



RAISING A CROP OF GARDENERS

I AM seldom at a loss for something to say. I will cheerfully discuss music, art, religion or the difficulty of obtaining good kitchen help. I don't mind listening to what you have to say about conscription and will willingly exchange valuable suggestions as to the best means of combatting the submarine. But it takes two people to carry on a conversation, and no one is willing to talk to me on any but the one subject I wish to avoid. I ask an editor if he expects to attend an important political meeting, and he says no, he must get his potatoes planted. I ask a prominent merchant if he experiences much difficulty in getting supplies, and he says he most certainly does! It is extraordinary, he says, what few varieties of Darwin tulips you can get in this country! He tells me he has fifty in his own garden, but he had to send to the States for most of them, and there are really 300 varieties. I infer that the government is to blame. A good deal of the conversation that follows appears to be in Latin, and I maintain a discreet silence, unwilling to confess that I am like the gentleman of whom Wordsworth wrote:

"A tulip by the river's brim,
A simple tulip was to him
And it was nothing more."

Or was it primrose?

Once started on his favourite subject, he would gladly talk for the rest of the morning, but I plead a business engagement and escape.

This morning I met a pretty Varsity student on her way to the station.

"Off for the holidays?" I asked.

"If holidays mean a change of labour I suppose I am. I'm going to work on a farm."

"Picking strawberries, as you did last year, I suppose?"

"No. That was hard work and pretty good pay, but it only lasted six weeks. This summer I'm to be a real farm-hand for three whole months. We are to get \$6 a week, live in hostels and pay \$4 for our board, so we won't grow wealthy, but we're going to learn to plough and milk and do all sorts of exciting things. Two hundred girls from the University of Toronto have registered for this work, and lots of others."

I jumped on the street-car and sat down beside an artist I know. Now here was someone, I thought, who would be able to converse with me on some more congenial subject.

"Where are you going to sketch this summer?" I asked.

"In Quebec," she replied; "we've some land down there and we're going to grow beans for the government. Incidentally I may do a little painting."

It seems that everything else is incidental just now. Even on a boarding, once sacred to the comic opera posters, is written: "Famine or Farming—Plant Beans."

The next person I met was the President of a Musical Club, and I congratulated her on the fact

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that the activities of her Society were over for the summer.

"Over!" she cries. "Why, they're hardly begun! Didn't you know that we've undertaken to cultivate an acre in the suburbs this summer?"

I didn't, but I had recently passed by a vacant lot where in other years boys had played baseball. Now it was ploughed and divided into sections with neat rows of stones. In each of the sections a number of nicely dressed women, some with hoes and spades, were looking anxiously at the soil which had a very grey and pallid appearance.

I PREFER the colour of the earth in my garden, which is of a rich chocolate hue, yet nothing will grow there, as it ought to grow, but like Mary, Mary, quite contrary, I have a fine display of cockle shells. They look very pretty dividing the rich, brown earth into patches separating the place where the pansies ought to be from the part where a few belated daisies are struggling into bloom. I arrange them in circles and they detract from that bare, brown look that shady back-yard gardens are apt to have.

Perhaps our furnace-man is to blame. We call him a gardener in summer, but he is really much better at shovelling coal. He is rather fond of weeding—at least he calls it weeding—but he is very apt to uproot the perennials and water the weeds. Potatoes and Patriotism are supposed to go hand in hand. Passive patriots refrain from eating potatoes, active patriots grow them. But no one can point the finger at me, for last year I was actively patriotic to the extent of four hills. The plants blossomed beautifully and in the fall we dug up some of them, but as they were like tiny little marbles, we left them in the ground. This spring our furnace-man, preparing the ground, unearthed a dozen or so handsome young potatoes. . . . They were delicious, and a neighbour who was dining with us exclaimed:

"Imported new potatoes, but how dreadfully extravagant!"

"They are from my own garden," I replied.

He was greatly impressed and told so many people about them that I have gained quite a reputation for my early vegetables. That is why I keep a discreet silence when gardening is discussed. I hate to dispel the illusion!

SOME school girls are cultivating a vacant property not far from our home, and every afternoon we see them working away in their middy blouses and gymnasium bloomers. There are neither silver bells nor cockle-shells in their garden, but there are "pretty maids all in a row" without a doubt, and they are storing up health and strength for winter use. But they will probably store other things as well. The amount of produce per acre raised by some companies of Boy Scouts and Girl Guides has put the attempts of their elders to shame, and the knowledge gained by our young people in this practical experience of work on the land will be of inestimable

value to the nation. The work done by the public school children has also proved profitable, and it serves to develop a latent talent for gardening in some of the boys and girls. We believe that certain people have a genius for making things grow, a talent born of love for this work—for 90 per cent. of genius is said to be the capacity for taking pains.

There is one school girl who made \$30 the first year from cultivating a back yard. The next year was still more profitable, and she spent most of her savings in building a greenhouse, and now she averages \$100 a year by her own work outside of school hours.

Floriculture and market gardening should appeal very strongly to women, and many girls are taking special courses at the agricultural colleges with a view to following this career. There is every reason in the world why they should be successful as itinerant gardeners in our large cities, though whether they will follow the dual role and act as furnace attendants in the winter is more doubtful. But even without special instruction there is no reason why any one should garden ignorantly this year. The Department of Agriculture has distributed circulars widely, free lectures are given in towns and cities by garden experts, special tables are devoted to gardening literature in all libraries and book stores, while Garden Committees and Women's Institutes, as well as all your neighbours and friends, are thrusting helpful gardening hints upon you.

"Eat what you can and can what you can't," one neighbour said to me. "Don't let your beets get old and hard and store them away for the winter. Can them while they are young and fresh." The advice was superfluous. We have never been able to raise in our shady garden enough of anything for our own table—except mint and parsley.

"Then you must help with a lot in the suburbs. You probably belong to some club that has taken part in the ten-acre farm that the Backyards Committee of the Thrift Campaign have secured," and she proceeded to tell me all about it. Each club pays \$5 for the rent of the land, free seed is provided and the Club can dispose of its produce in any way it chooses. Result: I am one of the twenty women responsible for half an acre and have promised to devote one evening a week to it. Just think of a ten-acre farm, with four hundred women labourers! Now that the spring-time enthusiasm is strong, there is no lack of workers; some come straight from their offices, others from an afternoon tea, but many have adopted the most fetching costumes for gardening, elaborate smocks, bloomers and overalls.

This movement is flourishing all over the Dominion and so we expect to raise in Canada this year not only vast crops of vegetables and grain, but a still larger crop of agriculturalists.

The Director-General of Food Economy in England says: "Without the mobilization of every available unit of Canada's food army, we would have a very grim outlook. Every acre Canada harvests is a torpedo into a German sub."