

A Home Industry Takes to the Attic



Calendar Making Is Mrs. David Scull's Work

In the picture Mrs. Scull (center) is seen with her son and an assistant packing calendars for shipping

Calendar Brings Prosperity to One Home

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Three hundred and sixty-five days in a year. Three meals every day. A husband, a wife and a son to eat them. College, too, for the boy.

Such were the thoughts which on a stifling August evening occupied Mrs. David Scull as she rested, not idly but meditatively, after her occupations.

It was 1935 and opportunities in Mr. Scull's particular branch of teaching instead of remaining steady, had formed a capricious habit of running away. New York was proving erratic toward the teaching profession. Yet the needed number of meals remained constant, as did the required number of college courses for Junior's graduation, and the price of textbooks and those "sundries" with which life is all compact.

How blessed it would be, Mrs. Scull decided, her thoughts becoming slightly fantastic as drowsiness crept upon her, if when people got into "hot water," as the expression goes, their needs shrank as woolens shrink when plunged into boiling suds! But, no! Necessities kept their dimensions, days their length from sunrise to sunrise. The shape of life and the pace of the calendar. . .

Calendar Making

The calendar! Mrs. Scull awoke with a start and jerked herself erect. Well, then if the calendar was one of the perfectly stable things in an unstable world, she would accept it as her friend and collaborator. She would make and print, calendars, in-

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friends had acknowledged them with real gratitude for their usefulness. The new ones, however, planned for commercial distribution, must have style in their proportions, be fashioned of fine paper and handsomely printed, so that they could hang on the wall beside a desk or in the most decorative kitchen, with dignified effect.

Her husband designed them on this basis and her son contracted for the materials and work. Having no money for advertising, Mrs. Scull introduced them to the public exclusively through personal letters to people whom she knew. She had lived in many American towns and had always maintained her far-flung friendships through an active correspondence, and to this she now gave a business flavor. Sending a calendar with each letter, she asked her correspondent if it seemed interesting enough to offer to local stores, to clubs, church groups and other organizations. In college towns she made it worth while for students to sell it. The response was surprisingly good.

In a letter to the writer, Mrs. Scull thus relates part of the story.

Sales Increased

"The sales have unfolded steadily in a wonderful demonstration of how demand meets supply, without waste either of money invested or of material, which, of course, would not be saleable beyond one season. Thus the first year 770 calendars were sold

calendars are produced, from the first process of printing to the last of packing for shipment. The part-time assistants who make up my staff are like a family. Many of them have been enabled through this work to attend night school; and a girl who helped me this season, by applying her salary to a slowly accumulated fund, has been able to fulfill her great desire and enter college for a teacher's training."

For the last three years the Scull family has lived in Washington, D. C. The fact that many organizations have national headquarters there has opened gratifying opportunities for expansion throughout the country.

Until the third season, Mrs. Scull was obliged to borrow a little money each year to buy materials as there was never enough profit to turn back into adequate supplies after bills were paid and a small sum taken out for some family need. Since then, however, economic freedom in the production of the merchandise and an adequate return for six months of hard work have rewarded the enterprise. This in despite of the fact that wholesale prices are low and commissions must be generous to be attractive.

First Link in Chain

Moreover, Mrs. Scull sees in this venture not only an isolated business project the financial returns of which have steadied the family fortunes for two years and the family morale ever since it was entered upon, but also as the first link in a chain of possible projects. Calendars,

numerable calendars, for sale, all checked off mathematically into days, weeks, months, placing below each date a blank rectangle for memoranda.

For years Mrs. Scull had made such calendars by hand to give to friends at Christmas and had found that they filled a different need from quotation and art calendars. She had always visualized them as utilitarian affairs for the synchronization of dates and engagements and her

out of the 1,000 made; the next year, 1,500 out of 2,000; the third year we had three editions, amounting to 3,200 copies, out of which 3,000 were sold; the fourth year two editions totaled 4,500, and every one was sold; whereas in this season of 1938-39 our two editions amounted to 7,500 and were sold out with an ensuing demand for a small third edition.

"Not enough can be said for the friendly atmosphere in which the

of course, are seasonal; but having built up a nation-wide clientele for these, the launching of affiliated projects, projects concerned with merchandise which can employ the year around some of the workers now on part-time and which will be acceptable to her calendar patrons, seems to Mrs. Scull a logical and pleasant step in advance. Although she is not yet ready to announce her plans, she has already plotted her business development so that it will demand a full year of work and perhaps double her profits without nearly doubling her expenses.

A delightful thing about this calendar enterprise is that it gives Mrs. Scull so much pleasure, independently of the income. She loves to write and to receive letters and it is through correspondence, as has already been said, that the sales progress. She has, in this way, an acquaintance with her business patrons and when large quantities of calendars are ordered by some national or local organization for sale in behalf of a worthy cause, she has a happy sense of participation in good works. Those who aid her in manufacturing, in styling, in packing and, finally, in selling, are all her friends and their profits quite as much as her own, give her a sense of joy and the satisfaction of having set something in motion which goes on producing opportunities and blessings for more and more people.

Intimate Appeal

She is particularly gratified when she receives letters from boys and girls in college, whom the commissions have assisted. This, indeed, makes an intimate appeal to her heart for her son thus helped himself toward his goal. In his case this was achieved not only by selling on the campus, but by performing tasks associated with the production of the calendars during the summers. This experience proved valuable not only directly in terms of money but also in teaching him business methods and preparing him for mature life and the economic responsibilities of marriage.

"And to think that it all sprang from a foolish sort of pleasure in using a ruler and marking off shapes on clean white paper for practical purposes!" says Mrs. Scull. "To think that those amateurish calendars which I made for my friends for gifts should have pointed the way for a business which, for six months of the year, at least, employs a staff of workers; which has helped my son and other women's sons and daughters to get educations and which gives me a nice little income and constantly enlarges my experience of life and my friendships!"