



A College Graduate and Her Pigs

As Told by Herself in Canadian Good Housekeeping.

Of course people wonder why I choose such a means of livelihood, especially when they learn that I am a college graduate and took the first prize on my Latin ode. Why should I cast the treasures of my mind before swine? they ask in a manner which implies that I am a disgrace to my alma mater. But one learns by experience that a college education is but an incident in the fight for a living, and some time those who scorn my pigs may be glad to raise them for dollars that pure brains will not bring.

Doubtless I could have made brains pay in time, but so suddenly was I deprived of my means of support that there was no time to wait for a good position, and I could not bear the thought of an ill-ventilated shop.

My vocation came to me as an inspiration, and in this way. While on a drive, I came across a farmer's wife feeding pigs. The pigs were so pink and clean and the woman so wholesome that it looked engaging. Furthermore, a friend remarked that, like Charles Lamb, she doted on roast pig. But would no longer indulge her taste because she could not procure fine, sweet pork, for pigs on the big ranches were fed on city offal. Then, in the still watches of the night, when I was striving to think life out to an issue, it came to me, and I could hardly wait till morning, so keen was I to be up and at it strange new work; for pigs were to save me from the poorhouse!

I at once started to read up on them, and a small sum of money left from the wreck of things was sufficient to buy my first pigs and serve as my support for four months. I owned an old farm in the country, and to this I betook myself, with a sow, a boar, and eight little pink pigs. I had the old pen patched up for the time being, and felt very important when my pigs were established there.

Naturally, I was a source of curiosity to the country people, and the man who delivered my porkers gazed at me with something akin to pity. I wore a fresh pink flowered calico, and he asked me if I expected to feed pigs

in that. He could not understand that it "was not something too elegant for work, since it was pretty and clean and fitted smartly, though I had made it myself and it had cost but eight cents a yard.

Such a summer as I had with my pigs! Not a single dull day. I watched and tended them carefully. I cooked their food in the old summer kitchen and carried it in small pails to the clean troughs. I cut clover and made the clean straw beds and kept the pens always clean. Pigs are made dirty by man; they want to be clean, but can't be generally, for all sorts of filth is thrown to them. But I could have eaten all the food mine ate, it was so sweet and clean.

My pigs paid from the first, because I thought things out. Perhaps that was where my college-bred brain power came into play. To begin with, soon after I was established, I had a new sty built, on a little rise of ground where the water could drain away on all sides, for pigs should not be kept in mud and slush. Concrete forms the base of the sty and extends back from it in a long dry run. Later, when the crops were in, I let my pigs run in the fields and gardens, and such delight as they showed scampering about in the sunshine. I never overfed them, which is another bit of pig wisdom, and never allowed any food to remain in the troughs after they had finished a meal. I fed my pigs regularly twice a day, night and morning, and their food consists principally of grain and middlings, and when I must hasten away from gay functions and my friends protest, I say, "but I have my pigs to feed," and those who do not know stare blankly, while those who are in the secret murmur about "brave little woman," and my friends exclaim, "for I am not being any sensible."

I have become greatly interested in my pigs and they care for me, though some people think them without feeling. I gather all sorts of succulent green things and throw them into the troughs, and in the autumn I go off into the woods for acorns for them,

and, having a mission for my walks, I find them enchanting; then coming home I scatter the acorns about the pen that they may hunt for them and thus amuse themselves. Each year I plant a small field with coarse turnips, and when these are half grown I turn my pigs loose in it, and such a revel as they have! I always give my pigs pure water once a day, and let a clean trough of it stand high where they can go to it at any time.

I suppose some people will laugh at me when I say that pigs have temperament. But they have. Unless they are happy they cannot be properly fattened. A contented pig will fatten as if by magic, but a pig seeing others of his kind at liberty will be very discontented, or if not regularly fed, or overfed, he frets and stays thin. Regularity and contentment, then, are the things to fit a pig for market.

Pig keeping, however, is not all beer and skittles; but so far I have kept my pigs pretty free from disease. I had one case of the much-dreaded cramps or rheumatism, and this I attended to at once and cured. Cramp in most cases comes from overfeeding and insufficient exercise, so I let him into the field to hunt his own food.

It, however, the disease gets a firm hold and the pig's legs become contracted, he should be killed immediately and buried, as the case is hopeless and he should not be allowed to suffer. There are other diseases which come to pigs from filthy sties, but mine are not affected, because they are kept clean. The general practice is to select the dirtiest place on the farm and there put the pig. I have driven through miles and miles of country, stopping at hundreds of farmhouses to examine the condition of the pigs, and none of the sties were ever as clean and neat as mine. Some of the places sickened me, and it is a wonder that people can eat pork at all, when it is so generally raised in filthy and diseased places. But when I attempted to give advice to the farmers, they only grinned and assured me that they had no use for new notions.

When I am buying pigs the farmers sometimes try to cheat me, a mere woman, but they can't do it. I know a healthy pig and I will take none other. A healthy pig has bright, wide open eyes, a closely twisted tail and a clean pink hide, and he will stretch and rub himself against things.

Perhaps some may fancy that I have been successful because I find a market among my fashionable friends who purchase from pity or charity. On the contrary I have been entirely independent and my friends have never had a bit of my pork except as a gift. But the way I make presents now and then, and one of my spare-ribs is regarded as more choice than a bit of sterling silverware. When I was ready to sell my pork, I sent printed pigs to wealthy people without using my name, merely the name of my farm, stating that I had clean, well-fed pork, which was as sweet as utterance; and I could not begin to supply the resulting demand. I felt wonderfully encouraged and set about more extensive buildings. I ordered more pigs, and now I have them of all ages and am ready to supply orders at any time of the year. I employ assistants, for I cannot attend to so many pigs myself. But remember, it's a woman's piggery, and my assistants are all strong country girls. My sties contain all kinds of pigs, black, white, blue and spotted, and I am cross-breeding and have become a fancier.

I am making far more money than the average dressmaker, and, better than all else, I have abounding health.