to resign upon marriage.

“Whether Americans are happier or live longer, I can't say,” concludes Mrs. Morley, “but I've found many more similarities than differences between the two countries.”