

The Country Homemakers

CONDUCTED BY FRANCIS MARION BEYNON

SPRING CLEANING

Every woman is conscious of it, that restless, uneasy fever which comes with the spring of the year, and which presages an epidemic of spring cleaning. It fluctuates slightly with the weather, becoming urgent on bright sunny days and subsiding when the weather suffers a temporary relapse into winter temperatures, but from the season of the first real thaw until it has found an outlet in the overturning of the entire household contents it is never entirely extinguished.

With some women nothing short of a complete migration to a new home will alleviate its intensity, and from the last of March to the first of June moving vans scurry about the streets collecting and depositing the household goods of those in whom the migratory instinct is strongest, or those who are in a position to indulge in it.

The great majority of women, being obliged to vent their restlessness on a more or less permanent abiding place, get a vast amount of satisfaction out of the turmoil of house-cleaning. The actual work is unpleasant, but the complete taking apart and putting together again, generally in a slightly altered form, of the fittings of a room gives a sense of change and freshness which is an immense relief to the feelings.

In our grandmother's day the thing ended there, tho it is questionable whether the regeneration of a single house ever quite satisfied a woman's passion for cleaning up. Today, having established the theory that a woman's domain is not bounded by the four walls of a house, women are looking about for new worlds to conquer. They have found them in the weed-grown cemetery, in the stable yard with its piles of manure which provide a breeding home for flies, in the school yard, which is a very desert of desolation and neglect in many school districts. Here is work crying out to be done, and work in which women have been specializing for centuries.

Small wonder then that when the idea of cleaning up and beautifying the district once takes root among bright and progressive women, it grows and flourishes like a tropical plant. Here, at any rate, women are sure of themselves. They have been dealing with dirt, without compromise, since the days of pinafores. They know all the tricks of the trade and the short cuts to success. The small boy, alleged to be irrepressible, becomes meek and hidable, and does their will without question, and even the adult males submit to an astonishing amount of hosing and ordering about.

The old siege of spring cleaning, in which each individual woman concentrated her energies on her own home, was nothing to this onslaught of the accumulated energy of fifteen or twenty women upon the dirt of the whole district.

If those who live in districts where there is a flourishing woman's club have not been struck with this cyclone of energy yet, let them not become too sure of immunity. It will break out some day, if not this spring then next spring or the spring after, and be all the more strenuous because of the delay.

PREPAREDNESS

At the beginning of the war much was said by economists, and good-hearted people generally, to the effect that this was the last war; that it was a war to kill war. Many a mother sent her son in the happy belief that he was going to help to do the thing up once and for all, and have done with it. Now, even the pacifists among the economists are admitting that there was not the slightest ground for this optimism, that there is no substantial evidence that this is likely to be the last war. On the other hand there are rather disquieting signs that this is only a little preliminary scuffle which will be followed by wars of increasing frightfulness as the genius of man is bent more and more to the monstrous task of creating instruments of human slaughter.

The republic to the south of us is full of militarists who are shouting the old dirge. "In times of peace prepare for war. The way to have peace is to be ready to fight." They have been chanting it in England and Germany for the last fifty years, and they have both been getting ready as hard as ever they were able, England on the seas and Germany on land and sea, and the result is not peace but war.

FRANCIS MARION BEYNON

SOCIALISM AND WAR

The article of Old Farmer, in the issue of January 25, is remarkable for its sweeping assertions, is unique in furnishing evidence conspicuous by its absence. What evidence is offered to prove that Socialists have fallen down on woman suffrage? None! The burden of proof does not rest with the negative, but I will go beyond its province and refer him to an article on this page in the December 15, 1915, issue, which sets forth in part the provisions of the Social Democratic platform of all countries, and provides for woman suffrage. Therefore, when the Social Democrats of all countries cast their ballot, they cast over eleven million votes for woman suffrage. Does that mean that they have "fallen down"? Now, if I ask my friend "to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear," he no doubt will answer that it is a physical impossibility. Then how would it be to say, "You have fallen down notably and lamentably"? So when he asks a minority in the various belligerent countries to maintain peace, he is asking the same as I, a physical impossibility.

Before me is a verbatim speech recently made by the spokesman, Scheidemann, of the majority of the Socialists in the German Reichstag, wherein it shows that they refrained from voting for the war credits until war was declared on August 4, 1914; that on the same day they made a demand that the war should end as soon as safety was assured and their



Illustrating the great charm of beautiful wall space

enemies inclined to accept peace; also a demand that the war be ended by a peace that should make friendly relations with their neighbors possible. These demands are still being presented to the chancellor. Further on he says: "We and our party comrades in other countries were too weak to prevent it." He closes with the wish that his country shall have the honor of being the first to take a decisive step towards peace. Thus far, however, these demands have fallen on deaf ears. The profits out of the war to the profit mongers taste good, even if they are smeared with blood. Furthermore, Socialism is not the system of production and distribution in any of the belligerent countries. Now, if it is not, how can my friend sustain an indictment against something that does not exist.

Has Christianity Fallen Down?

Would he say about Christianity what he said about Socialism, viz.: "The life is gone out of it and it is proved to be no remedy for the world's evils," remembering that majorities exist in this case instead of minorities and also that the propaganda of peace and the brotherhood of man has been presented for almost two thousand years as against fifty years? If he will not, then his reasoning has "fallen down lamentably and notably."

That "yellow book" bears the earmarks of a capitalist production when it says, "The Socialists see no solution of the present over-production and over-population." If there is anything that the Socialists claim a solution for it is this very thing.

Suppose a producer gets two dollars per day and produces five dollars in value, he lacks the ability to buy back the equal of his production. Again, suppose this producer gets five dollars per day and produces five dollars in value, he has the purchasing power to buy back the social equivalent of his production; therefore there can be no over-production.

Under the present system it is incumbent upon the capitalist to consume the difference between two and five, for he alone has the purchasing power to do it. If he fails in this there will be an accumulation of produce. Many capitalists strive hard to do this by keeping a large retinue of servants and living in luxury themselves. And also by using a portion of this three dollars in erecting new appliances for the further exploitation of labor.

"When we get down to brass tacks this three dollars is what is known as 'surplus value,' and is the crux of the whole matter. It is the nucleus around which is built the fortune of the multi-millionaire, and as long as it stands, wealth will accumulate into the hands of a few, which necessarily means that it passes out of the hands of the many. Millions of reform laws avail nothing against this modern juggernaut. It is not satisfied with appropriating all the wealth labor creates over and above a mere existence, but sends its envoys into legislative halls to influence legislation in its own behalf and legalize its actions of special privilege and monopoly."

Workers Should Stand Together

"When statesmen are your shepherds, ye shall not want for shepherding."

To my mind that "yellow book" he refers to has for its mission the setting of the workers at each other's throats. If capitalists can get the workers to forget their class they know they and their system of robbery are safe. Therefore I will quote an extract from Wilhelm Liebknecht's works. It is a beacon light to keep us from running on the rocks and being swamped in the discussion of capitalist issues, thereby losing our political identity as Socialists.

"On the ground of the class struggle we are invincible. If we leave it we are lost, because we are no longer Socialists; the strength and power of Socialism rests in the fact that we are leading a class struggle; that the laboring class is exploited and oppressed by the capitalist class, and that within capitalist society effectual reforms which will put an end to class government and class exploitation are impossible."

Economic force is a power we must all obey if we are going to stay on this earth, and therefore the lash of hunger in the hand of the employer is just as exacting today as was the lash wielded by the hand of Simon Legree when it descended on the bare back of Uncle Tom. Besides, the chattel slave had a sense of security in his "job" that the present wage slave does not possess. If any advantages to the workers exist to day over the past it is due not to the charity of capital, but to the strenuous fight of organized labor.

"Old Farmer" says he sees nothing practical in Marxian or revolutionary Socialism. That is not strange. "Some people can't see the timber for the big trees." Marx, being a mathematician, is logical. He does not prove his statements by asserting them. Therefore I wish to refer all those interested in this subject to two little pamphlets, one by Carl Marx, entitled "Value, Price and Profit," and "Socialism, what it is and how to get it," by Oscar Ameringer. The cost price is ten cents each and may be had at any Socialist publishing house. So for "two bits" you can get an education in Socialism, but that would not necessarily mean that it was a "two bit" education.

To even mention the word Socialism to many people who read only the misrepresentations of what it stands for, is equivalent to shaking a red rag in front of an infuriated bull. Throw down the bars of prejudice and read both sides. It would be interesting and instructive, as well, to know the difference between Marxian or revolutionary Socialism and Democratic Socialism. So if "Old Farmer" at some future date will favor us with this information it will be much appreciated and also will be strictly to the point.

Socialism is the ownership of the trust by the government, and the ownership of the government by the people, by means of universal suffrage, the initiative, the referendum and the recall. Therefore, "workings of all countries unite. You have a world to gain and nothing to lose but your chains."

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"I met your father last evening, and spoke to him about our getting married."
"Did he strike you favorably?"
"Not exactly favorably, but quite accurately."