



Dear Friends,—Spring is here again, a dull, murky kind of one, to be sure, yet spring, with all its interest and promise. I haven't been able to see even one tiny bit of a pussy-willow yet—that's what comes of living in the city—but I know that away out in the marshes the little gray catkins are coming out in full force, and that in the woodlands the ferns are already pushing up their coiled "fiddleheads," and the hepaticas showing forth the queer little woolly tufts that are destined, at no distant date, to resolve themselves into glossy leaf and dainty white blossom. All morning I've been wishing to get away out of the city, miles and miles, you know, to the bogs and wilds, where I know every bush and hollow almost, but wishing doesn't do much good, so the next best thing is just to sit here and think about it all, and—write about it. . . . Girls—and let me just say here, this letter is especially for you—appreciate your country homes. Don't think that the city is everything, and the old farm nothing but a "pokey" old place. I love my work here in the "Advocate" office, and for its sake I am glad to stay, but otherwise to me the city has little to offer in return for the dear old haunts where every tree was a friend, and every vine and wild flower. Believe me, girls, if you don't love the country there is something wrong. Of course, under certain circumstances, it may be best for you to go to the city, but if these circumstances do not exist, if it is your duty to stay home, and if you are moody and discontented, just try doing and finding out and seeing a little more this spring, and see if that will not make a difference.

"Doing!" I think I hear you say, "What does Dame Durden mean? As if I hadn't enough to do already!" Yes, I know all about what girls on farms have to do, yet I repeat it: there are extras which we can do, and find intense pleasure in the doing of them too. . . . For instance, there is your front yard; possibly it is just grass, with no vines, and only a few clumps of half-neglected flowers. Go at it; put some vines near the house, and extend the flower border. Then go at the back yard; make it a spot of beauty—a dollar's worth of seed and a little time will do it, and you will get a thousand dollar's worth of happiness out of it. Then turn to the house; plan how you can have it just as artistic as possible with the means at your command; think out "color effects" for the rooms, and work them out by degrees; and, above all, learn to take a genuine pride in keeping things clean and tidy. There is just one danger which may beset you in this, the tendency to "snap the head off" everyone who happens to upset anything, or spill things about on stove or table. This is a real danger, which must be fought against. At the same time, the men and children of the house should understand that it is their right and duty to make just as little needless "muss" as possible. The Great Mogul who stalks in on a clean kitchen floor with a pound of mud on each foot is not worthy of a wife or daughter at all, "let alone" a clean wife or daughter. . . . One thing more—learn to take pleasure in being a thoroughly good cook. Don't think you can cook and bake well enough. Try new things, and better methods. You will be exceedingly well versed in the art when there is nothing more for you to learn about it. There are chefs in Europe who receive \$10,000 a year for just managing cooking

—I suppose they have learned all there is to learn about the subject. However that may be, you will find it ever so interesting to try new relishes and salads, and new ways of cooking meats and vegetables, and you know, girls, every new thing that you become interested in means just so much more interest and pleasure in the home, just so many more things to keep you from wanting to rush off to the city to clerk in a store, or sew in a hot, stuffy room at \$4.00 a week.

Now, then, I must stop. Sometime soon I want to talk to you about seeing things, and again about reading as a means of keeping interest at home. For the present Miss Hisey will talk to you about the poets. I am delighted that she has chosen this subject. This is following up the line of what I suggested in our issue of March 24th, regarding having more variety in the Ingle Nook. Of course, we don't want to give up the housekeeping hints; we are helping a great many through that feature of our little realm. Only the other day, a boy (not the New Ontario boy) wrote: "Owing to sickness in the family, my brother and I have had to cook for ourselves this winter, and we found the recipes given on page 315 just what we wanted. We owe thanks to M. E. Graham for them; they are excellent." So you see we must have the housekeeping for the sake of motherless boys and young or inexperienced housekeepers. But we want other things besides. We want letters about anything whatever which will help us, whether physically or intellectually. The mind, after all, is the real "us," and we must not neglect it. I am glad Miss Hisey is leading the way in this divergence.

#### WITH THE POETS.

There are comparatively few people to whom poetry does not appeal. Even in the most material and unromantic of persons there is a vein of poetry which, if cultivated, would prove a great and lasting pleasure to his or her life. The poets, besides having the gift of expressing their thoughts in beautiful and rhythmical language, have exquisitely fine senses of hearing, seeing and feeling. They sing to us of the common things, our hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, the woods and the fields, and all the simple scenes we look upon each day, yet fail to see hear or understand.

True, we may never learn to care for Milton or Dante, but perhaps Longfellow may appeal to us, or Wordsworth, who writes of the very simplest things, and says:

"To me, the meanest flower that blows can give Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

One of his loveliest sonnets is indited to the meek snowdrop: "—venturous harbinger of spring, and pensive monitor of fleeting years."

Longfellow writes of rainy days, of the stars and clouds, of life, death, children and flowers, in lines which we soon learn to love and treasure in our minds. We follow the fair Acadian maid, Evangeline, through her patient wanderings, though she and the other touching characters in the poem may be mostly creatures of the imagination. We think of the:

"Thousands of aching brains where theirs no longer are busy, Thousands of toiling hands where theirs have ceased from their labors, Thousands of weary feet where theirs have completed their journey."

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