

BORSODI, RALPH

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## Elsa Maxwell's Particles

CAN YOU CAN-CAN?

**B**OYS, have you tried canning anything? You got into so many jams, I should think you could make the bigger and better jam

than we girls. The trouble with us as a nation is that we practically live on canned food to save that funny thing called "time," which Dr. Einstein tells us is so "relative" that it is as bad as a mother-in-law.



Dr. Einstein

Now, because tin from which cans are made has become more valuable than gold—which is worthless today, I was wondering in what that high priest of 57 varieties—Mr. Heinz—is going to put up his fabulous concoctions . . . concoctions which I must say have bravely bridged the gap between the old ways of life and the new. This reminds me of a story.

On a certain summer day not so long ago, the wife of an outstanding consulting economist and advertising agency executive came out of the kitchen and said to her husband with great pride: "Ralph, I just canned some tomatoes for you."

Her economically sound husband hit the ceiling. "What business do you have," he asked, "competing on a pee-wee scale with big canners? Don't you know that it will cost you less, in the long run, to buy your food already canned?"

"But Ralph," she said meekly, "this is all it cost me." And sitting down she proved by actual figures that her home-canned product cost less than the factory-canned tomatoes.

And apparently she was the type who got great satisfaction out of doing everything with her own hands.

**T**HIS is the beginning of the remarkable saga of Ralph Borsodi, who seems to me to be almost a Thoreau of our times. Ralph got out his pencil and paper and started checking Mrs. Borsodi's figures.

Borsodi was stumped. Here was a fact contrary to all the orthodox laws of classic economics. Here was home production competing with mass production, and Mrs. Borsodi is probably one of those remarkable women who enjoy this sort of pleasure more than shopping for a new hat.

"It doesn't seem to me that this can be true," Borsodi said, "but if it is true—and true for tomatoes—it must be sure for many other things."

He took time off from his big-scale, industrial research . . . and started some economic investigation of his own.

"What did you find?" I asked him, scenting some new line of thought.

"A very startling thing," he

answered. "I discovered with the aid of electricity—the great contribution of the Twentieth Century—a little fellow can operate just as efficiently as the big factories . . . and have no waste for distribution, and selling."

"But boiling this down," I asked, "what does it mean to most people?" "Simply this—It means that with the use of small, electrically-driven tools—you can make more money by staying at home and producing what you need—than by going out and working your life away in order to make enough money to buy what you need."

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Well, Ralph Borsodi is not just a writer of books, a parlor theorist. He has gone out and put his ideas into practice. In Suffern, N. Y., and in three or four other places, he has set up projects by which people could acquire land co-operatively. With just a few dollars to use for capital, almost anyone can go to one of these projects, get his land, and learn—at a special school Ralph has set up—how to live efficiently and well—without being dependent on anybody but yourself.

**T**HE people who live at Bayard Lane, the first of these projects, include a large number of writers, architects, and professionals. They produce their own garden products, operate their own electric churns, electric grinders, electric spinning machines, weaving machines, and pressure cookers.

Imaginative and intelligent use of the latest devices and scientific principles has taken almost all of the drudge out of their labors. The old-fashioned notion of creating homecrafts have been revived. And, above all, virtually every family attempting the experiment have made themselves securely and permanently independent. They don't have to worry about losing their jobs, being evicted, or going on relief.

What the future holds for the Borsodi plan remains to be seen. Ralph himself admits that it is scarcely possible for it to solve any economic problems for the whole country. "But it is quite possible," he said to me emphatically, "to break down the problem for a family or a neighborhood, a locality—or even a region. And if you solve enough of these, you solve the whole problem."

These "back-to-nature" fellows, like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, did a lot to influence our thinking and bring simplicity into our lives. But whatever they may have imagined did not work out in the same way in practice. Yet, Rousseau didn't have electricity at his disposal—that strange fluid which plays an important role in Borsodi's magic kitchen. The very least Borsodi's experiments deserve the serious consideration of the Administration. (Mr. McNutt, please note.)

(Press Alliance, Inc.)

