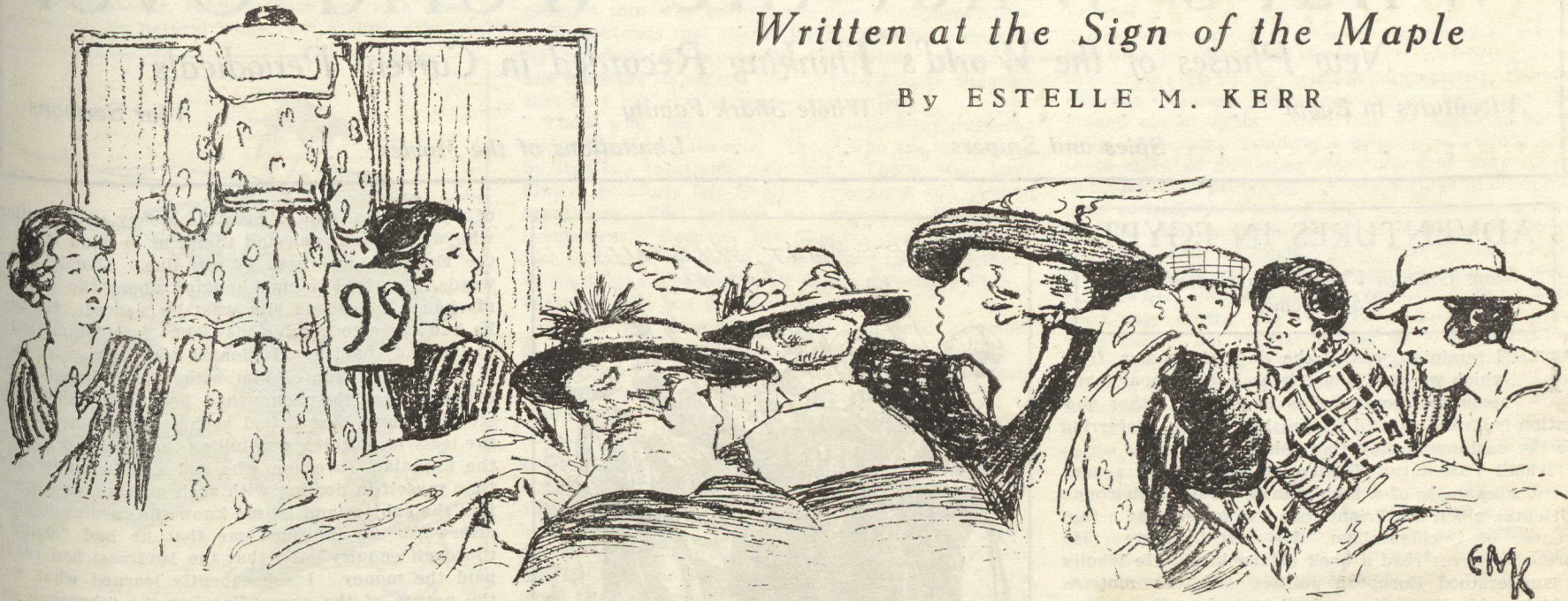


ECONOMY—WISE AND OTHERWISE

Written at the Sign of the Maple

By ESTELLE M. KERR



Bargain Lovers

WOMEN are said to be penny-wise and men pound-foolish. If practice makes perfect, women should be champions in the presumably gentle art of purchasing. They are the recognized shoppers of the world, responsible for the expenditure of the family income. This would logically fit them to be buyers on a large scale for the retail stores, yet men are beating them at their own game, for in the city of New York out of 250 resident buyers, only three are women.

"They are not good shoppers," says a successful buyer. "While they love a bargain, they are not good at bargaining. The very fact that a thing is a bargain may blind them to more practical considerations."

Joke columns developed that theme long ago, but it is constantly cropping up in new forms. One that cheered us in our cradles was this:

"See, John, I bought six beautiful lamp shades."
"But, my dear, we haven't a lamp in the house!"
"But they were such a bargain!"

LIFE is more humorous than the Funny Column, particularly in a big store at an early hour on bargain day, or before a shoe shop when a Fire Sale has been advertised and policemen are required to keep back the crowd. Department stores do everything to encourage this sporting instinct, doubtless from philanthropic motives, to give the frail sex a real interest in life. Any woman who has run a bargain to earth will tell you that they can't possibly afford to sell at that price. When you count the expense of delivery and calling for the parcel next day and exchanging it you begin to wonder how they do it. Oh, economy, how many extravagances are committed in thy name! How much time and nervous energy is wasted in the vain endeavour to be penny-wise! What bitterly bloodless battles have been fought by the "Look, only 99 cents" cards!

Pound Foolish

ONE woman's economy is another's extravagance. One gives up silk stockings and adopts fine hosiery thread, and the woman who does her own knitting smiles. One, by dint of self denial, brings her annual expenditure for dress down to \$400 a year and then finds that according to an expert, a woman should be able to dress on \$29.20 a year! This accompanied, too, by a most definite estimate of prices and a list of garments which, though not suggestive of the trousseau of a June bride, seems adequate for health, cleanliness and use—most discouragingly so!

THE national women's dress bill in Great Britain is said to be four hundred million pounds a year, or more than the total amount annually spent on intoxicating drinks. There is something radically wrong with women's dress. It is ugly, expensive or inconvenient, sometimes all three. Men can hardly conceive of the amount of feminine time wasted on dress. Time, money, labour—they are all sacrificed and in the days before the war it hardly seemed to matter. The very rich and the very poor are to some extent freed from the tyranny of dress, and

there are other women who have resented this preoccupation with feminine fripperies and frivolities. H. G. Wells, who understands modern women with a knowledge and sympathy achieved by few men writers, has compared her resentment to that of a gallant soldier cursing his out-of-date accoutrement.

Standard Frocks

YOU have only to pick up a woman's paper to see the place that dress occupies in the average woman's life, and there is something very depressing in the idea of a presumably intelligent human being spending hours buying clothes, thinking about clothes, reading about clothes, taking them off, putting them on, running little ribbons through them, and all the rest of it. . . . Now, if ever, seems the moment for rebellion. In adopting a uniform women will sacrifice none of their charm. You have only to consider the nurse in her print frock with spotless cap and collar and apron to realize that simplicity, even severity, in dress sets off real beauty and adds attraction to the plainest face.

SINCE the autumn of 1914 there has been a trend of fashions towards useful, comfortable clothes. Skirts are wide enough and short enough for the most practical purposes, and the coat-frock, a sort of combined coat and skirt, is both becoming and smart. Now, when Fashion is planning new creations to make us feel that we "simply cannot be seen" in last winter's clothes, let us seize upon the simplest version of the present styles and perpetuate them so that we may be no longer hampered by ever-shifting fashions, but choose our materials for their durability, have them fashioned with care, knowing that we may wear them and look well in them so long as they are whole and clean, and we shall be spared the contrast in our papers of the latest outlandish hats flanking the very column that tell of the struggles of an army in its agony.

ECONOMY is a mean word, suggestive of miserliness. There is a word we like better, and that is, Thrift. Economy says "Don't." Thrift says "Do." And any one who has ever been a child knows how disagreeable "dons" are. Thrift includes not only the saving of money, of clothing, of food, of fuel, and of light, but of health, knowledge, temper and opportunity. The truest thrift may be to spend money, in order to save health and strength, so that the power of work and the amount of production may be increased. The business woman who makes her own clothes and does her own house-work will never be as successful as the one who reserves her energies for her work. So don't be discouraged even if you do spend more than \$29.20 a year on clothes and 15 cents a day on food! People who devote all their time to being penny-wise may never have a pound to spend foolishly, and those who are constantly busy doing useful work are not exposed to the insidious temptation of bargain sales.

Helpful Hints

THE time that can be expended in cleaning, re-trimming, "making over" and "freshening up" comparatively worthless articles is limitless. If you desire to spend your life in this manner the papers

will furnish you with useful suggestions. Dozens of them every day and year after year all freely offered to the young house-keeper. The editors of these columns, though modestly anonymous, are yet omniscient, and if all their ineffable wisdom could be collected what a contribution to the economy of nations it would be. Take the matter of old corks, for instance, they can tell you scores of uses for them. They can with considerable care be transformed into pin-cushions, pen-wipers, knife-cleaners, breakfast foods. Then they tell you the loveliest ways of warming over a little cold lamb with mushrooms and a cup of chopped olives—but always when you happen to be out of such commodities, and when you have spilled ink on the best table cloth, you have the comforting assurance that you read how to remove it last January.

BUT the really up-to-date editor endeavours to give timely knowledge. In August she tells you so minutely how to turn a faded muslin frock pure white, that you spend a warm morning over the stove with greyish or perforated results and then your eye falls on a suggestion for dyeing, and in your efforts to achieve a rosy pink, you transform not only the gown, but the porridge spoon you have used to stir it, also, in spots, the week's laundry which happened to be lying near. But when the editor is away on her summer holidays, you may be pleasantly reminded:

"When putting skates away for the summer, cover them with oil," or some such seasonable hint!

Thrift Week

WAR Savings Week in England added hundreds of new associations to the National War Savings Committee, which now number over 3,500. War saving certificates are having a ready sale, economy exhibitions are largely attended, literature on the subject is widely circulated. And this knowledge will be of national benefit to the nation. The collection of waste-paper, for instance, makes the nation so much richer. The understanding of food values and cooking will do away with incalculable waste, and above all, the knowledge of mothercraft will promote that most necessary form of thrift, the preservation of the lives and health of the children. The widow of a Michigan senator has recently bequeathed one million dollars to establish a school near Detroit for training young girls of ten and upwards in a way that will fit them to become mothers.

RECRUITING posters in England have given place to exhortations to economy, but while the government is preaching economy, £500,000 a day is spent on intoxicating drinks. The increase in the cost of cloth is far below what might have been expected when one considers the demands made for army equipment. During the first twenty months of the war the amount of woollen cloth required was 90,000,000 yards, which would suffice to put a girdle twice around the earth, and the flannel required for shirts has been nearly as great. In view of all these most necessary expenditures it behooves us to make as few demands upon our national resources in materials and in labour as possible.