

Mrs. John Hoodless

The death of her year and a half old son from drinking impure milk awakened Mrs. John Hoodless of Hamilton to the imperative need of homemaking education. She felt that she should have known enough about food to have prevented his death, and her wish to spare others from a like tragedy led her to devote her brilliant intellect to putting homemaking education within reach of all.

So, although the eighteen-nineties viewed with alarm, and more than a little distaste, women on public platforms, Mrs. Hoodless carried her crusade from the ladies' parlour out into the world of men and affairs.

As Chairman of the National Committee on Domestic Science and Technical Education, she directed the efforts of Local Councils to have household science included in school curriculums. She visited the best schools in England and the United States, and corresponded with all European countries where it was being taught. Lady Aberdeen wrote that Mrs. Hoodless' enthusiasm swept everything before it.

Her speeches on that topic, although delivered fifty years ago, sound a very modern note. For Mrs. Hoodless advocated then what educationists are advocating today: the whole child, body and spirit as well as mind, should be trained in school; a one-sided curriculum led to mischief and evil; vocational skills should be taught; management deplores the lack of skilled labour.

Bright, womanly, intelligent, she was so successful in presenting her case that a farmer did the then-unheard-of thing of inviting her to address a Farmer's Institute.

It was an evening meeting, and wives were allowed to attend. Can't you see those women of 1897 sitting silent and respectful in the back rows while their menfolk discussed the serious business of "The Feeding of Calves"? And feel their frightened delight when one of their number dared to leave that traditional rear position and break that public hush? Quick-thinking as any politician, Mrs. Hoodless began her address by hoping that farmers would devote as much thought to the diet of their children as they did to that of their animals! From that evening and from that speech came the Women's Institutes.