

Granted the breadwinner, and all falls into its place harmoniously. Then comes the opportunity and occasion for the display of all feminine virtues, inestimable qualities and virtues, to which I now make a deep reverence and obeisance.

A. B. C.

THE WIFE'S CONTRIBUTION OF TIME AND LABOUR.

It is always satisfactory when one has sent a paragraph out into the dark, as it were, to find that it has been at least read and considered. On this account it was rather a satisfaction than otherwise, to find, in the October number of the CANADIAN MONTHLY, a paragraph attacking one of my positions. It is a still greater satisfaction, of course, to find, in the November number, a paragraph so ably defending the assailed position, that it seems almost needless to say anything more about it, especially as F. B. R. has said almost exactly what I should have said had I observed the paragraph of A. B. C. in time to reply to it. I am very glad that this so happened; for the more opinions we have on this subject the better; and for this reason, and because The Table is intended expressly for the free interchange of thought and expression, I shall add a few remarks to what F. B. R. has said so well.

In pointing out that the wife is really the 'loaf-giver,' I supposed that any reader would recognise the allusion to the etymological meaning of the word *lady*, which is simply the old Saxon *hlæfdige* or *lof-giver*. When words thus embody the conception of a people, it will generally be found that the conception is not altogether an incorrect one. Most people will recognise the beauty of the ideal of the good wife and house mother as the *lof-giver*, while the husband and father is the *bread-winner*—bringing home, as it were, the raw material of domestic life, which her loving care and industry transform into what is needed, in all its details, for the comfort of her household. She actually accomplishes the miracle spoken of by A. B. C. in 'making two loaves stand where one stood before;' whether she, with her own hands, as do so many good wives, at once saves the baker's profit,

and provides more wholesome food for her household, or by more intelligent and judicious oversight and direction, guards the economy of the *ménage* in every direction from the waste and misappropriation so certain to ensue from the hands of careless hirelings. What F. B. R. says as to the productiveness of the wife's labour in increasing the product of her husband's efforts in merely providing him with more favourable conditions for his labour is assuredly true, but more than this can be claimed for the industrious and thrifty wife of the working man; whether he work with his hands or his head—whether she bakes her own bread or scrubs her own floors and 'gars auld claes look amaist as weel as new,' or applies the higher capabilities of a cultivated woman to make the home of the professional man with a limited income, bright and attractive as that which is supplied by *wealth alone* can never be. Every one who has had much to do with the poorer classes knows well how ruinous it is, in a merely pecuniary point of view, to a poor man to lose his wife, and how a poor widower with a large family finds himself compelled to marry again with what would be, but for the necessity, indecent haste. Whereas, how often does it happen that the poor widow, left with a large family, takes up the burden and bears it with her almost unaided exertions until the children can earn their own support. And how often may we compare two families in which the husbands are equally sober, industrious, steady, in fact have started under equally favourable conditions, *except only* in the character of their wives. Yet you will find, to-day, that the family in which the wife is active, managing, economical, is far ahead of the other in prosperity and comfort. To whom is the 'meed of thanks' due *there* for the difference? Mrs. Oliphant gives us an instance of a wife who had more than doubled the actual income of the family by the labour of her own hands in taking boarders, and yet the husband would talk magnanimously about *giving* his wife a pair of gloves! If the labour of the industrious wife is to be excluded from the class of 'productive labour,' so must that of the baker, the tailor, the artisan class generally. Indeed it often happens, in our modern complex civilization, that the wife's work comes far more truly under the head of 'productive labour' than