

OUR FARM HOMES

THE things that annoy you and make you feel sad,
You scarcely would notice at all when you're glad;
So when you are crossing life's uneven ground,
Look pleasant and wait till the bright side comes' round.

The Tragedy of the Farmer's Wife

(From The Delinquent)

WE live the six millions of farmer's wives in the U. S. placed in a caldron, fused into one homogeneous mass, enough of it clumped out to make one woman—the typical farm woman—and were she depicted to the people as she is there would be the greatest tragedy of American civilization.

Yet so commonplace is this tragedy, so often recurring, so long portrayed, that the senses of the people are dulled to it. The masses do not realize its presence, and the very star performers in it are unaware of the parts they play. The cause of it all—the farmer himself—does not know the thing that is going on in his very household. So subtly and gradually has it borne down upon the victim that neither she nor any of the other members of her family have realized her crushing.

But this typical farm woman! Let us take a look at her as though she were a creature seen for the first time and, therefore, seen with the vividness of a first impression. As representative of a hardware dealer in the adjacent town we have called on our husband. It is spring and soon the rattle of the moving-machine is to be heard in the land. The fields are just beginning to show the tassel of the barley, and the oats coming to head, and the farmer needs a new machine and we are here to sell it to him. Hale and hearty and prosperous, he asks us to dinner and we accept the invitation.

We see the farmer's wife for the first time. It is but a feeble glance as she passes in open doorway, while we wait in the bare sitting-room. We catch the dark hair combed straight back and knotted, then the blue calico dress falling unbroken in one piece and tied about with a checked apron. Such a slim and gaunt figure, we think. We look at her more closely when we come to the table. This farmwife is thirty-five years of age, and, knowing the manner of rural marriages, the wife must be two years younger. Yet she looks a woman past the prime of life, and broken. Her business is appalling. Not an ounce of flesh shows on her stooped and wiry frame. There are no signs of the feminine tendencies to adorn the person, nor is there a vestige left of the softer qualities that go to make up the appeal of woman to man. There is the one characteristic, that of activity, for she is intensely busy. Yes, and one other—a look of hunger in the eyes and a hanging on the words of the stranger when he talks of the things of the outside, the things of which she has so little opportunity to know.

Yet we know that this woman is not an individual, but a type. We have

seen her in the railway trains where two seats were turned together and many children sucked striped sticks of candy. We have seen her with the same children about the counter in the country grocery. Swarms of her lend a somber element to the gay throngs that turn out in rural communities on circus day. Come to think of it, our mothers looked like this when we first remember them in the boyhood days when we were so happy and care-free back on our farm. How thin she has always been!

There is a lot to be found out about this woman, and it is vital to know of

Remember Your Friends

It is time now to decide your Christmas gift to your friends. It is becoming more popular every year, to send to our loved ones, remembrances that will constantly remind them of our love and care, and love—all through the year to come. What better gift, than one that will remind them every week of your interest in them? Let us suggest a novel and choice gift.

A year's subscription to Farm and Dairy should be a most valuable gift for your neighbor and one that will result in much good to him and his family. Send us the name and address of the friend to whom you desire to send Farm and Dairy for one year, together with \$1 and we will send them, so that it will reach them on Christmas morning an attractive Christmas card, showing that you are sending them Farm and Dairy for one year, as a Christmas gift. We will also at the same time renew your own subscription FREE for 6 months. For two such gifts we will renew your subscription FREE for a year.

Decide at once. Avoid the rush at Christmas. We are busier then, and so are you. Send us the name to-day and we will do the rest. Address Christmas Editor, Farm and Dairy, Peterboro, Ont.

her. It is she who bears the brunt of feeding the multitude for which the farmer receives so much praise. It is she who gives birth, before her vitality is sapped, to the men who make history. It is she who is martyred even in the times of peace and plenty. It is a useless martyrdom, for it is easily preventable, and for this reason it is especially important that her condition and the causes of it should be known.

In the first place you will be told that it is all both about the unfavorable conditions on the farm; that the farmers last year raised seven billions of dollars' worth of produce and that they have given themselves the uplift. Conditions are not at all like they used to be on the farm, you are told, for these men are now riding in automobiles and running water has been put in their houses.

There is a lot of truth in some of your statements, for the farmers have made a great deal of money, and in some communities there are hundreds of country houses arranged like the homes on the farm. We are glad you mentioned these ideal homes, for there are so many of them, and they prove the possibilities of farm life. They should be provided for all the farms, and they may be provided, but

they are not. The consensus of opinion of the greatest authorities in this country upon farm conditions is to the effect that probably ten per cent. of the farmers are grasping their opportunities for better living in so far as the home is concerned, and that the condition of but ten per cent. of the women is improved. Strange to say, with the vast majority there has come a worse condition with the development of the farm and the advent of prosperity. The Country Life Commission, appointed by the President, has traveled the country over and found this to be a fact. The practical men of the Department of Agriculture state the condition as a fact.

The tale of the way the wife got the worst of it is the simple tale of the development of the farm. A young farmer and his wife, for example, went west twenty years ago to carve out for themselves a future in a new land, or moved on to a new farm adjoining those on which they grew up. They were young and strong and courageous and laughed in the face of the difficulties they met. They staked out their farm in the forest primeval and felled the trees and built themselves a cabin. The man labored in the clearing all day and the wife sang merrily about the house. Her inside duties were, however, simple and easy and she had plenty of time to make a garden, care for the chickens and often lend a hand in the work of the field. Her task was lighter than her husband's in the fight against the pioneer.

The husband worked persistently and the clearing grew. As the years passed, the crops covered a greater and greater acreage, and the harvests brought more money. A large house was built and its care required more

labor. A hired man was necessary in caring for the farm, and his meals must be cooked. The old cow had developed into a herd of eight or ten, and there were milk and butter in abundance to care for. At the end of seven years three children had come into the family, and the mother must attend to their needs upon her time and strength. Things were growing complicated for her.

Yet for the husband there was but the necessity for man's work each day, for, with the advent of prosperity, he had added to his working force. His was the business of getting money out of the farm, and these broad lands were profitable. Hers was the business of keeping the household in order, and the additional burden had come so gradually that there was no realization of their increase. Anyway, there was no hired help to be had, for there were no schools, no hire of course, it was not the man's work, and the farmer, like the warrior of old, draws the line very closely in the matter.

The conditions under which the division of labor in this family developed are almost universal. They would vary slightly on a New York dairy farm or on the prairies of Kansas or in the wheat-fields of California. Yet

they are the conditions of the average prosperous farm household. The woman's lot is better where there is less prosperity, and is quite simple where there is poverty. But the increase in the production of the farm, in its size, in its complexity, all tend to make the burdens heavier on the woman. This matter of work—tiresome, tedious, monotonous, never-ending work, is the dominating burden of the woman on the farm.

Setting down the program of the woman's day at her duties may show the work more graphically than anything else.

From 4 to 6 a.m.—Breakfast for the men and getting them off to work.

From 6 to 8 a.m.—Washing dishes and milk-buckets and putting away the milk.

From 8 to 9 a.m.—Getting children off to school, churning, working the butter.

From 9 to 10 a.m.—Getting in vegetables, feeding poultry and odd jobs.

From 10 to 12 a.m.—Getting a boiled dinner for the family and hired men.

From 12 to 1 p.m.—Serving dinner and clearing up.

From 1 to 3 p.m.—Sweeping, cleaning house and making beds.

From 3 to 4 p.m.—Ironing, scrubbing and odd jobs.

From 4 to 5 p.m.—Gathering eggs, care of poultry.

From 5 to 6 p.m.—Getting supper for family and hired men.

From 6 to 7 p.m.—Serving supper and clearing up.

From 7 to 8 p.m.—Straining milk, washing utensils, preparing for breakfast.

From 8 to 10 p.m.—Mending clothes for children and mother.

This practically completes the woman's eighteen-hour day, when there are no extras. Interspersed with the other tasks are those of taking care of two or four small children. There is often extra work, as the washing must be got in some place, the clothes of the children made, fruit in season put up, and extra meals for the men in the harvest-time prepared, and countless other such possibilities. The baby may break the mother's rest in brief respite of sleep. There is often illness in the family, and the burden falls on her. The illness peculiar to women sap her strength, and the bearing of children undermines it. Yet the husband, with his man's strength and none of the things drains upon her, does not realize that she is doing more than her share.

Her tasks must be performed three hundred and sixty-five days in the year. The family and the hired men must be fed on Sunday and holidays. There is no variety in the work as there is with that of the men outside, with the change of seasons. It is the same endless monotony, the same tasks to be done in the same way. Even the boasted health opportunity of the country is denied her. There is only running water in the house and no sanitation. She refuses to decay on or near the premises, and the wife lives always among its odors. Another of the current mistakes about farm life is the belief that it is far healthier than that in the cities.

It is healthy only in proportion to the number of hours that are spent in the fields away from the house. The farm house is a breeding place of disease. Dr. Stiles, of the Public Health and Marine Hospital Service, has just made an exhaustive study of rural conditions in the South and reports that there are five million farm people in that section who are physically wrecked from disease caused by lack of sanitation.

As a general rule, there are no women who are self-employed for years in farmhouses. Who ever heard of a farmer who would pay a girl more than three dollars a week? His mind is made up to the effect that she is worth no more, and he will pay no