

The Country Homemakers

THE SEA COAST

Born inland and raised on the great open stretches of the prairie, I find, nevertheless, that there is something about the sea coast that appeals to me tremendously. I love to stand on the sandy beach and watch the tide work its way slowly in with first a big wave that rushes away up past all the other previous high water marks, then a succession of less effective efforts followed by another great rushing wave, driving all the wee bathers in swift retreat before it. In a way that flat unbounded area of blue, stretching off into illimitable space, reminds one of the prairie with its great open distances.

I love, too, to hear on a cloudy day the continuous distant booming of the fog horns. Why it is that this one noise seems pleasant while almost all the other sounds that belong to a big city are disagreeable it is difficult to say. Perhaps the difference is in the significance. One knows exactly the limitations of the elevated and surface cars that roar past continuously on the busy streets, but there is always room for speculation in the boom of a fog horn. It may be only an unimportant little boat rushing about the harbor on some trivial business, but it may be a boat coming from anywhere or going anywhere, and watched with the spiritual eyes of love and anxiety from both ends of its journey.

In New York, with the railroads stretching out like the ribs of a fan behind, and the great water courses of the world before one feels nearer the centre of things. It is little wonder that it is a city of many races, it is so easy of access and behind it lies so great a field of opportunity.

THE HUMAN LEECH.

It is gratifying to find that Canada is not the only country afflicted with that contemptible type of person whose patriotism and enthusiasm for the war is that of the profiteer who sees in it an unparalleled opportunity for the exploitation of the people in the matter of prices and for the exploitation of labor in the matter of hours, with the unique privilege of throwing the cloak of patriotism over both. It is rumored that a small army of these ambitious servants of the public welfare descended upon Washington recently. We have not heard how they fared, but if the party in power was sufficiently indebted to them for favors received in the past, they probably fared as they would fare in Canada under those circumstances.

One would think that in so-called democracies, where people are forbidden to write or speak against the war, under threat of heavy penalties a sense of common decency would make the government feel obliged to nationalize all war supplies, so that private individuals would not have an incentive to use their enormous financial power to prolong the conflict one hour longer than necessary.

THE DOUBLE STANDARD

A writer to the page this week says that before I leave she would like to get off her mind some opinions on the dual standard which have been fermenting there for years. It is altogether likely that there will still be plenty of room for the free expression of opinions after I have ceased to conduct this department, but I am very glad to give space to the discussion of a subject upon which I, also, have always felt very keenly.

The setting up of a single standard of morality for men and women is only one of the many ramifications of the woman movement, but an important one. It is incredible to me that there are large numbers of really decent straight men who think that it is less vicious for men to be immoral than for women. It is often claimed that men are more tempted in this respect than are women, but that is of course a man-made theory which can never be put to the test until there is some way of registering emotion, but it looks as if, for once, nature has been careless; if the theory is true. Think for a moment of the difference of the risk involved for men and women whether in marriage or out of it, taking it in the physical sense alone, the possible suffering, responsibility, and the risk to life even, that a woman has to face. If nature, in view of these simple physical facts has not made woman's temptation enormously greater than man's she has made a fatal blunder, and she is not apt to blunder in that particular way.

Therefore it seems to me that the dual standard has grown up because the physical and social cost to the woman is so much greater, and men have, very naturally, fostered it for their own convenience.

But when it comes to be a recognized practise to acquit men on the "unwritten law" theory when they summarily do away with men who invade their homes and send women to penitentiary for years for the same offence it is time for every woman to protest, and they are likely to be joined in their protest by all of the best men in the country.

THE HIGH COST OF LIVING

Once more the question of the high cost of living is to the fore in this city and a commission is sitting upon it daily and occupying its valuable time chiefly, apparently, in asking everybody within asking distance what is to be done about it. We thought some of our readers might be interested in the following extract from the New York Sun:

Mrs. Julian Heath, head of the Housewives League, dropped in on the food hearings at City Hall yesterday, but declined to be quizzed by the legislators who are conducting it or to lend her voice to the discussion.

"No!" she said. "I'm tired of seeing women made fools of. The men get them down here and get them to talk, and then they don't do anything. You'll see, nothing will be done to mend conditions—it's just talk, talk. I'm not going to give them away. Everybody knows what conditions are. They're just making fools of us."



PICKERS AT WORK IN STRAWBERRY PATCH AT NATZIG, B.C.

There were a lot of other women, however, perfectly willing, nay delighted, to be made "fools" of in that way. As long as Senator Elton H. Brown and his war committee would sit there and listen to them they were perfectly happy to talk. From the East Side they came mainly—Mrs. Ida Harris, Mrs. Nell Zilberaad, Mrs. Jacob Panken, all the women who stormed City Hall last winter to tell the Mayor that their children were hungry.

And they did not scruple to tell Senator Brown—angered, no doubt, by a sort of tacit implication on the part of the committee that "things are not so bad after all"—that the riots last winter were as nothing to what will happen next winter if the cost of food continues to rise.

"A mother is a lioness when her children are hungry," Mrs. Harris told the committee. "I am a quiet woman, but I will not see my children starve. Ye say, 'For God's sake, Mr. Borough President, give me place for markets where the food can be sold cheap.' But the Mayor he takes the place for a motion picture show, or for a dump for the city. My son had to dump on Riverside Drive! But so, on Riverside Drive de ladies had parties for their dogs, and ye, mothers who raise grand men, ye must pay so much for food that our children starve."

"I told the women last winter that they must not scold—the pushcarts," Mrs. Panken, who represented the Mothers' Anti-High Price League, said. "I advised them to go to City Hall, thinking in my innocence that the City Fathers would really do something."

The little woman, in her plain dress and simple hat, said the last words with a faintly sarcastic smile. She went on to quote figures which showed that she was conversant with the conditions that make prices jump so somewhere between the producer and consumer.

"And then we were asked to turn ourselves into cinders," she said, "and then do you know what happened? Rice, which was 34 cents a pound, jumped to 6 cents and in some cases to 12 cents."

What process must be taken to eliminate the rubbers? I cannot tell. That is a matter for you gentlemen; but you must do something. Already the high rate of New York is decreasing and the weight of our children is decreasing, and when that happens it is not good for the country."

IN EXPLANATION

By mistake an old letter belonging to an old argument found its way into the page recently, and brought forth a reply from Wolf Willow. As we had firmly closed our columns to any further discussion of the question of the foreign women voting and as we do not want our successor to enter upon too warm a discussion I am sure Wolf Willow will excuse us for not reopening the question.

I should like to thank her for the compliment. It is nice to have a person with whom one has rarely agreed say that one has been "a dandy umpire."—F.M.H.

WOMEN BERRY PICKERS

Two thousand troupered women are toiling in the berry fields of British Columbia harvesting the strawberry and raspberry crops, a patriotic labor that has the added incentive of paying the workers all the way from \$1.80 to \$3.50 a day.

Early in the season the small fruit growers throughout the province faced the serious problem that even though they might manage to bring their fruit crops to ripening there was not in sight sufficient labor to harvest the yield. After considerable discussion the government was petitioned to grant special permission for the importation of thousands of Chinese coolies to handle the berry crop. This was a hard proposition for the government. Alien labor meant an increase of people to feed. While the government are still considering the situation, prominent women leaders in the province got busy in the matter, and in a few days were able to offer a counter and better proposition that a woman army could be raised to gather the crop. Immediately the movement of supplying growers with female pickers received government sanction the work definitely assumed a most important position and a splendid organization was built up. From every sphere and profession of Pacific coast life is the army made up. Hundreds of collegiate girls, high school pupils and teachers from the recently closed schools and universities make up a part of the army.

The work is not difficult once the peculiar crouch like attitude necessary to garnering the berries has become accustomed to. On most of the ranches the day's toil begins at eight and continues till six thirty, with an hour off for lunch. Every picker is furnished with a tray which holds eight boxes (called halfbacks by the initiate). The berries are graded by the picker as she works. Into one or two go green and semi-ripe ones; others hold the firm ripe berries; into a pail which the picker has at her side go the over ripe ones. At the sorting sheds later on the green ones are all assembled and hurried to the nearest depot from whence a fast express carries them to the berry hungry people of the prairie provinces, the chief distribution points being Calgary, Edmonton, Regina, Saskatoon and Winnipeg. The ripe, firm berries go to the local B.C. markets of Vancouver, Victoria and other smaller cities, while those too ripe for shipping are turned in to the big canneries at Mission.

Each picker when beginning a row places at the end of it a stick on which is painted her number. In case of rain or when returning from meals this prevents confusion, and each picker goes quickly to where she left off work. She also carries a tag number and this aids the check up in the sorting sheds, where credit is given to the workers for the number of boxes picked. Thirty cents per crate is paid for strawberries and forty for raspberries, with an added ten cents per crate bonus to workers who stay through the season. As some pickers average eight and nine crates a day, many of the women will have a nice little sum saved up at the end of the season. To accommodate the pickers, neat little rows of houses have been built. These hold from four to a dozen people. They are lined with bunks much after the style on board ship, mattresses and oil stoves for cooking are also supplied. In some places tents have been used where time was not given the growers to build. From 600 to 1,000 crates per day are going out from the big ranches, and every bit of the work is being done by female hands.

Women workers are likely to be a permanent thing from now on in the B.C. berry fields.—Francis J. Dickie.

THE UNWRITTEN LAW

Dear Miss Reynolds:—I am sorry to know you are leaving us. There is one thing I wanted to get off my mind before you go. It is about the unwritten law. I think there is a great injustice done to a woman in Alberta who killed another woman for stealing the former woman's husband. You probably remember the case, for the woman,

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