

The Country Gentlewoman

I was calling on a bride-to-be this week. Her friends are wondering just how contented she will be on a farm. But the groom-to-be is one of our progressive farmers and he is making his house over up-to-date. An office, pantry and two dining rooms have been added downstairs, and several bedrooms and a delightful bath upstairs. A gasoline engine forces water all over the house as well as to the barn, and the attractive paint and papering will make his wife just as content in a farmhouse as she ever was in New York. She has her pretty furniture and rugs, cut glass and linen. Her flowers and yard will be kept in good condition and she can grow in abundance the things which formerly had to be paid for in good hard cash. "Takes money to live that way," some one is saying. But think of the solid comfort there will be in just living!

Somehow all women love pretty things, whether they be gowns, houses or babies. They enjoy a bunch of roses

on the table just as much as the average man enjoys the well-planned and served meals that are sure to accompany this "extravagance." The pretty table linen and china will be apt to make the man more careful of his own personal appearance; it is likely that he will take at least a semiweekly shave and will feel an interest and pride in his home that no sort of outside influence could ever dull. He will delight in making his wife happy and content, and will always find a willing bright companion on the other side of the roses.

A bunch of roses does all this? Yes! Farmers, plant a few flowers, or fix a place chicken-proof and hog-proof and let your wife have some flowers. Oh, yes, I fully realize that chickens and hogs are money-makers; but think for a minute of some of the things that money cannot buy. Modernize your home just a little instead of fixing a new concrete stable for the cows. Let the old hog pens do this year. Sunshine and fresh air are the very best things for hogs. Use the surplus money to

do something for your wife which will make one hour's work answer for three.

Nearly all farmhouses in my section are either very new and modern or very old and dilapidated. Some few have been rebuilt during the past twenty-five years, but they are not modern by any means. There seems to be a feeling among farmers here that a good up-to-date house is not an asset but merely "some place else to sink money"; that a farm having a fine house and well-laid-out grounds will not bring much more money than one with the same condition of soil fertility and outbuildings and an old ramshackle sort of house.

Most of the old houses built from fifty to a hundred years ago are still standing, and the material in them is surprisingly good where the weather has not touched it—fortunately for those who have to live in them, for not much repair work is done for them if they are tenants. And very often if the owner lives on the place he is too stingy to spend any money on it. A tenant doesn't mind burning a fence

paling for kindling once in a while, or stuffing a piece of old rag into the window which has been carelessly broken by some one. If the shutters and doors are loose and ragged-looking they are apt to stay that way so far as he is concerned, for he says: "What's the use of fixing up? Like as not I'll move at the end of the year anyway." The landlord thinks: "I'll not bother to fix it up; he doesn't appreciate anything and I guess he'll move and then I don't care who I get in it. So let 'er go!" The house and barns, but particularly the house, are neglected, for houses don't make any money anyway—just a dead expense, you know.

How to Modernize a Farmer

We read of how to raise the ceilings to make pleasant rooms, but father "raises the roof" when it is mentioned. We see just how to put in bay windows and windowseats with the most attractive sort of curtains and pillows for a cozy corner; just how to arrange our own private gas plant in the garden if you will, so that we only have to give a turn to have a light; and we hear of the joys of hot and cold water and a bath: in fact, good advice on almost every subject except the main one to a farmer's wife—that is, how to take an average conservative farmer and make one progressive enough to see that by making the house more comfortable and up-to-date he is adding at least twenty-five years to the life of his wife; is able to live easier and happier and thereby prolong his own life; and is learning the beauty and joy of living on a farm, not as a hired man but as a man who knows how to make the best possible use of his time and labor. Many more boys and girls could be kept on the farm if the home were made attractive and some good pictures and magazines were brought once in a while. Make it easy for your wife to have things a little bit dainty, so that if she ever does get a chance to visit her city friends she won't be always comparing her life with theirs to the detriment of the farm.

Only when you find a man who has a little more education than the average farmer will you find one who makes any attempt at modernizing. The home centers round the wife and mother, and yet she is perfectly helpless unless her "rich uncle dies"; and then like as not her husband will have some special place to put just that much money. Unless he is willing to help with his time, strength and pocketbook, she can do nothing. It is positively painful for a man of a certain type to give his wife five dollars for a butterworker, when he can take a shingle and make a paddle "like mother used to use." But if he sees a new style plow he gets it, even if it does cost him twice as much as the old one did. Perhaps he can sell his old one at some sale; it looks as good as new and will do the work well enough. I could write a book on this subject—not from experience, but from observation.

Our Way of Making Over a House

When I came as a bride to our farm I found the house in a most dilapidated condition. My husband and his brother owned the place between them and the former had lived here as a bachelor for a year before we were married. Previous to that a tenant had rented it for about twenty-five years. The first thing needed was a roof. So my husband and his brother bought the shingles and put them on the entire house and porch roof. They also put a whole new end of weatherboarding on the east side. Now, some men would not have considered the possibility of doing such a thing. But farm work at that time was pretty well done, since we have a fruit farm, and as my husband is handy with tools and willing to help me too, he went to work. How often do we see men right here in our locality who will let things go to rack and ruin while they sit out in the blacksmith shop or store and wonder when they can get the carpenter or bricklayer to come down and do something which they themselves might have done in the time they were talking about them. Often, too, a man is perfectly willing to fix the stable or barn for the sake of the horses and cows and to make things easier in his own work, but will not take the

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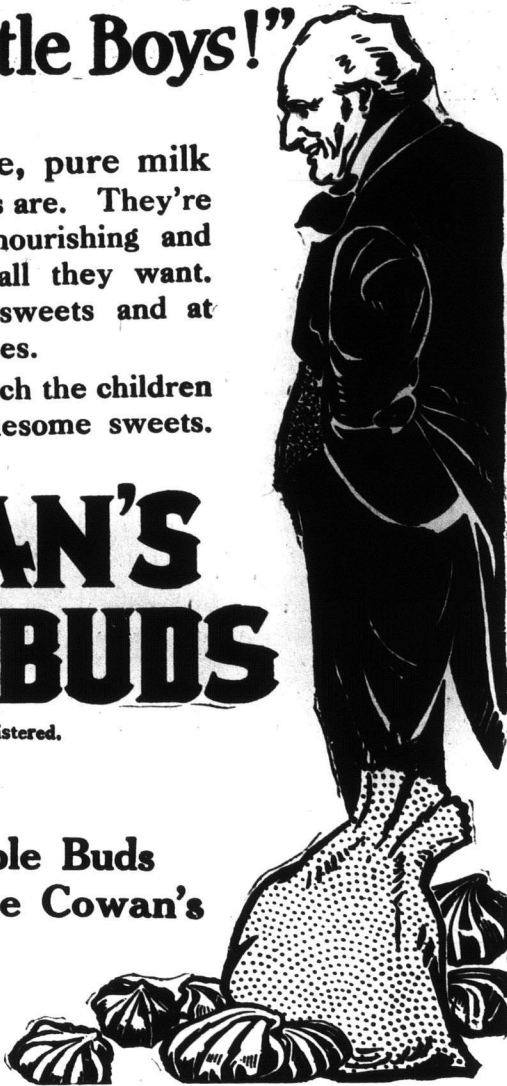
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