

Suppose we take a shawl and spread it on the floor, we shall notice at once that it consists of two parts. The chief portion is the main body of the shawl, but it is surrounded by a fringe or border. Now, a farm is like a shawl. It has its main body of duties, which are the province of the farmer himself; but there is an agricultural fringe of duties which fall more clearly into the province of the farmer's wife. It is to this "agricultural fringe" that I propose to direct your attention this afternoon, the more especially as in this show you will find illustrated some of the most successful results of the attention to it which has been given by farmers' wives and daughters in Ireland.

In France special agricultural instruction is given in the elementary schools in some country districts to girls as well as boys. When this system was first suggested, the proposer said, "Could not women otherwise tax us with selfishness, and reproach us with occupying ourselves too exclusively and with an almost jealous care with all that directly regards the farmer, as if it were likely we should gain anything by neglecting or disguising the important, if not preponderating, part in the work which the wife of the farmer is called upon to undertake?" Again, "We state nothing which is not strictly accurate when we affirm that there is no well-directed or lucrative farm in which half at least of the merit is not directly due to the mistress of the house." I am entirely of this opinion, and so apparently are the Committee of the Royal Dublin Society, and so are those ladies who are managing with such great credit to themselves, and such great advantage to the country, the female division of the Munster Dairy School.

THE SCHOOL.

Some people, however, have a different opinion. Only a month ago I read the following editorial note in an English agricultural newspaper:—"Feminine activities are the most obstinately illogical of all natural phenomena."

The earliest agricultural school was established by King William I. of Prussia, at Konigshart, in Brandenburg, in 1722. In those days only corn-growing was practised in that district; but the king obtained the services of a Dutch dairyman and his wife, and established a dairy school to which the authorities could send really well-conducted daughters of farmers from districts where cattle were reared. These girls worked as ordinary dairymaids for two years, and before they left they were bound to make some butter without help from anyone. Frequently the king himself acted as judge of the butter thus made; but whether or no, if the butter

was good the dairy girl received five pounds (a large sum in those days and in that district) from the royal purse as a wedding present. The historian of this school indicates that the money was usually soon required for its legitimate purpose. But whether or no, it is clear that more than a century and a half ago this practical Prussian monarch recognised distinctly that skill in the management of a dairy was "one of the duties of a farmer's wife."

THE DAIRY.

This part of the "agricultural fringe" of which I have spoken no doubt claims the first place in our consideration. Its importance on some farms, and especially in Ireland, would overshadow that of the farm itself, if it were not that the farm were the milk-producing machine. Still, the value of the milk to the dairy farmer depends entirely upon the skill with which it is converted by his wife and dairymaid into butter or cheese, unless, indeed, he sells it in an unmanufactured condition, as milk itself, to a large town. No person who has the least knowledge of the subject will deny the vast importance of the duties of a farmer's wife on a dairy farm. From the very beginning of the dairying she should exercise those qualities without which successful dairying is an impossibility. You have been lectured over and over again about the necessity of cleanliness. When do you begin to see its necessity? Is it in the condition of your hands or that of the cow's udder, or does it only begin with the milk pail and the other dairy implements? Then do you consider whether your dairy is free from all kinds of bad smells? Do you keep bacon, or cheese, or other strong-smelling substances in the same apartment as the milk, or the cream or the butter? Perhaps in Ireland I may be forgiven for saying that there is nothing so fatal to the making of good butter as the neighbourhood of the cleanest pig in the world—unless, perhaps, it is that of the dirtiest.

I will assume that the cows are milked properly with clean hands, that their udders have been very carefully washed, and that all the dairy utensils have been scrupulously washed immediately after they were last used. The next thing is to take the cream off the milk quite sweet, and take no skim-milk off with it. Do not be greedy, because it does not pay in the long run. I confidently appeal to the successful pupils of your Munster dairy school. I do not object to the cream being kept for a certain time after it has once been separated from the milk in a sweet condition, provided always that it is not kept in a pantry, but in a cool and clean place of its own. Another most important point, most difficult to

teach people, is that the churning should be stopped as soon as the butter comes, when it is in grains like turnip seeds, and then it should be all washed to get out the butter-milk. While it is still in the churn is best, but that is a minor matter.

It is not necessary to go through the whole process of butter-making, but there is one other matter that is very usually lost sight of—I mean the necessity of all wooden utensils used being thoroughly wet. If this is not the case the butter will stick to them, its grain will be spoiled, its quality ruined forever. In "making" the butter, treat it as tenderly as a baby, for fear of breaking its grain. These are some details too generally overlooked, and now I come to another. Before you send the butter to market, make it up in such a way that it will capture the eye. It is not sufficient to appeal only to the taste, good looks, as every woman knows, count for a good deal with men; and in the United Kingdom most of the butter merchants belong to the sterner sex.

THE PIG.

In connection with the dairy, the pig, to which I have alluded, is, no doubt, a very valuable means of utilising refuse material, and I do not wish to speak disparagingly of an animal which is said to confer immense benefits upon the landlords of Ireland; but I object to those who perform the duties of the dairy having anything to do with the feeding and tending of the pig. I will only add that there can scarcely be a greater mistake than to believe that it is good for the pig to wallow in mire. Like other animals, he is benefited by attention to the cleanliness and the healthiness of his habitation. But if, during his lifetime, the care of the pig should devolve upon the farmer, there can be no question that, after he has come to the natural end of all pigs—that is to say, after he has been killed—the farmer's wife has very important duties to perform. The most handsome pig that ever lived may be completely spoiled by the ignorant "curing" of his hams and bacon. Before this stage is reached, however, it should be carefully noted that the farmer's wife cannot "cure" into good bacon the sides of a pig that has been improperly fed, especially during the last few weeks of its existence. During that critical period, no strong tasting food should be given. None of the pickings up in the farmyard or the roadside should be allowed. Even Indian meal, or maize meal, as it is now often termed, is much too strongly flavoured. To the refuse of the dairy add barley meal or oatmeal, and I do not object to a proportion of potatoes, if