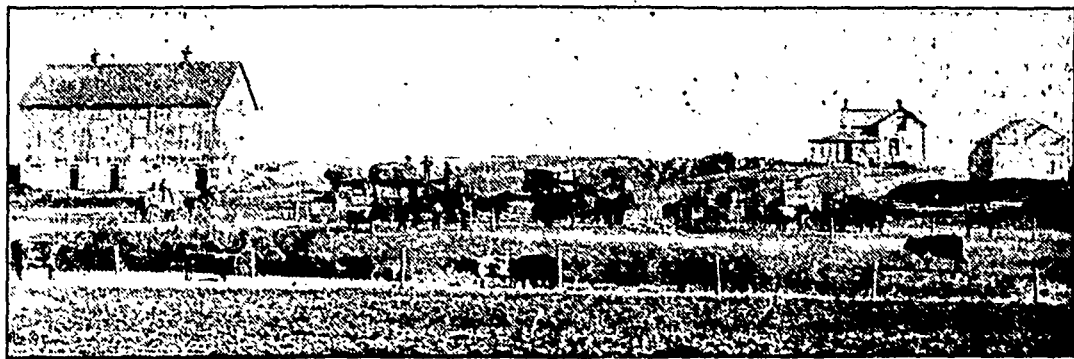


## FARMERS' WIVES.

Personal Visits Among them in Manitoba by an American Lady.

Mary Alice Harriman, of Minneapolis, contributes to the February Housekeeper of that city the following article on how farmers' wives like life in Manitoba:



James Davidson's Farm Buildings, referred to on page 7.

Photographers have given us some interesting results in pictures of a group of people as one individual. The composite resulting shows the leading characteristics of the group, while looking like none personally. The idea is to get a perfect type, with all weakness eliminated, and whether of university boys, Vassar girls, or a society of learned scientists, the result is the same. Why should we not do the same in writing of a certain class—farmers' wives for instance?

Instead of using a camera for a composite picture of one hundred wives of the farmers of Manitoba, let us try to blend their varied comments on the country, climate and work, into a composite word picture, and thus give a type of a nearly perfect woman, which shall serve as an answer to the readers of *The Housekeeper*.

The general idea of a farmer's wife is of an over-worked woman, with few of the comforts and none of the luxuries of life. More especially is this true of the accepted notion of the pioneer women who have so bravely gone with their husbands to the new regions opened for settlement within the last twenty years. One unconsciously pities them. They must of necessity, we think, be homesick, lonely, over-worked, have to follow the binders in harvest and water the cattle in winter. All this is so far from the actual facts of the case in the "Prairie Province" in this year of our Lord, 1897, that we wish to picture a few homes and home-keepers in Manitoba who are neither home sick, lonely, over-worked nor unhappy.

Let us sketch in a few of the hundred recently personally interviewed, then we will adjust our pen camera for a composite of the whole. A farm house near a rapidly flowing stream, wide stretches of market gardens, a glimpse of a large city in the distance, seen through trees shading the low roofed house.

"We used to live in Lower California when we first came west," said the rosy cheeked young matron who asked us into her tidy parlor. "But my sakes! I stood it a year, then we moved here. Manitoba's cold, crisp winters are too delightful to ever sigh for a warmer climate. We make more money right here with this market garden than we ever did anywhere else. The children are healthy, and as for me, put me down as a contented, happy woman."

So we did, and drove to another farm, some what more pretentious. Here a brisk lady greeted us. She said that they were early settlers, had no money when they came and were just married. Now they have eleven children and are worth forty thousand dollars—which was not a bad record for twenty-two years of farm life.

The only thing another busy woman had to complain of was the lack of time among the men folks to fix up the house. "For they make so much money from wheat raising that they hate to putter around the house."

"Can't you hire such work done?" was asked, but she said men for odd jobs like putting up shelves, building cisterns, etc., were scarce.

As we drove along the beautiful level road, we could see broad stretches of farm lands lying under the sunny sky, and neat farm houses in every direction.

So much has been written of the sod house and the rude, comfortless homes of the mortgage-ridden Northwestern farmers, that it was a pleasure to see the very opposite in well built houses, barns and sheds, that were better kept up than the average farm house in either the East or South. No tumble down outbuildings here with clapboards or shingles innocent of paint, and gray from endurance of rains and fogs; no seven-by-

help when the babies were small; always had a cheery word when the work seemed hard during harvest and help was scarce; and now we have our reward for years of toil."

It does depend on one's husband, indeed. No one knows that better than the thousands of women patiently striving to help "John" to make a living, clear the farm and have a competence for declining years. No woman can be happy either in palace or on the farm with a fault-finding or shiftless husband.

But to the credit of the men who are making of Manitoba a banner province of Canada, be it said that they are an honor to any state, province or country. Here dwell a thrifty people gathered from Eastern Canada and the States, from Scotland's braes and England's crowded centres, from far off Russia, whence come the persecuted Mennonites of whom there are few better emigrants; from barren Iceland, whose people are inured to every hardship and gladly come to this more favored clime; and the strong and hardy Scandinavian, all united in one purpose—to make their homes comfortable, rear their children, and lay up a competence for declining years.

"I came from England three years ago as a domestic servant, but within a year I had a home of my own, and you can judge for yourself if I have reason for liking this country." This from one who could not have been over twenty-three, and showed with pride her comfortable home and pretty, blue-eyed baby so like the father who came in to see the strangers and offer to "put up the horse, and you stay to supper." But what need to further relate the same story told in different forms? Everywhere the same smile of content and welcome; everywhere the well-kept home. Small wonder that the "composite" resulting from the women on the farms in Manitoba shows a strong, healthy woman, with good complexion and cheerful eyes; a woman bearing many and healthy children, who will rise up and call her blessed as they reach maturity and seek homes of their own; a woman intelligent, bright and contented, who thinks no work too hard when done for "John" and the babies; who believes woman should be the help-mate to man, and lives up to her belief. The Canadian type prevails, though Scottish, English and Norwegian characteristics were not wanting, but rather complemented the other.

This, then, is the picture resulting from personal visits among the farms on the wide reaching prairies, and the composite is certainly "A Contented Woman," who is proud of home and children, who enjoys farm life, and who believes that she has the best husband on earth, and lives in the only country worth living in.

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Where else could one find a more heartfelt response to the enquiry which had been propounded?

"It depends on one's husband if a woman is contented," answered another wife. "When two work together, then prosperity follows. John always talked matters over with me; tried to

## THE KLONDIKE.

Most people are not aware that the Klondike, Bonanza Creek and Eldorado are wholly in Canadian territory, and that the claims on the latter are worth from sixty to several hundred dollars.