

# Our Women Folk

CONDUCTED BY  
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## The Altar

This is an altar where from year to year,  
From dawn's bright blossoming to  
twilight grey,  
Rises an incense sweetest unto God—  
An incense wrought of love, of toil and  
play.

No fairer altar looks to cloudless sky  
In marble temple crowned with golden  
dome  
Than this whereon is carved with symbols  
bright  
The word immortal, loved and holy—  
Home!

Arthur Wallace Peace.

## THE SCHOOL AS A CENTRE FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE

This Excellent Address was given at the  
Manitoba Educational Convention by  
Mrs. Rose A. Hambly.

**D**URING the last fifteen months I  
have been teaching in a Ruthen-  
ian settlement 45 miles from  
Winnipeg. The people in this particular  
district were unfortunate in choosing  
their homesteads, the land being, as one  
man aptly describes it, "too sand, too  
stone, too swamp." Some of them have  
been unfortunate in another respect;  
they have been the prey of the specula-  
tor and the tool of the politician. In  
this latter misfortune, we, as older  
Canadians, share the blame and loss.

A young man—a successful rural  
teacher of ten years' standing—once  
said to me, "I am quitting teaching; I  
want to be able to poke my own fire."  
In a number of the new Canadian dis-  
tricts, cottages have been built in con-  
nection with the schools, and I am one  
of those teachers who poke their own  
fire, and hear the music of their own  
"ra-kettle."

Anyone can readily perceive that a  
separate home is necessary for the  
teacher, among a people whose mode of  
living differs so widely from our own.  
Only those who have been among them  
know how essential such a home is  
for the people themselves. I have in  
my district, women who were trans-  
planted straight from Austria to the  
place where they are now living, and  
had never had a chance to learn any-  
thing of our ways of housekeeping till  
the door of the teacherage was opened  
to them. In such districts, the influence  
of the teacher's home is not less valuable  
than the teacher's work in school.

The contractor finished the cottage  
the day that I went out, and the wagon  
that brought him to the station, carried  
me back to the school. My nearest  
neighbor—a crippled old woman—was  
standing at her gate, and waved to me  
as I passed. Her home is a moss-  
chinked cabin, twelve feet square, and  
the cost of the entire furnishings does  
not exceed ten dollars; yet I have never  
known any one richer in a sense of  
neighborliness and hospitality. She was  
the possessor of a cow, a potato patch,  
and a well, and before night came she  
had managed to share all these things  
with me in so happy a manner, that I  
felt as if I had been welcomed into a  
kingdom.

Not all were so well disposed. Before  
I had been there a week, one of the rate-  
payers who knew a little English, came  
to me and told me that the people did  
not desire a teacher who could not  
speak their language.

"Woman teacher no good here; all  
these people had like beasts. Only man

who can fight stay here. These children  
wild like wolves, learn nothing unless  
you beat every day with big stick. How  
you going get letters? How you going  
get things from store? You no stop  
here; these people eat you up." Under  
the spell of this gloomy prophet, I felt  
my spirits rising. Here was a situation  
in which even Mark Tapley might find  
"credit in being jolly." I thanked my  
pessimistic friend, and privately re-  
solved that if any one tried to "eat me  
up," I would furnish as difficult a meal  
as possible.

As soon as I was settled, I started out  
to look up those people who were not  
sending their children to school. In the  
first home I visited, I found appalling  
conditions. Under the family bed—a  
wretched affair of rags and hay—a flock  
of hens was cooped, and a pig lately  
killed and not yet cut up, lay on its  
back on the floor, and invited dust and  
dirt with open arms. The winter's  
supply of potatoes was heaped in a  
corner. Two little girls of eight and  
nine, clad each in a single tattered gar-

ment, a passion for learning, and nice  
moral perceptions; while the patient  
courage of the women is a thing to  
wonder at.

For the benefit of the older boys and  
girls a night school was started, with  
classes two evenings a week. Not being  
accustomed to restraint or discipline,  
some of them were a little boisterous  
and inclined to disregard the property  
rights of others. On one occasion when  
hand sleighs belonging to the day pupils  
had been destroyed, I announced that  
there would be no evening classes till  
the sleighs were replaced. This was  
cheerfully done within 48 hours, and I  
have never since had ground for com-  
plaint.

About this time a sewing machine  
was sent out as part of the school equip-  
ment. This was a great attraction for  
the girls. With a little assistance in the  
use of patterns, they were soon able to  
make their own dresses. During the  
winter, the night school girls often came  
at 5 o'clock, and sewed for two hours  
before school. In the spring, some of

in simple home nursing and diet for the  
sick.

Some strange things came to my  
knowledge. In an adjoining district, the  
wife of a man who was fairly con-  
valescent under the doctor's treatment,  
thought to hasten his recovery from  
pneumonia by packing a tremendous  
plaster of mud on his chest. He died in  
a few hours. The women are especially  
helpless in dealing with infectious  
diseases. One poor mother told me she  
had lost five children in three days, of  
scarlet fever. Infant mortality is very  
high, and this is largely due to im-  
proper feeding. Bottle-fed babies a  
month or two old, can hardly be expected  
to thrive on milk and coffee varied with  
milk and tea.

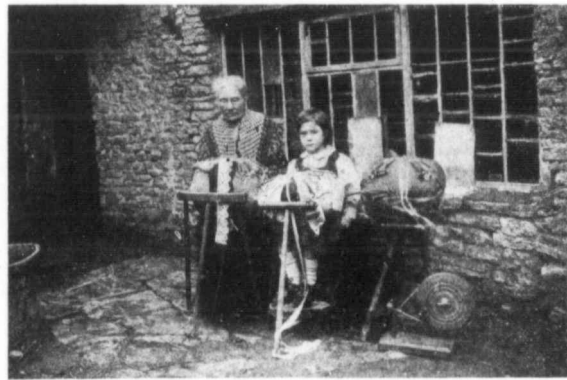
It was a great relief when we were  
able to settle again to the regular work  
of the school. Evening classes were re-  
sumed with a somewhat wider scope.  
From the first, the night students had  
been encouraged to bring their friends,  
and a number of people had got into the  
way of dropping in to spend an hour.  
There were letters to be read and  
written, garments cut out, and so many  
various little things to attend to, that  
in order to take care of them all, it  
seemed necessary to add another evening  
to the week's work.

I talked the matter over with my  
young people—and they were enthu-  
siastic about the idea of a community  
gathering once a week. It is nearly  
always easy to draw a crowd for an all  
night dance. That was not at all what  
I was aiming at. I wanted to get all the  
people of the district together in a  
friendly, social way. I explained that I  
was especially anxious to have the  
mothers—that if anybody had to stay  
home it was not mother.

We decided on two rules—ten o'clock  
closing, and no smoking in the school.  
As the days lengthened, some happy  
spirit usually managed to set the clock  
back half-an-hour, and everybody ap-  
peared so blandly oblivious, I thought it  
best to follow their example. While I  
was positive in prohibiting smoking in  
the school, I had no desire to offend or  
banish the smokers. The cottage was  
placed at the disposal of those who felt  
that cigarettes were indispensable to  
their happiness. A few of the older men  
occasionally availed themselves of the  
privilege.

To the two rules I added a request. I  
believe the people of my district are  
loyal; I think they concur in the senti-  
ment of the woman who said to me, "I  
eat the English bread, I keep the En-  
glish law." Outside of my own district  
the people are unknown to me. I ex-  
plained to the night school, that any  
one could depend on a welcome from me,  
except the man who had evaded his  
military responsibilities. I had no  
desire to make inquiries, or be told the  
names of evaders, but it was my wish  
that the young man who had been sitting  
under a bush, would remain under his  
bush so far as our socials were concerned.  
I have never referred to the matter since,  
but I have reason to believe that wish  
has been respected.

In order to avoid the paralyzing stiff-  
ness that sometimes settles on a com-  
pany of people in new surroundings, we  
planned a programme of lively games  
for the first part of the evening. Some-  
times we had a little concert, and here  
the school gramophone was of great as-  
sistance. None of the girls could dance,  
but several of the women knew some of  
the folk dances of their own country,



ONE OF OUR MOST BEAUTIFUL ART-CRAFTS

The old and the new generation making lace, Olney, Bucks, England. Mr. Henry H. Armstrong, High St. South, Olney, would like very much to get in touch with people who originally lived in these parts and who have since taken up their abode in Canada.

ment, shrank against the wall and  
peered at me through their tangled hair.  
It was in one of the strongholds of  
poverty and ignorance, yet even here,  
hope and the love of beauty were not  
dead. In that fetid atmosphere, in the  
dim light that fell through the filthy  
window, a cherished geranium had put  
forth a sickly flower.

I learned that these two little girls  
spent the dark winter days alone in that  
hovel, while their fourteen-year-old  
brother, and widowed mother, cut cord-  
wood in the bush. Having no clothes,  
they were prisoners except for short  
dashes in their bare feet to the stable  
near by. With the help of friends,  
those two little girls were made ready  
for school, and I have never known two  
brighter, happier children. This was an  
extreme, but not an isolated case, as  
similar conditions existed in a degree in  
a number of the homes.

Going in and out of these places and  
seeing little children who had died for  
lack of intelligent care, laid in the grave  
without the tenderness of any religious  
service, it seemed to me at times that I  
was living among a people who were  
outside the humanities of life. Yet this  
was only seeming, for out of these poor  
homes come children of great natural

talent, a passion for learning, and nice  
moral perceptions; while the patient  
courage of the women is a thing to  
wonder at.

In common with many other districts,  
we had an anxious time during the  
influenza epidemic. We were, however,  
more fortunate than some in having a  
doctor, and many people in that part of  
the country undoubtedly owe their lives  
to Mr. Stratton's prompt action in send-  
ing help. The doctor made his head-  
quarters at the school, and remained  
with us several weeks.

Nursing, as it is ordinarily under-  
stood, was almost out of the question.  
The homes have few comforts for those  
who are well, and no facilities for the  
care of the sick. Most of the beds are  
shallow boxes of boards or poles, with  
some loose hay thrown in and covered  
up with a single thickness of cotton.

For some time before the epidemic  
reached us, the children had been drilled  
repeatedly in the instructions laid down  
by our medical authorities, for the pre-  
vention and treatment of the disease,  
and lessons were given to the older girls