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THE ADVANTAGES OF FARM LIFE.

A Study by Correspondence and Interviews
With Eight Thousand Farm Women.

Digest of an Unpublished Manuscript.

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THE ADVANTAGES OF FARM LIFE.

By Emily Hoag Sawtelle, Associate Economist,
Bureau of Agricultural Economics,
U.S. Department of Agriculture.

REASON FOR STUDY.

The Country Life Commission appointed by President Roosevelt found many unfavorable conditions prevalent in the open country, and gave them wide publicity in its report. This report was not an indictment of country life, but a candid statement of some of the handicaps to the development of the innate power of rural social institutions. The Commission felt that the country was not making progress as fast as the cities and towns and made some pointed recommendations looking toward improvement.

The findings of the Commission stimulated much further discussion and research in which, rather naturally, attention was centered on the evils to be removed and their sources. A rather gloomy picture was painted and put before the people and the impression it made persists in the minds of city people and writers on rural topics. As late as 1914 the Secretary of Agriculture, the Honorable D. F. Houston, received more than two thousand letters, in response to a questionnaire regarding the needs of farm people, which brought to light many undesirable phases of life on the farms. These letters were published as Reports of the Office of the Secretary Nos. 103, 104, 105, and 106. This gave direction to further work in agricultural and home economics extension, credit, roads, schools, and other measures and were therefore decidedly helpful. But with the movement for improvement of conditions well under way, protests against calamity stories began to appear and farm people now resent characterization and cartooning as ignorant objects of misguided pity.

The every day life of the bulk of the people of this country is not news. So there would be no point to any statement of country life at its best if there had not been previously so generally entertained a conception of country life that is woefully one-sided. With the popular conception in mind and a conviction that it was misrepresentative, the author set out to visit farm women in their homes and to report in their own words their attitude toward farm life. Others were reached by letters, some of which were written in refutation of a misrepresentation of farm life which appeared in the press. /1.

/1. Acknowledgment is made to the Phelps Publishing Company, Springfield, Mass., for the courtesy of lending to this Bureau volunteer letters written by farm women in reply to the article, "The Woman God Forgot," published in the September, 1920, issue of "Farm and Home." Recognition is hereby given of the rare favor rendered by the Webb Publishing Company, St. Paul, Minn., of allowing us the invaluable opportunity of reading and analyzing 7,000 letters of farm women in reply to the question appearing in the January, 1922, issue of "The Farmer's Wife", "Do you want your daughter to marry a farmer?"

Views of hundreds of these farm women on many phases of farm life are here presented. These women are strong, resourceful, capable and leading personalities in their communities. Living full and active lives they see the best side, and choose to consider the handicaps and the undesirable features of temporary and minor importance and to emphasize the possibilities of farm life.

THE WORK SIDE.

Satisfactions in Good Farming.

The true country woman finds pleasure in her occupation because, first of all, she likes the basic material with which she has to work. She loves the land. The sight of the broad acres of the farm causes her daily pride and satisfaction, and she glories in the fact that she and her husband are workers in the soil.

> "It is almost sinful," confesses a West Virginia woman, "how I love these old acres here, how I lay store by each inch of the land, how I cherish and enjoy each flower, each tree, each blade of grass or grain it grows, how I believe there is no spot in the universe so dear."

Tonic virtues of the land. Those races, nearer to nature, not so civilized as our own, speak without fear of ridicule of the bracing, steadying, satisfying stimulation that comes out of the soil to those who live, walk, and work on it. "I like to get off the city sidewalks and get my feet on the good, solid, strong, real ground," Booker T. Washington was fond of saying. "Strength comes out of the earth," says an eminent American Indian scholar. Children of our own race, in the country, wait impatiently for the first warm day in spring when they may discard shoes and stockings. They exult in the touch of the oozing mud, the dry prickling sand, the cool upturned clods of the plowed fields, the yielding green sod, the smooth surface of boulders and rocks beneath their bare feet.

> "The very fact," asserts a Wisconsin woman, "that many farm women are working calmly, patiently along, without moving pictures, fashions, electrical conveniences, and all modern improvements show that they are deriving a certain other satisfaction from life. Just as the plant sends its roots down into the earth, and the rose, or the potato draws up materials for its individual existence, beauty or usefulness, so does each person's life absorb from the surroundings the thing which it requires for its needs. We, the farm women, are where we belong. I feel that this close-to-nature elemental existence, is the fullest, richest source of emotional satisfaction. And we pay the price. We give our services, and we give up the superficial, sensational stimulants of society and fashion, so we feel square and honest as we take our gifts."

Even the long hours of labor on the farm hold compensations. Nature is at her best in the early morning, and most farmers would not give up their habit of early rising. A farmer's wife in Utah says:

"The farm woman rises early and watches the sun come up over the tops of the Rocky Mountains, capped with perpetual snow."

When the naturalist farmer, John Burroughs, lived in the city of Washington he spent every free moment in the open country. "Away from the farm," he once wrote to a friend, "I am like a fowl with no gravel in its gizzard. I am hungry for the earth. I could eat it like a horse."

Truly rural-minded folks, without the farm environment, are like plants without soil and water. When they try the experiment of moving to town the result is often a pathetic failure. Witness this experience of a farm family in Michigan described by the impatient daughter of the household:

"We're living in the city right now," she writes, "but at heart we are farmers; anyway, we're going back to the farm at a very early date. I'll describe mother. She's almost forty-five and the mother of two husky boys and three healthy girls. Practically all her life she has worked on a farm. We moved into the city less than a year ago and we are ready to go back to the farm tomorrow, even today. We - but what is the use of further discussion? We've tried both farm and city life and we're going back to the farm! And there it is, in a nutshell, for it's mother who wants to go back worst of all."

Appeal of science. Every occupation to be fully satisfying, must have in it some elements of experimentation, exploration or adventure. Even the most home-loving of folk like some change and variety, and one of the reasons why farm women like agriculture is because it possesses a many-sided character. Farming comprises, not one science only, but a great number of combinations. In the last twenty-five years mechanical invention and scientific research have brought about such a Renaissance of agriculture that it appeals to alert, keen-minded men and women. Especially does it interest the independent, resourceful woman who is a product of the twentieth century.

"When I go with my husband down to Farmers' Week at the Agricultural College," writes a woman from the Southern Appalachian mountains, "I do not spend all my time in the Home Economics Department. I attend the lectures on soil chemistry and animal husbandry. I go to see the new agricultural machinery and watch them judge the stock, because I'm interested in everything that goes on at the farm."

"Our Jerseys give us so much pleasure," writes another Southern woman, "It's a joy to work with fine purebred stock."

"I used to assist my husband in his photographic studio in the city, before his health failed him," relates a North Carolina woman. "And now, since we have moved to the farm, I still help him with his work, but it is so much more alive and

interesting! We bought an old deserted farm which we have started building up. Farming makes photography look like empty routine with all its mechanical repetition. You can go just so far in that art and it is fascinating enough, but there comes a time when you are bound to repeat yourself, going over and over the same ground, the same motions, with no new field for thought, - no advance. With farming it is so different. The things you can discover and learn and experiment with are endless. The combinations are so varied, the results so satisfying. There is the dealing with live, growing things, too, that we like. One gets tired of chemicals."

The farm woman is the strongest supporter of our basic democratic principle - she believes that everyone in America should work, and that everyone in America should share the higher life. She admits of no second place for American farmers. She makes no apology for her chosen occupation. Rather, she believes its possibilities boundless.

"If you know of legislation for bettering farmers' credits, for improving country roads, building consolidated schools, cooperative creameries and laundries - boost for it and vote for it, and you may be sure that the farm women will fall in line with every improvement and wave of progress that is made," writes a woman from Wisconsin. "In the meantime, they are calmly and willingly giving their services that the life from the earth may flow in a steady stream towards a better and kinder world of people."

Partnership on the Farm.

Nowhere does a woman have a better chance to be her husband's partner in every sense of the word. The business itself is spread out in front of her door. Its details come into her kitchen. She sees the plans for the work going on around her. She hears the talk of the business at her table. The farm papers come into her living room; farm bulletins are on her desk. She has every opportunity for studying the technique of a science, and for acquainting herself with the inside workings of a thriving business.

The farm woman can feel that in real ways she has helped to earn the farm home.

"My husband and I started life on $200, 6 years ago," announces the wife of an Ohio farmer, "and today by hard work we are making good, and are looking forward to a home of our own in the near future."

Many women on American farms are on an equal financial footing with their husbands.

"We have one common pocketbook at our house," asserts a wife from the Northwest, "and whether it is a dozen eggs or

a bunch of fat steers that are sold, the proceeds go into that pocketbook and each feels that the other has a right to draw from it for farm, household or personal use."

"The farmer and his wife lead a life of cooperation," writes a Massachusetts woman. "We do not call it an addition to our own affairs to be interested in our husbands' work. It is part of the farm life."

"I actually feel sorry for the woman who doesn't get a chance to help her husband once in awhile," says the wife of a wheat farmer in Illinois.

A farm woman can always start on her way to partnership or economic independence with her garden, her butter, and her hens.

"It is quite true we must work hard to hold up our end of the farmer's burden," observes a Virginia woman who markets her own products, "but we are interested in our work and work never seems difficult and monotonous when mind and heart are in it. What farmer's wife is not proud to go to the nearest city market with her rolls of butter, her fresh eggs and crisp vegetables?"

Mutual advantage in partnership. The helping on the farm is not all on one side. The farmer often gives his partner a helping hand with the garden and the heavier indoor work.

"Slowly and surely," writes an Iowa farmer's wife, "electricity and gasoline are finding their way into the farm home. The farmer has been criticized about modernizing the farm outbuildings first. This is true to a certain degree, yet there's a reason for it. Naturally, if the outbuildings are modernized, it enables the farmer to work faster and realize more capital with which to make further improvements. There's truth in the old saying: 'A barn can build a house sooner than a house can build a barn.'"

The work of the husband on the farm is of such a nature that he is able to share in the discipline and training of children.

"I prefer living on a farm," contends a young college-bred woman in New York, "my husband is such a help in the care, management, and discipline of the children. He takes the children all over the farm with him and lets them ride in a basket, or box or seat securely fastened on rake, cultivator or plow."

This interchange between house and garden, barn and field, is looked upon by many women as a refreshing change and tonic.

"Up on the hill the other morning," writes a Pennsylvania woman, "I say my neighbor, Mrs. R. herding the cows. I went up

for a chat. 'Is it monotonous herding the cows?' I asked. 'Decidedly not,' she replied. 'With all this great valley and the hills beyond, it is a change. I have a good woman doing the work inside. I have the latest magazines with me to read. I have the pure air and the sunshine, and I can take memories of the autumn mornings with me through the winter. It is only for a few hours each morning and I like the change.'"

The man and woman on the farm are constantly exchanging opinions about the work. The farm is not a man's world entirely, nor yet completely a woman's world. It takes both man and woman to make a successful go at building up a true home and a successful business on the farm.

"Here in the South," says a woman from the Coastal plains, "the men look for the big returns, the big crop, like cotton. The women look to the little crops, in order to have something coming in all the time, such as peanuts, potatoes, corn and nuts. The women are for diversification. So we keep the business balanced, and earn a good living."

Many times on the farm if the farmer lacks a certain quality or ability, his wife is able to come to his assistance as this Wisconsin woman did in the early days of farming with her husband.

"I've always been quite a hand to keep accounts, and help my husband with the business end of the farming," she proudly affirms. "Every week I used to drive my fast driving horse into Milwaukee and get the checks all made out for the men who were working for him, and attend to the other business."

Long hours of planning and working together with hands and brains and hearts, hour by hour, month by month, year by year, give the farmer and his wife a trust in one another that is well nigh unbreakable.

Almost more than any other women, farm women profoundly influence their husbands' lives. A woman from the Pine Tree State, who now has a beautiful country home and every social advantage, shows that it makes a great deal of difference to a farmer whether his wife is ready to believe in him and stand by him when a test comes.

"When I married my husband," she tells us, "he was a salesman in his father's store. We decided to buy a little farm and did. We worked along on this little farm, hardly making ends meet, but we always paid our debts and met our obligations, and people knew we were to be depended upon. I helped in the fields and with the milking. After 7 years, a man with a 600 acre estate noticed that my husband was ambitious and reliable and offered him the managership of the farm. At first my husband said 'No, I don't dare attempt it, I don't know enough about farming - we might fail.' But I thought we ought to take the chance, so I said, 'Let's try it.

We have the little place to come back to, if we do fail, and it's better to try to get ahead than to stay here and go behind as we are doing." So we tried it and succeeded, and that one successful venture has given us courage ever since to start and do something, rather than to merely think, dream and plan. The start is the main thing, and probably the hardest thing, too."

In 1775, Abigail Adams wife of John Adams, third President of the United States, was left to manage the farm in Braintree, making a living for herself and children while her young husband went out to do his duty for his country. Here is an extract from one of her letters:

"I take my pen and write just as I can get time; my letters will be a strange mixture. I really am 'cumbered about many things' and scarcely know which way to turn myself. I miss my partner and find myself unequal to the cares which fall upon me. I find it necessary to be the directress of our husbandry. I hope in time to have the reputation of being as good a farmeress, as my partner has of being a good statesman."

The Work Habit for Farm Children.

One of the chief sources of satisfaction that farm life affords the American woman lies in the opportunity the farm work gives her to enjoy her children.

Opportunity open to children. In the first place worry and anxiety keep many mothers from taking as much pleasure in their children as they might. On the farm, however, there is so much in the way of occupation among the farm animals and in the woods and fields that farm women find their children are not great causes of worry. They feel that the youngsters are safe - if they are in mischief it is not often the kind of mischief that does harm to anyone, for there is room enough on the home farm for the boys and girls to have a good time, without bothering the neighbors.

"My little five-year-old girl," declares the wife of a tenant farmer, "loves everything out of doors and will dress up in overalls and jumper and follow her father over the farm all day long from morning till night."

"All the children," says a mother of ten grown children, "learned to ride horseback and bareback as soon as they could run. They grew up with a family of cousins living on the next farm and had a world of fun just helping with the work."

"You ought to see how my children enjoy the farm," says a Southern woman who has recently moved from the city to the country. "It was worth coming just for that. Here at our backyard are oysters for picking and fine fish and crabs, and all about us are good hunting, wild turkeys, ducks, rabbits, partridges, and squirrels."

"The farm work has kept our children busy and occupied and happy," writes a Massachusetts woman. "It is making men and women out of them, we think. We want our children to be self-helping, independent, resourceful and we think the country life is a great help in making them so. They all have their work to do. The two boys help with all the outdoor work. They both can run the tractor. The two girls clean and dust the house, the older girl running the vacuum cleaner and the little one going along with dusters and mops. We have the self-carry system at the table too, everyone at our house, no matter who, picks up his own dishes and carries them to the kitchen after the meal is over. It saves lots of steps for the housekeeper."

A widow left to support herself and her children on a Maryland garden-truck farm says:

"No opera music, (and I love music) could be sweeter to me than the call of my boy to the team as the wagon starts off to the canning factory well loaded with tomato crates that I have worked hard to fill. I am tired, yes - but proud of my work, and proud that my little son is learning to like work."

A woman from North Carolina whose children are now grown to useful manhood and womanhood believes that work taught her children the best in life. She says:

"I had to bring up my family on the gospel of hard work and cheerfulness. I couldn't afford to get downhearted myself with five children looking to me for courage. I had to go out into the fields and work myself, and see that the house kept running right and regularly too. The children learned the meaning of work right along with me, and they were trained not to look on it as drudgery and hardship either. I felt that the girls needed to get a higher education to support themselves and I knew the boys could get along with a High School education and their farm training. The boys agreed with me and gave up going to college and helped me put the girls through Normal. Then the boys went on and earned their own way through college. My oldest daughter finished college, taught and did county agent work and is now married to a prosperous farmer. People wonder how she has the energy to take care of her little children, look out for their local Home Bureau Club, act as President of the County Bureau and take an active part in the State Bureau. It is because she got in the habit of working at home, of never wasting time, of taking responsibility, of expecting to take her share of all the work that goes on."

Effacement of Drudgery.

Casual observers of country life are in the habit of contending that the present day farm woman is more restricted by her household duties than was her Puritan or Revolutionary ancestress; that there has been in

the average American farm home, no substantial improvement of conveniences in the past 50 years. When they say this, they are doubtless thinking of the work of the early women in picturesque terms. They have in mind the romantic vision of Priscilla Mullens:

> "Seated beside her wheel, and the carded wool like a snow drift
> "Piled at her knee, her white hands feeding the ravenous spindle,
> "While with her foot on the treadle, she guided the wheel in its motion."

Beside this picture of home industry, present day work in a farm home looks like drudgery.

The march of progress. The modern farm woman herself may at times think that improvement in farm homes has been mortally slow and that conditions are far from what they should be. But when she stops to compare present conditions on the average farm in this country with the state of affairs that existed on the majority of farms 200 years ago, 100 years ago, or even 50 years ago, it is brought home to her strongly that great and important strides in progress have been taken by farm women.

Abigail Foote, of Connecticut in the year 1775, wrote in her diary at the close of the day a narrative that makes a modern woman's head whirl.

> "Fix'd gown for Prude, mended mother's ridinghood,- spun short thread, - Fix'd two gowns for Walsh's girls, - Carded tow - Spun linen, worked on cheese basket, - Hatcheld'd flax with Hannah, we did 51 lbs. apiece, - Pleated and ironed - Read a sermon of Doddridge's, - Spooled a piece, - Milked the cows, - Spun linen did 50 knots, - Made a broom of Guinea wheat straw, - Spun thread to whiten, - Set a Red dye, - Had two scholars from Mrs. Taylor's, - I carded two pounds of wool and felt Nationaly, - Spun harness twine - Scoured the Pewter."

Coming down to a span of years within the memory of present day women, we find a total change of conditions:

> "I was the daughter of a pioneer farmer from the Michigan lumber woods," says one woman who still lives on a farm. "I have lived to see towns and cities, where once I saw bear and deer and lynx. In the Wild Wood I married a young man who worked in the lumber yards and we hewed a home out of the wild woods. What was a wilderness when I was a child is now beautiful farms. The old log cabins have been replaced with fine dwellings; wild animals with fine stock. We farm women do work hard but we are not lonesome or discouraged. Fifty years ago my mother never heard of a gasoline engine. Most farmers use them now to saw wood, pump water, churn, run the cream separator, run the washing machine."

Women who have lived through the great period of transformation appreciate most heartily the new life that has come to the farm home. Even a young farm woman can point out great improvements that have come about in her lifetime to make work in the farmhouse easier.

"Some 30 years ago," relates a Miami valley woman, "I was the third and last child to come to my parents in a 2-room log cabin built by father himself, on a 40-acre tract of land. From childhood, I knew what work meant. Mother was always busy; her work was all done by herself. She had a little 4-hole wood stove, and iron kettle, 2 iron pots, 2 iron skillets, 2 iron griddles, and enameled lined iron kettle and a granite 6-quart preserving kettle, the prize of the neighborhood in canning time. In a big iron soap kettle she made most of the soap for the neighborhood where we lived. Later, when we moved into a larger house, our only floor covering was a rag carpet woven by mother herself. I filled shuttles for her to weave it. We surely were proud of that new carpet, and a few new small rugs from what rags we had left from the carpet.

"Now I am mother of two lively children. We have been on the farm over two years. We have over a hundred acres. I have gas lights in every room, a 3-hole hot plate for hot summer cooking and an extra large coal range, a washing machine that can be run sitting or standing or by gasoline engine, if I ever am lucky enough to possess one. I can all my vegetables by 'cold pack' in a steam cooker. I have all the pans and kettles I can use in aluminum and granite, and I haven't a heavy iron pot in the house. I have a big roomy kitchen with large cupboard cabinet, chest of drawers for towels, 2 large roomy work tables and 2 stoves in it."

All sorts of varying conditions are found in farm homes, but as a rule farm women are working toward the many conveniences. The spirit displayed by this young Iowa farm woman is typical:

"My washing machine has been run with an engine for six years and now I use electricity. I also have a mangle, that is run by electricity that I iron all my flat clothes with. We farm women never have to watch a meter as we have our own electric plants. Within three miles of my home there are only three out of 14 farmers that haven't electric plants of their own. Eleven of us farm women have the use of electricity and we don't have someone always sending us a light bill either. There are many things I haven't got, such as an electric vacuum cleaner, but I intend to have one before long to use in place of the hand one I have had for 10 years, and yes, I am going to have a grill to cook my light meals on, as well as other things as soon as I can get them. I have the dustless mop which lightens one's work so much and which is in use every day on my hardwood polished floors. My sewing machine is run by an electric motor and while I am busy sewing I have the electric fan to keep me cool."

Making the most of the released energy. Fortunate farm women who possess modern electrical helps, freed as they are from some of the most immediate, urgent demands, have had the time to look about them and discover new ways to lighten their labors. They are constantly devising new means and methods to make their work more pleasant and profitable. On the

walls of many modern farm kitchens are schedules of weekly and daily work. These schedules are usually briskly followed by their progressive makers who believe in living, not drifting through life. Some women know exactly how long each piece of work should take.

"I know from actual experience," declares an energetic Western woman, "that what helps most in house work is system. Have a day for your special work and see it is done on that day. Now I do the washing Monday, rain or shine, and usually I can find a time in the day to dry the clothes. If I can't I let them lie in the bluing water till next day and it only whitens them the more. Then they are ready for the line bright and early Tuesday morning. While I do the ironing, I usually do my bread baking to use the same fire. I do everything up in the forenoon (unless it is canning time) then the afternoon is free."

Many farmers' wives find it advisable to plan their work and improvements at least a year ahead, if not longer.

"I believe in improving the place you live on," contends a young Southern woman living on an old plantation that has been in her husband's family for generations, "just a little bit every year instead of waiting ten years, living in bad conditions, just to fix things all up in a burst. We added the wide veranda last fall and next I want to fix this living room and lighten it up - paint the dark doors and other woodwork white ivory, put on a light paper and have some blue and white curtains. We want it to be a cheerful place."

A woman from central Massachusetts recites her yearly schedules:

"I set myself to do 40 pieces of sewing every year and I get it off before spring when the heavy part of the gardening and canning begins. Towels, dresses, hats, sheets, etc., all come in, but I get 40 pieces done every year. I make most of my clothes and my daughter's clothes. Yes, I took the clothing efficiency course and enjoyed it greatly. Then there's our mending club, which meets every week to darn stockings and mend and visit, and we do have the best time."

Conveniences and improvements, long planned for, come about surely:

"One year," writes a Missouri woman, "we had 'a big try' for running water at the house and barn. The year of the big try we had a trio of geese, raised 40 goslings; a trio of Indian runner ducks, raised 80 ducklings; and had 1,000 chickens, hatched under hens. This work was done mostly by the wife, a boy sometimes fed them after they got older, and the farmer often shut their doors after they were in for the night. These were all sold with the exception of some pullets that were kept to replace some of the hens in the fall. Also the wife sold the cow, keeping the

calf to raise; the husband sold one of his cows and a sow when fattened, and both farmer and wife sold a litter of pigs each. The farmer and hired man did the digging and when you dig 450 feet between home and spring and then over 200 feet more to barn, in clay, with pick and shovel, it takes some courage. But that and some of the butter money settled the water question in one family that fall. The 1½ horse-power gasoline engine pumps the water and before spring we had a washing machine (run by engine) sent in on trial. It was never taken out. Now we are planning for a car."

Removing the stigma from agriculture. As in every occupation, so in farming, there are bound to be some disagreeable aspects which nothing can entirely eliminate. As in surgery, dentistry, nursing, there are diseases to be dealt with at first hand. As artists, sculptors, printers, must deal with dauby paints, clays and inks; as electricians and engineers must deal with oil and grime; so on every farm there are stables to be cleaned, there are chickens to be picked, there are weeds to be pulled, there are kitchen floors to be scrubbed. The surgeon, the artist, the engineer, are not stigmatized in public thought. Why? Because the glorified part of their calling obliterates the materials with which they work. In contrast, farmers, the world over, have been stigmatized. The soil, the clods - the farmer's medium have been too much stressed; the wheat, the cattle, the fruit, his finished products, have been too little remembered and too little identified with his calling.

It is the problem of the farmer and the farmer's wife to take the stigma from agriculture, so to elevate it by motive that farming shall cease to take its general reputation from the meaner aspects and begin to assume the character of a lofty calling. Already farmers are objecting to the caricatures in the press which represent them as sorry and disheveled, hayseedy and dirty.

A western woman speaks for the majority of her sisters on the farm in this description of her work:

"There is beauty around us in every process of nature. Even the smell of warm wet soil is pleasant. A little dirt and engine grease does not make farming objectionable. Men can wear wash suits which can be cleaned by the machine so they can be comfortable and neat. My hoe has accounted for thousands of weeds. The young crops have thrills for me. There is a primitive love for the soil and growing things in every healthy-minded person. Any real work will have occasional hardships and vexations, but so long as you love the work it need not be drudgery."

THE SOCIAL SIDE.

President Roosevelt said, in appointing the Country Life Commission in 1908:

> "If there is one lesson taught by history, it is that the permanent greatness of any state must ultimately depend more upon the character of its country population than upon anything else. No growth of cities, no growth of wealth, can make up for loss in either the number or the character of the farming population."

In his introduction to the Country Life Commission report in 1910, we find this telling statement:

> "If country life is to become all that it should be, if the career of a farmer is to rank with any other career in the country as a dignified and desirable way of earning a living, the farmer must take advantage of all that agricultural knowledge has to offer and also of all that has raised the standard of living and of intelligence in other callings."

In certain pre-frontier enterprises in the country, the motive for the undertaking has been purely economic and the development wholly in the hands of men removed from family influence. Our forests have been cleared by migratory lumber-jacks; our fur trade has been conducted by lone trappers; our mining camps have been made up of detached prospectors and adventurers; our railroads and waterways have been opened up by groups of engineers, working alone, living in bunk houses. The kind of life produced under these conditions, because one-sided, has always been lacking in permanent satisfactions. It is only as families have entered in that such camp communities have ever really become settled, and formed into an integral part of national life.

Just so, in ordinary communities as we find them to-day, where the economic motives and practices have come to hold the center of attention in the public mind, where the financial, commercial and trade sides of life have far superseded the social side in public thought, rural life has become unsatisfactory, one-sided, incomplete, unstable, almost a soil-mining venture for the purpose of obtaining money with which to return some day to more congenial atmosphere and mode of life.

> "The chief figure of the American West", says Emerson Hough, "the figure of the age, is not the long-haired, fringed-legging man riding a raw-boned pony, but the gaunt sad-faced woman sitting on the front seat of the wagon, following her lord where he might lead, her face hidden in the same ragged sunbonnet which had crossed the Appalachians and the Missouri long before. That was America, my brethren! There was the seed of America's wealth. There was the great romance of all America, - the woman in the sunbonnet; and not, after all, the hero with the rifle across his saddle horn. Who has written her story? Who has painted her picture?"

The rural woman through all our agricultural development has held like a creed the determination that while gaining financial advantages, her family should not be needlessly deprived of social privileges. She has endeavored by dint of labor and thought, by substitution and combination, to bring to her family the best that life has to offer. The American farm woman has always been a courageous social pioneer as well as a resourceful agricultural frontierswoman.

Country life in America has been built up gradually in the course of the last three centuries in which may be considered a series of wave movements; including rude pioneering, primitive civilization, and modern organization. Each section of the country whether settled early or late, has experienced or seems likely to pass through, each of these stages before reaching a settled type of national life.

The Stage of Modern Organization.

In a general way we have now reached the third movement of American country life. The out-grown, scattered small-scale agencies such as the cross-roads-store-postoffice, the four-corners blacksmith shop, the river-road-mill, and the country dressmaking-millinery store, are being assembled into single large concentrated trade centers, and there transformed to meet the needs of that larger group of farm people brought together by adequate transportation and a high type of common needs. Distance has no longer the completely isolating force which it formerly possessed.

A Minnesota farm woman says:

> "Country roads are being rapidly improved - in proportion to the population, much more rapidly than city streets. Almost every farmer has his car; often his son has one too, and it is but a matter of minutes to drive into town for a new plow point or a new dress pattern. There's travel from the first thaw to the first snow, by motor, and by sleigh during the brief winter."

Time means much to the modern scientific farmer and to the up-to-date social-minded farm woman. It is only under vigorous protest that farm people now make numerous trips entailing miles of travel over poorly-kept and widely diverging roads to a half-dozen or more incomplete duplicating centers in order to find the lawyer, the miller, the veterinarian, the dentist or the banker. They greatly prefer to make one longer trip on a finely surfaced road to a consolidated trade center which displays all grades and varieties of facilities and services.

Farm people who have reached the stage of complete organization, demand that their bank and grocery stores be in close proximity to one another; that their shipping point be coincident with their milling destination; that they be able to purchase dry goods at the same town from which they haul their seed, feed, and fertilizer. They want to be able to buy a plow point or a victrola record a block or so from where the milk has been deposited at the creamery and they want to have their service facilities grouped together with their trade facilities in a compact, easily accessible cluster.

"I wonder", says a North Dakota farm woman, who is well acquainted with all the new forms of rural organization, "whether a farm woman who can drive a car over a smooth road, who is but three quarters of a mile from good neighbors, and only five miles from a thoroughly equipped trading town, is any more isolated, or completely hidden away, or forgotten by the world, than many a city woman?"

It is but a short step from educational consolidation to social affiliation. Farm people whose boys and girls go to consolidated schools begin attending with their children, functions of a social nature; lectures, concerts, plays.

"Now with cars coming into favor," says a Nebraska farm woman, "distance is of little consequence to us and we rural folks attend lecture courses, Chautauquas, and similar affairs as well as city people."

"The other day," says a Pennsylvania farm woman, "we attended an afternoon concert given by Sousa's band. Of course the place was filled, but a good percentage of country women present were certainly well dressed. The majority of them came in their own cars and showed as keen an appreciation of good music as did their city sisters."

"We have stereoptican films in our church", says an Ohio woman. "Our children are being transported to a consolidated school and we have our community meetings, picnics, reunions, fairs, supplying all the good honorable attractions wanted."

Town libraries have come to be widely patronized by farm families in communities where organization has sufficiently progressed to make a complete mutual understanding possible between urban and rural subscribers.

"There are very few farm homes around here, lacking in a supply of newspapers and periodicals", says a Nevada woman, "and most of our rural communities have access to the library in the neighboring town or city."

The splendid music furnished by great talent and genius in the town or city is no longer out of the reach of the farm family.

"As to enjoying the music of the cities", says a Nebraska farm woman, "what is there to hinder any one of the country sisters from getting into a car and speeding over the fine roads to the center of activity?"

The modern farm home through electrification is brought near to town in communication and general atmosphere.

"On the ranches in our country", says a Nevada farm woman, "we have many of the modern conveniences. For instance, we use

electric power for lighting and running our household machinery such as the churn, the separator, the washing machine, and the small farm tools. We have hot and cold water in the house and farm buildings, and are equipped with carpet sweepers, vacuum cleaners, fireless cookers, coal oil stoves, dustless brushes, o'cedar and oil mops, food choppers, patent fly traps, screened porches, ice cream freezers, ice boxes, pianos, phonographs of latest patent, as well as the latest improved sewing machines, kitchen cabinets and ranges. But why say more? Most parts of this county have their women's clubs, and one would have to look far to find more congenial groups of women. We have our parties too; and if we want to go to the theater we have our cars and can run into town."

Native Social Advantages in Farm Life.

In the year 1791, Miss Hannah Adams, the historian, in writing to John Adams, made reference to the "humble obscurity" of their common origin. In reply, John Adams wrote that, could he "ever suppose that family pride were any way excusable, (he) should think a descent from a line of virtuous, independent New England farmers for a hundred and sixty years was a better foundation for it than a descendant through royal or noble scoundrels ever since the flood."

The farmer and his wife, it is generally acknowledged, never have to fear that change in public sentiment in regard to the value and ethics of their services will force them hurriedly to seek some other means of earning a livelihood. They are safe in throwing their whole souls into their work with enviable social independence.

"As a farmer's wife, "says a Utah farm woman, "you have the satisfaction of knowing that you are a producer of the essentials of life, that your work feeds the world, for if we farmers should stop work for one single year, the wheels of industry would be silent, and not only humans, but ninety percent of the dumb creatures, by reason thereof, would perish from the earth. The wealth of the world is torn from the earth in rural districts by the plow and pick. The city is but the counting house for the wealth of the soil, on its surface or beneath it - the only wealth of intrinsic value for all who live and for the millions yet unborn."

Farmers' wives everywhere are noted for their conscientious ambition to do something that amounts to something.

"Certainly most farmers' wives do not shirk their tasks," says an Illinois woman, "there is a day of honest work but not a day of drudgery."

"I have lived on a farm more than forty years," says a New York woman proudly, "and my back is straight as a dart yet. Worked any? Yes, indeed, at a good stiff pace and why not? The world's work must be done and I am no shirk."

"The days are filled with healthful honest labor", admits the Vermont farm woman, "and I am content and happy. I am in my fiftieth year and have no grey hairs."

Neighborliness. In the country, the homes are not usually close together. Meeting one's neighbors is a pleasure. Greetings are natural and recognition not at all perfunctory. "Folks are folks". The city woman has been trained and drilled in casualness; the country woman has never known such a number of people that she has lost interest in meeting a new person.

"The wife of the man who reads our electric meter", says a Massachusetts farm woman, "belongs to the town church we attend. She has been up here with her husband again and again when he reads the meter, and she just sits in the car and reads her paper. Often I'll be out hanging up clothes or some such thing and you would think she'd at least say 'good morning', but no, not a look does she send in my direction, but picks up a paper and reads it, as though she was in her library at home instead of sitting in my door-yard."

"Almost everybody comes to our weekly community suppers," says a Massachusetts farm woman. "But I wish there were more newcomers. Sometimes you get so you know everyone so well, it would seem nice to meet some new personalities."

This does not mean that the older acquaintances in the country are the less valued.

"There is nothing in the city" says a Wisconsin farm woman, "to compare with the spirit of comraderie that exists in the rural districts among folks who share a party line telephone whose branches extend to several neighborhoods where dwell a lot of people you've known well enough for years to call them by their first names."

"Caste is unknown in the country", says an Ohio farm woman. "I can count nine farm houses from my kitchen window and when I am working in my garden or with my chickens I can see my neighbors doing the same thing."

"My next door neighbor and I," says a South Carolina farm woman, "make our work easier and pleasanter many times by sharing, and doing it together. If she has setting hens and I have eggs, she loans me hens and I give her eggs. If we want to can, we do it together at my house or hers, and our families have dinner together, and we get so much done, with such a nice social time thrown in, that it's a fine scheme all around."

"It's only in very, very rare cases", says an Iowa farm woman, "that you find farm neighbors aren't acquainted and haven't visited back and forth and exchanged help at threshing or shredding time."

"Nobody needs to pity the farmer's wife", says a West Virginia farm woman. "She has the best of everything the world can give her - a home of her own, the finest kind of surroundings, with splendid scenery and good air and neighbors who stay year after year and mean something in her life."

In rural America, family hospitality is the rule.

"One reason I like to live in the country", says a New York farm woman, "is that here our families spend their recreation time together. We attend the Grange, and there the young folks have their dances with the older folks present. Our boy and girl hardly ever go off in the car alone, but mother and father go along too. Our whole family enjoy pleasures in common, whether it be a trip or a play or a Grange meeting or a high school entertainment."

Because of the sheltering isolation which the land throws around the farm home, the development of strong individual family characteristics is possible. Since each family stands out alone as a distinct entity, family pride is easily built up and fostered in the country. In case of marriage between farm families, land inheritance is given careful consideration. Thus, country custom and family tradition work out an actual social selection of the finer types among the moderately well-to-do farmers. Even the traditions of the country community are usually of the kind which link the neighborhood together by associations connected with family history, land ownership and the land itself.

"We have such a good view from our house" says a Massachusetts woman. "Off in the distance we can see Wigwam Mountain. The last Indian squaw in those parts lived on that hill and had her tepee there. That's how it comes to be called Wigwam Mountain. That's where I got my blush pink rose too. One of the first ministers brought his bride here on horseback and she brought her rose bush with her and planted it over there where she settled. It has always been called 'Parson's Rose' ever since, and about every family round about has a bush from it."

Possibilities Open to Country Life.

The pioneer women of America took the culture of their New England or Southern homes and triumphantly transplanted it at the edge of the frontier. The pioneer woman's daughter in the succeeding age wrought out from her environment, crude but forceful social instruments which were made to do double, treble and quadruple duty in preparing her sons and daughters to face the more intricate problems of a newer age and a bigger nation.

That newer age is now upon us. Farm life is now on trial to demonstrate whether it can pass into and on through this era of organization as triumphantly as it has passed through earlier eras. The thinking farm women of America believe that nothing can or will prevent the modern organization of farm life. One type of farm woman says:

"All this that is said about rural life's having come to the end of its possibilities for Americans with high standards, is a mistake, a pathetic, a ludicrous mistake. Social life in rural America is just coming into its own. It is stepping over the threshold into a new destiny. The farmer has been and still is the American par-excellence. If he finds a way to culture, it will be an American way, a democratic open-handed, open-hearted free way which all can follow. This is possible, provided the farmers of this generation stay farmers. If we, the farm women, make the mistake of not waiting for the new day, then we can not say what the future American rural life, left in the hands of unpractised and uninitiated newcomers may be."

Another type speaks:

"Some say that American rural life is cracking and bound to break up. This is absurd. Why should it? Why should we people who love our occupation and do well in it, whose children thrive in it, be driven out of that occupation just because we have reached the point where we demand certain wider social advantages? Other people such as contractors, tradesmen, carpenters, painters and engineers, do not have to leave their business to educate their children and obtain cultural privileges for themselves. Why should we? Then again, if we leave farming, we are not advancing in a business way, for removal from agriculture does not usually mean business promotion to us. It is rather an acknowledgement of defeat, for we consider farming on no lower round of advancement than merchandizing or any other business. As a matter of common sense and justice, it should be so arranged in public policy that we have those institutions which will permit us to remain in the occupation we love, without suffering the penalty of an unhappy and unfulfilled life."

Experiments in Rural Organization.

Throughout the country, many concrete, practical and definite experiments for attaining social facilities of a high character for the rural home and community are found. When the farm home and community have been put in close relation with the outside world through well-planned social mechanics, the farmer's wife is both willing and glad to sound the praises of the social advantages of the open country. An Indiana farm woman says:

"We are not behind the times, by any means. Last week ended a fine Chautauqua where we heard some of the best lecturers, concert companies, and readers in the United States. We also have one of the best organized Sunday schools and churches in the country, thoroughly progressive in all methods, from the Men's Brotherhood to the Cradle Roll. We have an up-to-date, wide-awake college-bred minister. We have a fine consolidated school building, modern throughout; the children are taken to school in hacks, well heated, in the winter time. A great many of the people in our community are college-bred men and women

and even those who are not, nearly all plan to send their children to college."

"When we buy a farm" says the wife of a Maine tenant farmer, "we want three things, good land, a good market, and a good community. And those three things are not so easy to find when you come to look for them. We've been hunting for a farm this whole year, making trips to find it in Maine, Vermont and Massachusetts but in one way or another they've failed to measure up. We want a community where folks are neighborly, where the church life is congenial, where people are friendly and pleasant, where there is plenty of sociability and then too, we want a community where our younger children will get the advantages of the High School our older children didn't have."

"Communities are much the same as people", says a North Carolina doctor's wife who has recently moved to the farm. "There are sick rural communities with diseases of inertia and ignorance that need preventive and curative methods used upon them."

"We believe in mapping out the social life of our community", says another young Southern farm woman. "We plan at least four big events for our community each year. This year, for instance, we have decided on a community fair, a community play, a big social, and a community Christmas tree."

"My husband and I", says a North Carolina farmer's wife, "think if you want to live in a fine neighborhood you shouldn't leave it to luck but should go to work and build it the way you want it. Pick out your neighbors and when you get them, act neighborly and stick by them. We have in our community a club which is organized much on the order of the commercial clubs of the town. It's to boost our little community center, seven miles from the railroad. We print on our community letterheads: 'Our community offers many advantages to those seeking desirable locations for homes. Splendid opportunities are open for a number of business enterprises. We invite the fullest investigation. Full information will be gladly furnished to interested parties.'

"We have already got an empty store opened up and occupied by an enterprising merchant and we have brought a man who has a splendid little chair-and-basket manufacturing business to the village. Several new homes are being built up around the Academy and just now we are trying to persuade one of the boys who used to live here to open up his garage business in this community instead of elsewhere. Several times when we have heard of young farmers, we have made it a policy to go to these young farmers, one at a time, perhaps half a dozen of us, and tell him of some farm we knew was vacant in the neighborhood, suggesting to him we'd like him for a neighbor. We've got several live-wire farmers in our midst just that way. We are apt to let communities drift too much."

"In our southern mountain community", says a Tennessee woman, "a rural hospital has proved a source of great blessing, appreciated especially by the mothers of farm families. This hospital serves a territory of fifteen square miles, remote from the railroad. It is well equipped with modern apparatus and has a staff of two doctors, four nurses and one orderly. There have been treated at this hospital in the three years of its existence, patients with blood-poisoning, broken bones, appendicitis, typhoid, bullet wounds, paralysis, burns, cuts, injured eyes, grip, influenza, ear trouble. The hospital force also conducts weekly lectures, and physical examinations of children at the consolidated school; frequent clinics for diseased tonsils, adenoids and teeth, and for tuberculosis; dispensary work for outside patients; instruction and observation of mothers and children by visiting nurses, and baths for electrotherapy."

There is every reason to believe that the courageous spirit with which American farm women are now attacking their problem of social organization will soon be widely reflected in the press. Presently we shall have appearing in our magazines and newspapers strong truthful pictures of farm life. Already, occasional glimpses into farm life given in current periodicals show us that we have in the making a new rural literature.

Women of rural America today have before them as great and as worthy a task as ever faced their predecessors of pioneer days. They can win a lasting place by stating and restating what they know to be the satisfactions of country living; what they feel to be the value of productive work and unimpeachable service; and what things of the spirit they are determined to bequeath to their children.

THE HOME SIDE.

At the National Agricultural Conference called by the President of the United States in January, 1922, the farm women said clearly: "We stand for the conservation of the American farm home, where husband and wife are partners, and where children have the opportunity to develop in wholesome fashion."

At the national meeting of the American Farm Bureau Federation in November, 1921, the women representatives set forth this statement as their creed: "As goes the rural home in the United States, so goes the Nation, and not otherwise."

In fact, in the last few years, there has been a repeatedly-expressed desire among earnest, thinking rural women that the farm woman's real attitude towards farm life should no longer be misrepresented, lest in these days of publicity and critical unrest, this misconstruction of her attitude may have more influence than her actual daily unprejudiced courage and contentment. These excerpts from hundreds of letters and interviews may be taken as representative of the whole country.

The Physical Setting.

The farm home is most fortunate in its setting.

> "Two few people," says a New York farm woman, "in balancing the returns from the farm, start the credit sheet with that comfortable item, the country home. We do not often stop to realize that farmers are almost the only people who can afford the luxury of a country residence while still on a small income."

One woman from Michigan says:

> "Our work is harder than the city woman's and there is more of it, but we are free to do as we like in some things. I am raising my family without fear of a landlord ordering me out, because there are too many babies. The little vine-covered cottage is better than an apartment in the city where no children are wanted."

Farm women appreciate space, outdoors and in, to a greater degree than is commonly recognized.

> "What is there that you city people have," asks a Connecticut farm woman, "that you do not pay for?" You can not even enjoy a moonlight night because of the electric lights. In some of your homes you do not know what sunlight is, or fresh air, or green grass, or the beautiful wild flowers or the ever-changing woods. Did you ever see the trees hanging loaded with ice and all glittering in the sunlight? In a few weeks, those same trees put forth new leaves, and then later change to a dress of most beautiful autumn colors. Did you ever look out some morning, or just at night, and see a deer or a fox far off in a distant field? We country folks get up early in the morning; when the air is fresh; the meadow covered with dew; the fog hanging over the river and perhaps the sun just peeping over the mountain."

Children in town are all too often forced to seek a playground in the street. The city mother is kept in a constant state of anxiety as to the safety of her children. A city woman, who, with her four children, was visiting a farmer's wife said:

> "I live in an apartment building with four other families and each has several children. There's absolutely no place for them to play except on the side-walk and in the street, and all day long they battle for supremacy and I live in hourly dread of someone getting hurt. Here in the country I have complete rest from the constant anxiety and the children are reacting to the quiet surroundings and they play instead of indulging in constant quarrels and fights."

The farm woman is reasonably sure that no one will erect an objectionable building near her home which will shut off her much valued view of the landscape.

> "For months now," says a Virginia farm woman, "I will have more beautiful scenes at my back door than any but the Master can paint, for what is there that can compare with an autumn woods? Just yesterday I saw the evening sun send its rays through the cool woods that were splashed with the scarlet of the black gum, next will come the gaunt bare trees and the lovely snow-strewn fields and after that, whispers of the seedlings waiting for the spring rains and suns and the bluebird's call. Then everything thrills to nature's touch and even the poor tired farm woman forgets all worries and thrills too."

The farm. The farm home is something more than a country residence. We speak of the homestead and farmstead interchangeably because the farm includes the home and the home encompasses the farm.

> "You don't think of your home on a farm," says a Middle West farm woman, "as just a space inside four walls. The feeling of home spreads out all around, into the garden, the orchards, the henhouses, the barn, the springhouse, because you are all the time helping to produce live things in those places and they, or their products, are all the time coming back into your kitchen from garden, orchard, barn, or henhouse, as a part of the things you handle and prepare for meals or market every day. It is one of these peculiarities of making a home on a farm."

The broad fields, the upland pasture, the woodlot, the orchards, the avenues of trees, the miles of fences and walls are never disassociated from the home idea in our thoughts of farm life. Every farm person will understand the land-and-home-sick feeling which prompted John Adams, during his long absence from Quincy, to write this to his wife Abigail, who was active farm manager during his absence:

> "..... I want to take a walk with you in the garden, to go over the common, the plain, the meadow. I want to take Charles in one hand and Tom in the other, and walk with you, Abby on your right hand and John upon my left, to view the corn fields, the orchards."

Abigail Adams later wrote to her two sons, John and Thomas, in regard to this very close connection which this family felt existed between their indoor and outdoor home. To her son John, after his long absence in England, she wrote:

> "Four years have already passed away since you left your native land and this rural cottage. If you live to return, I can form to myself an idea of the pleasure you will take in treading over the ground and visiting every place your early

years were accustomed wantonly to gambol in; even the rocky common and lowly whortleberry bush will not be without their beauties."

The Farm House.

The northern hillside cottage with its gleaming window panes, the southern plantation mansion with its wide and comfortable hearth, the western ranch house with its spacious verandas, all proclaim that the land with its crops, livestock, and barns, exists for the prime purpose of supporting a fine type of American home.

A place to rest. The good farm house provides a relief and change from work to members of the family. American farm homes have always been detached from farm animal quarters and a barn is now seldom built directly opposite the house; farm machinery is not usually stored in the front yard, nor are the various farm animals pastured in the vicinity of the house. By planting vines, hedges and trees skillfully most of the work suggestions are shut off from the view.

> "We want our farm to be a restful place," says a young South Atlantic woman, "so we are fixing it up as we go along, and as we can afford it. We have picked up enough stone to make the pillars for our porch and the fireplace and chimney. We are planting shrubbery and vines and later we expect to cut out some of the timber across the road so we can see daylight and won't feel quite so much in the wilderness."

> "It seems to me I couldn't stand it if I could not look out from my work on trees, and green grass, flowers, and hills and valleys," says a North Carolina woman. "When we first moved to this farm an old barn shut off our view just where the shade was best. We had the old buildings torn down and I've planted my rose garden where it used to be, near trees that have been standing there a hundred years."

Indoor aspects. The indoor setting of the farm home sometimes constitutes one of the most satisfactory features of farm life. The ordinary farm house is a capacious affair providing ample opportunity for privacy to the various members of even a large family. Rent is never discussed in the farm home and the boys and girls know that they are welcome as long as they will stay. As a Wisconsin woman says:

> "In the country there is a lot of room indoors and out for things to grow in. Our families, like the crops, grow up naturally."

The new farm house of this day does not differ materially from the city home in its opportunities for conveniences as has been shown by the Census. Because a house is located on a farm it does not mean that it must be merely a crude headquarters for work, completely pervaded by an air of grim business.

An Idaho woman who started with her husband on a forty acre claim with a one-room shack five years ago writes:

> "We now have a hundred and sixty acres of land, with an attractive four-room house painted white. My kitchen is done in white with light oak-stained woodwork and is furnished with a white cabinet and table and chairs to match the woodwork. I have blue and white linoleum on the floor and white cheesecloth curtains at the windows. A plain range, a cream separator and a canary bird complete the kitchen equipment. The walls of the other three rooms are finished with plain oatmeal papers with flowered cretonne over-drapes and white curtains. All summer I put roses and sweet peas in bowls everywhere. We have large comfortable chairs, restful couch, a good library table and bookcase, a piano, a violin, a ukelele and a new two-hundred and eighty-five dollar phonograph with lots of good records, not of the popular type. As for magazines, I take the farm paper from most every state and read them all. We also subscribe for seven of the best monthly magazines."

When the farm woman has fully determined for herself that her permanent home is to be upon the farm, she sets about getting all the indoor conveniences as rapidly as practicable. The furnace, the bathroom, electricity, hardwood floors, and other pleasant features, may, through wise planning be introduced into the house once it is finally decided that the family does not mean to retire from active farming as soon as it reaches a competency. But while working for them the family is by no means discontented with what it has.

> "I know," says a New York woman living on a hill farm, "that bathrooms and electric lights are great helps in country living but think they are not all, and that deep satisfying things may come to us in country life without these artificial aids. I dream of making our home ideal in physical attractions, some day, but in the meantime we have tried to make our living as true and beautiful as possible, and we do truly believe in the future of country life in America."

Economy. No critic will deny to the farm home the quality of economy. The members of farm families have before them so many direct incentives for thrift, so many enterprises, calling for investment of savings, that they get in the habit of making every dollar count. Because the farm brings in greater returns as time advances, the young country woman feels justified in working her hardest and living modestly in her early days on the farm, knowing with this investment, the fruits of labor will increase with the years. She is willing to practice frugality, economy, thrift, for she knows, in the ordinary course of events, on the farm, the older she gets, the easier it will be - she has a feeling of stability, a permanency, a lack of strain, that more than makes up for the loss of early frivolities.

> "We started our life's journey in a sod-shanty on a Government claim," says an older Kansas woman. "Oh! those

happy days, while we toiled and worked with the expectation of having something laid up to support us in our old days. Work was a pleasure, not a drudgery. We now own eight hundred acres besides Government bonds. Although we have retired we still live on the farm because we love the farm life. We have a nice and convenient home."

Books. Most farm families like to read. A Massachusetts farm mother tells us here a story which many another country woman will recognize as typical of her own experience in the world of children and books.

"As I write my sixteen-year old boy sits across the table from us reading the Youth's Companion. He put down 'Sailing Alone Around the World' (Capt. Joshua Slocum) to take up the paper. Last night he finished a book which he bought himself at a second-hand book shop 'In Kentucky with Daniel Boone'. You will see he is living in the midst of adventures, as a boy of his age should, and getting it from the real experience of others rather than from the falseness of the movies. Outside of reading his mind is taken up with basketball and other athletics, skating, sliding and other out-door activities and the girl question doesn't bother him. He simply hasn't time for anything more. He reads the newspaper some but scarcely any out-and-out fiction. He was slower to start general reading than any of the other children, but now that he has the line that he likes he can hardly be pulled away from a book any more than the rest of them. His first year's school work was done at home as the little school near us was closed then and I couldn't bear to send him three miles every day with a cold lunch.

"Magazines have always interested our small children, mainly the illustrations including the advertisements. The oldest girl often amused the two younger brothers long before she could read herself by taking one on each side of her on the couch with a magazine on her lap. The boy on her left had all the things that were pictured on the left-hand pages, the other, all on the right-hand pages. Like a real little mother she kept none for herself.

"The Knight's of King Arthur' was also a great favorite with them and had much the same effect. I asked one of the boys why he liked the book so much and he said 'Because it has a fight on every page.'

"Nearly all of these books that were read to them were more or less edited by their father, the long prosy descriptions or other objectionable parts being cut out.

"The children have all had a steady diet of fairy stories before they were ten, read to them and later read by themselves. We probably have over 200 books of fairy tales of all nations

and those have served to cultivate the children's imaginations remarkably well. 'Alice in Wonderland' they have all enjoyed but especially the girls.

"The children have all had times of pouring over the dictionary which is the biggest and best we can afford but not too good to be taken to the window-seat where they got down on their knees and studied it. A big atlas has been used much the same way especially to follow the journeyings of friends and relatives. Our books have mainly been bought at second-hand stores and the married daughter is now picking up a similar collection beginning with the things she has already read and liked.

"I haven't said much of the kinds of books I have most enjoyed as a farm home mother. We really are not creatures of a different species. We like fashion books and articles on proper table etiquette, too. I have read the necessary amount of care-of-children books, food-for-the-family, and so on, but mainly we have read as a family and when my boy pokes 'Daniel Boone' at me and says, 'You've just got to read this,' why I just read it as I do his catalogues on motor-boats, yes, and the older boy's love letters, too, though not all of them, I suspect.

"Because we live on a farm doesn't mean that we must necessarily confine our reading to chickens and fertilizer. I remember after my daughter was married and went to live on a farm in the wilds of The Berkshires, a native from the town called on her and mused along: 'A Maxfield Parrish picture and Kipling's poems. Well, you won't be staying here long." Nevertheless, they are still on a farm and read the New Republic and the Atlantic Monthly regularly."

Music. Music makes an excellent companion to literature in the American farm home. Busy farm women find that music provides the finest kind of relaxation.

"With all my work", says a New Hampshire farm woman, "I find time for music which is my hobby. I am even dreaming of going to the New England conservatory of music for voice culture. I, for one, am not growing old and gray before my time."

"The first few years I was married", says a New York woman, "I gave up my music, and how I did miss it! Then I took up playing the organ for church and Sunday School. Of course I had to practise, and it took time, but I found to my surprise and relief, that I could finish my day's work just as early as I had before. The music was really better than a rest to me. It was a recreation and an inspiration. My husband saw the difference and said, 'Now never give up your music again. If you do, you'll get the habit of dropping out.' I say, even though you have seven children to raise without much help, as I've had, you cannot afford to let music die out of your home."

Far from cutting one off from life, the farm opens up many an avenue leading out to world interests. Gene Stratton-Porter, a farmer's wife, became interested in the wild flowers, the moths, butterflies, and birds in the swamps surrounding her Indiana farm home.

> "I kept a cabin of fourteen rooms," said Mrs. Stratton-Porter, "and I kept it immaculate. I made most of my daughter's clothes. I kept a conservatory in which there bloomed from three-hundred to six-hundred bulbs every winter, tended a house of canaries and linnets, and cooked and washed dishes three times a day. In my spare time (mark the word, there was spare time, else the books never would have been written and the pictures made) I mastered photography, to such a degree that the manufacturers of one of our finest brands of print paper once sent the manager of their factory to me to learn how I handled it.
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> "Upon this plan of life and work I have written ten books, and please God, I live so long, I shall write ten more. Possibly every one of them will be located in Northern Indiana. Each one will be filled with all the field and woods legitimately to its location, and peopled with the best men and women I know and have known, and unless my barrel fails me they will be seasoned with plenty of molasses."

Marietta Holley living in New York State, became interested in the way her farm neighbors thought and talked. She began writing for the local papers. One day she wrote about an ordinary country woman, Betsy Bobbit. After that, she wrote under the name of "Samantha Allen", for hundreds of thousands of readers and her books about her country neighbors have been translated into nearly every language in the world. She still lives on the farm where she was born.

> "I don't know that you could exactly call me a farm woman", says Miss Holley, "I guess it would be more appropriate to call me a 'hen-yard woman', my place is so small. But i do enjoy living in the country. I used to like to go to New York for a few weeks at a time, but not to stay. Life is too hurrying and rushing. I like to stay at home where I can look out and see my Jerseys feeding peacefully on the knoll of the hill."

Home traditions. The farm homes of America keep alive the sacred traditions of our land. New England and Southern soil has become dear to Americans, not because of money values alone, but because of associations. Every farm in America is a little native land in and of itself, with its traditions and its history. Every field has its story; this splendid old orchard, for instance, was drained with laborious toil by the grandfather and planted with high hopes by the father and is now tended with pride by the grandson who reaps the harvest of fruit and victory. In the older states, home traditions have sometimes accumulated until, the farm as it has been handed down from one generation to the next, has become a venerated spot, not only to the family representative now living upon it but to all those migrants and descendants of migrants who have gone out from that farm. In newer sections of our nation the land becomes endeared to us be-

ause here have striven and conquered the pioneering parents.

Daniel Webster used to say of his boyhood home where his father and grandfather had lived and worked:

> "I make to it an annual visit. I carry my children to it. I love to dwell on the tender recollections, the kindred ties, the early affections, and the touching narrations and incidents which mingle with all I know of this primitive family abode."

Daniel and Ezekiel Webster owed their greatness not so much to the humbleness of their origin, as to the sterling qualities which their farm home bred up in them. There came a day when both boys wished to leave the farm to go to college. Neither wanted to go without the other, and one of them was needed at home, for the father was old and in debt. Here came the supreme test of the Webster farm home. Did it exist for financial purposes or was it an expression of spirit, only justified in existing so long as it maintained this spirit? This was the question Daniel Webster's mother asked herself.

Should she hold back her sons, keeping the semblance of home, or should she fearlessly trust the spirit of the home, giving up the material house, dear and sacred as it was, to perpetuate the inner meaning of the home, and to give the best that it expressed to the nation? Her trust in the home spirit as embodied in the hearts of her sons, Daniel and Ezekiel, was complete, and she said:

> "I have lived long in the world, and have been happy in my children. If Daniel and Ezekiel will promise to take care of me in my old age, I will consent to the sale of all our property at once, and they may enjoy the benefit of all that remains after our debts are paid."

The farm home is a home to the whole nation, not merely to those that live within its walls. The nation, in a way, borrows and depends upon the traditions of its farms. This, it seems, is our rock-bed of patriotism, the stabilizer which shall continue to make us a strong and permanent nation. Without it we should be like floating plants without roots.