

Why Humdrum?

BY LAURA E. NIXON '17.

"This world is so full of a number of things,
I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings."

—Robert Louis Stevenson.

Why is it that the people on farms,—and particularly the women—are so often discontented?

A well-known writer stated in "The Outlook" some time ago, "Nothing is wrong on the farm in this year of grace that cannot be righted by education."

Here, then, would seem to be the solution to a great problem.—Educate the people!

But how? Just what do we mean when we say "educate" them?

Our neighbours to the South have gone rather extensively into this matter. From the statistics they have gathered and the measures they have taken we can get many hints.

A few years ago the President of the U.S. instituted a commission for the betterment of farm life, by first investigating rural conditions. This commission brought to light many interesting facts but very little that applied to the home. The Good Housekeeping Magazine, realizing the inadequacy of the President's Commission, conducted a National Farm Home Inquiry. The work was later taken up by the greatest organization of women in the world. "The General Federation of Women's Clubs," with the result that they were enabled to get into touch with not only the farm homes of the U. S. but also those throughout the continent.

The first outcome of this movement was a collection of thousands of letters. In these letters the writers not only

described conditions in great detail but poured out their hearts in the expression of their needs, their ambitions and their dearest hopes. From these letters—some of which were published in "Good-Housekeeping"—one can get a better idea of rural conditions and rural problems than can be obtained even from personal observation for many things that would not be revealed to the most careful observer were brought to light. Naturally, these letters were extremely varied. They fell into two main classes. First, those from the more prosperous farms. In these the writers were disposed to regard any investigation into the status of farm people as an affront. A larger number came from homes where peace and plenty do not reign and in which the lot of the women particularly is a hard one.

The main points of these letters might be summed up as follows:

First.—The large amount of work to be done, with little or no help and few conveniences.

Second.—The monotony of life on the farm.

Third.—The lack of opportunity for social life.

Fourth.—The scarcity of money—or, as one woman puts it, "The Unpaid Work of the Farmer's Wife."

Having considered some of the causes for discontent let us notice what steps have been taken to remove it.

In New York State a Reading Course for the farm home has been established in connection with Cornell University. The courses for the farmers' wives deal with the chemistry of foods, sanitary conditions, how to work, how to rest, how to beautify the home inside and