

Why Not Live and Let Live

By Annie E. Mellish

During the past few months schools and colleges in different parts of the continent have sent out graduates in Domestic Science. A large field is waiting and eager for the practical work of this body of young women. The question is—will they enlist? Will the sweet girl graduate who is full of lofty ideals and ready to revolutionize the diet of mankind be willing to go on active service in a private home?

What would it mean to a mother worn out with care and responsibility to have an assistant of this kind. The more educated and refined the broader her interest in her work. This is especially true where there are children. The best is none too good for the home. The wise mother realizes this fact yet she looks in vain for such a helper.

From ocean to ocean the help problem has become very serious. One reason is the outcome of free education. Children of to-day in every class are given equal advantages in our public schools. This is a step in advance of fifty years ago and makes it possible for girls to now earn their livelihood in different lines. Very few are taking up domestic service, as parents aim to have their daughters follow some other vocation.

For instance, I know a widow who had to support herself and three little girls. She had been "out to service" before her marriage and when her husband died she did laundry work for fifteen years. She sent her three children regularly to school and gave them every advantage that she possibly could with her limited means. The girls are now young women, one has recently been appointed superintendent of a hospital, another is a first class stenographer and the third is on the staff of a public library. Had there not been free education for these girls they would now, no doubt, be "out to service" like their mother before them.

Another reason we hear quoted quite often for the dearth in this line, is due to the standing formerly given to those engaged in house-work. They have been practically in a class by themselves. In fact, I remember when visiting in a small town some years ago, hearing a certain steam-ship line referred to as "the servant girl route." No one meant to be unkind. It was simply a local distinction in the different lines of travel.

This attitude towards household help has been pretty general in the past. The result is that many girls well qualified for domestic service have taken up nursing, stenography or some other means of livelihood. They are not nearly so well off financially or so comfortably housed, but they feel they are at least, on an equal footing with other wage earners.

Home managers are now rising to the situation, and trying if possible to form a compromise. In the place of the old-time advertisement, "wanted, a servant girl," we read to-day "wanted, companion help, light duties, high wages," or "wanted, mother's help, home privileges, liberal time off," etc.

During a lecture to his class in Boston University, Prof. Dallas Lorne Sharp, incidentally touched on this subject and said, "the day is past when a distinction can be drawn between the girl in the office and the girl in the home. Each one is doing the task assigned her by higher authority, of the two the girl in the office is more of a machine."

What is true in the United States should also be true in Canada. As it is, criticism in regard to the business girl has changed during the past ten years. War conditions strengthened this movement. In fact it then became an honor for a girl to enter the business world and even with the return of the boys in khaki the halo has not disappeared. Even the society editor gives a list of prominent young women who are now earning a wage by picking fruit. They may call it a frolic, a summer outing, anything they like, but they are working and receiving money for their labor on the same principle as a maid in a home or a president of a railroad. All work is honorable. Why the "looking down" on a girl engaged in any one phase of it? Why not live and let live?

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Johnson—"Wonderfully! I feel a sense of great security. An army that can make my boy get up early, work hard all day, and go to bed early, can do anything."



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