

PROGRESS

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED

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Devoted to the Interests of Industry, Architecture, Science, Engineering, Inventions
and the Home

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Editorial Comment

The attention paid to the production of labour-saving appliances and other conveniences for the home must be very comforting to housewives, especially New Zealand ones, rarely free from the worry of the everlasting servant question. In this number there are special articles on heating and lighting appliances, demonstrating an astonishing advancement compared with conditions only a few years ago. The help problem has been a great spur to development. So acute is the scarcity of competent domestics, genuinely able to do what the calling demands, that Parliament has placed the question among those of national importance. A few partisans are heard who say that systematic importation of domestics by the State is simply in the interests of wealthy people who can afford to do their own importing, but the real pinch of the scarcity is felt by the wives of the salaried class, who cannot afford fancy prices, nor can they keep large staffs of servants, with the result that either home or children must be neglected, or the health ruined in an heroic, often a vain attempt, to do everything single-handed. We have every sympathy with the Government's idea of continuing an active immigration policy, and hope it will not be slackened by pressure from those who think this great country should remain the preserve of a tiny handful of population. But unfortunately, domestic service does not attract girls so strongly as factory life, with its strenuous eight hours a day. The law of supply and demand has operated so thoroughly in favour of the domestic help that we should imagine that there can be few remediable grievances of wages or working conditions. Of course, the drudgery inherent in domestic work remains to some extent, but it is rapidly diminishing, and would be but a small factor if householders could take advantage of all the home appliances described in our special articles this month.

To our mind, the domestic help problem will be solved by the mechanic rather than the statesman with an immigration policy. Eliminate some of the monotony and all the drudgery from the housewife's duties, and the calling of the domestic will

attract girls of a good type more surely than the factory or office does to-day. Eliminate the dirty coal fire in its old-fashioned dust-distributing grate; eliminate cooking methods which involve toil in an over-heated atmosphere; throw out the duster, which is merely a dust-disturber, not a dust-collector; instal furniture and decorations that are not dust-traps; plan the home with due regard to easy cleaning, and the result will be, if good taste has been exercised, a thousand times more satisfactory in the long run than a weak acceptance of the con-revision of orthodox ideas, of course, but it is being forced upon all of us, however conservative, by the urgency of the situation and the hopelessness of palliative remedies. Utilisation of vacuum cleaners has wrought wonders in the home. To be able to sweep without raising dust means that there is much less work for the duster. And in regard to the latter, it is possible to obtain cheaply a material which really holds the dust, not pushes it into the atmosphere. Electricity as a lighting medium makes for improved hygienic conditions in the home. It is also considered by some to be a success as a cooking medium, but the careful housewife who uses a gas stove will not readily give up so useful and effective an appliance. Both gas and electricity save much of the worry of cooking, by providing a constant, unfluctuating heat, easily controlled, and leaving no after-dirt. Clothes washing need not, to-day, be a steamy task, involving much hard muscular effort. There are good appliances on the market which greatly reduce the effort required for this work, and it only remains for cheap power to be available for these mechanical aids to clear the drudgery out altogether.

One of the most brilliant modern imaginative writers, H. G. Wells, who is also a good deal concerned about the problems of life, has given in "A Modern Utopia" his view of the ideal domestic arrangement:—

"The effectual abolition of a labouring and servile class will make itself felt in every detail. . . . The room is of course very clear and clean and simple; not by any means cheaply equipped, but designed to economise the labour of redding and repair just as much as possible. It is beautifully proportioned and rather lower than most rooms I know on earth. There is no fireplace, and I am