

The Economic Value
of
Domestic Science.

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The purpose of this thesis is to show the relation of economics to domestic science and to emphasize the importance of the latter science as a factor which enters into the efficiency of the individual laborer.

Domestic economy is quite commonly conceded to be one of the most important sciences of today; but popular opinion limits its application to the home when in reality its scope is wider than that of any other science. Its relation to certain phenomena of economics is especially close; and to none closer than to the labor-power of any community. It is this intimate connection of individual and communal efficiency of labor with domestic science that will form the basis of the following discussions.

The history of the past ages of man proves that the civilization of the early ages was of very low degree. The domestic science part of their lives, we find, was indeed very poor and crude. They lived upon roots, grasses, and various kinds of wild nuts, for the vegetable part of their diet, and the animal diet consisted of the wild animals that they could capture. As a rule all their food was eaten in the raw state. According to their ideas fresh meat was not at all necessary for they would often eat meat partially or even wholly spoiled and think that they had a treat. Not very long ago the Australians considered themselves happy if they could but secure whale's flesh that was beginning to putrefy. Other animals eaten by the early races were: beavers, rats, toads, bears, foxes and rhinoceri. In fact as near as can be determined, these ancestors of ours would eat anything which they could capture by any means and would eat it in any form.

Of course these people soon discovered fire and they immediately began to cook their food, but the method of cooking was almost as bad as eating it raw. The usual method was to put everything they had to be cooked together and cook it all the same time. It made no particular difference what way it was cooked whether it was boiled, baked or fried, just so it was cooked; and usually it was cooked so thoroughly that it would not be in a very digestible form.

The style of clothing that these early people used is hardly less repulsive. In a great many cases they wore no clothing at all or if worn it was more of an ornament than any thing else. Some of the tribes tattooed themselves; others made clothes of leaves; while still others used mud to cover their bodies. Soon they began to use the skins of animals for clothes and this form of dress has not yet been abandoned entirely.

Not only does the food, its method of cooking, and the clothing enter into this subject but the question of sanitary conditions has a vast influence upon it. In order to do the best work, and thus attain the best results excellent care must be taken of our bodies. Everything must be clean and wholesome. Bacteria are the cause of nearly all our diseases, and it has been proven that the common source of bacteria is dirt; and so the logical conclusion is that in order to have good health we must avoid all unsanitary conditions. It is readily seen that these early peoples did not have these sanitary conditions and furthermore they had no idea how to care for their bodies.

It is needless to say that these people did not do the highest class of labor. Why? First because they had no idea about the necessity of labor except to capture food to live; and second, and by far the strongest reason, they were not capable of labor. They

weakened their bodies by gorging themselves upon improper food, and then trying to sleep the evil effects away. When they attempted any form of labor they soon found that they were exhausted and would have to stop. They had abused their bodies and so they could not expect them to do the best work, but rather the poorest as a result of this abuse.

Leaving the early ages and following the history of man on through the middle ages and to the present we find that man has gradually become more civilized, and in accordance with this advance in civilization Domestic Science has advanced. A better class of food, clothing and sanitary conditions were gradually introduced as well as a better method of securing and preparing these necessary articles. One other thing is readily noticed in connection with this advance, and that is the gradual increase in labor ability. Each generation has been more capable in labor than the generation before it and this fact is largely due to the advance in Domestic Science.

Still there is much room for improvement along this line. For instance, look at our poorer class of laborers who live in tenement houses. Here the conditions are not sanitary or wholesome to say the least. The family lives in one or two rooms in which everything is piled helter-skelter and covered with dirt. The food which they consume is of the poorest and cheapest kind, cooked and eaten in the quickest way possible. Occasionally the members of the family will tend to their bodily needs by bathing, but most of the time they neglect this important duty. Is it surprising then that these people do such poor work as they do? Their bodies are weakened by lack of care and without proper care it is impossible to do the best grade of work.

However these people are not altogether to blame for their neglect of their bodies. Their wages are not sufficient to allow them

to live in the better houses, and to consume the better class of food. They are kept so busy working to get enough money to keep them alive at all that they forget the care of their bodies. It follows therefore that the persons who own these tenement houses; and the persons who are willing to see these poor people work on half rations, rather than loose a few cents of their millions, are more, or at least, as much to blame for these disgraceful conditions as the laborers themselves.

Another evil thing which we Americans, as we as all other nations of the world, tolerate is the alcohol habit. It has been clearly proven that alcohol is a poison to the body, and yet intelligent as well as ignorant laboring men will use alcoholic drinks and still expect their bodies to be in as good a condition as they were before. A very large percent of our laboring class use their wages to purchase this evil of all evils instead of getting some good wholesome food for their bodies.

This evil could be corrected, in a great many cases, by the application of the principles in domestic science. Often the reason a man resorts to stimulants is because the food which he has consumed at home is not sufficient or of the right kind to give his body the necessary strength for his work and so he seeks to make up the loss by resorting to alcoholic drinks. Now if the wife at home thoroughly understood domestic science she would see that the food that she served was of such a character, and prepared in such a manner as to be readily digested, as would give the required amount of energy as well as keep the tissues built up.

It is not only the physical body that is injured by the lack of proper domestic science but the mental capacity of the person is injured just as much. When the body is not kept clean and healthy, when the right kind of food is not given to nourish the body, the

nerves are weakened. Good food is required to keep the nerve tissue in repair and if this is not given the nerves naturally decay. They become sluggish and fail to react to the stimuli given them. Thus when a laborer, who has been abusing his body, is required to do quick mental work he is unable to do so.

To remedy these evils and so raise the efficiency of the laborers it will be necessary for the wife to have a thorough knowledge of domestic science. Each food contains a certain number of calories to keep his body in the proper condition, the number of these energy calories varying with the kind of labor he is engaged in. For instance, the man who is at moderate work such as a clerkship will require 3,055 calories per day. A man at hard, severe work such as mining will require 4,195 calories per day. Thus it varies all through the different classes of laborers. Now if the wife thoroughly understands domestic science she will prepare such articles of food as will yield the correct number of calories required by her husband to do the work in which he is engaged. If this were done together with careful care as regards sanitary conditions the efficiency of the laborer would be greatly increased.

The great leaders of labor today are those men who know just how to care for their bodies and who have the proper kind and amount of food served up to them at home. If the lives and characters of the leaders in the entrepreneur class were examined it would be found that their habits were regular, their sanitary conditions excellent and the class of food they consumed beyond criticism.

Today the American people rank first as laborers. Compare our working men with any other working men of the world and it is found that the American can do the work much better and in a shorter time. Why is this true? The one great reason is that domestic science has been recognised as of great importance and its teachings have

been heeded. In all of our colleges this important science is being thoroughly taught. The Americans as a rule have sanitary homes, and in these homes the science and art of cooking is well understood. Not only is the food cooked properly but it is properly eaten. Besides this we have officers appointed whose business it is to see that our country is kept as free from disease and is as sanitary conditions as possible. These facts entirely explain why the American people can boast of sending out the most efficient laborers.

When the world fully awakens to the fact that domestic science is closely related to the efficiency of the laborer, when every child is thoroughly taught the necessity of taking care of his body, when every home is kept in perfect condition as regards cleanliness, and the food eaten, then will we have a class of laborers who will accomplish whatever they set out to do and will accomplish this end readily and easily.

The efficiency of the laborer depends upon the sanitary conditions, the kind of food taken, and the preparation of this food. If these conditions are excellent the efficiency of the laborer will be beyond criticism. The welfare of the nation depends upon the character of the laborers contained in it; and when domestic science and economics are brought side by side, the one working with the other, then will the world have a class of efficient laborers who will be able not only to increase the world's production of wealth, but who will be able also to demand a fairer share in the division of the product.