

# WOMAN'S SPHERE



## A DAY AMONG THE DOUKOBOURS

"WHILE you are with us," said my kind Swan River hostess one morning at breakfast, "we must take you to see the Doukoubour villages"—an invitation which it is needless to say was promptly and delightedly accepted.

"We may have to spend the night there, so I should advise putting up a good lunch basket," said the head of the house. "I don't believe you would like the flavour of Doukoubour cooking. I have tried it and know whereof I speak."

Accordingly a generous lunch basket was packed, and gaily we started—a select party of four—one bright August morning, for our thirty mile-drive through the beautiful Swan River Valley, to the land of the Doukoubourski.

To one brought up on the level prairies of older Manitoba this drive was in itself a great surprise and pleasure—a surprise on account of the wonderful development of this almost infant settlement, opened up only about four years ago by the Canadian Northern Railway, and a pleasure on account of the charmingly diversified nature of the scenery. Up hill and down dale we drove, along a road bordered thickly by late wild roses, golden glow, fire weed, pea vine and vetches, and other gorgeous Autumn flowers, and through magnificent fields of wheat untouched so far by the much dreaded "rust," and now all ready to harvest. Truly a farmer's paradise. A line from one of our harvest hymns kept running through my mind:

"The valleys stand so thick with corn  
That they laugh and sing."

Almost encircling this smiling valley are the Duck Mountains to the south and east, beautiful and blue in the distance, and

away to the north the Porcupine Hills, with grand old Thunder Hill standing boldly out between the two ranges. And here, nestling at the foot of Thunder Hill, we found the Doukoubour villages, or rather, some of them (there are thirteen in all, I believe), picturesque in the distance, and interesting at least at closer range.

After visiting these people, and chatting with those who can speak a little English, one finds one's self wondering just what Canada has gained by bringing them in as settlers, for almost without exception they seem to be as primitive in their habits and customs as they would be in their native land. During our stay in one of the villages we were entertained at the home of one of the most "advanced" of these settlers—he, with two or three others of the village having broken away from the communistic idea, and taken up homesteads. "This year," he told us, "I have twenty acres under crop on my homestead. Next year, fifty. Then some day I shall have a home there. I want to belong to Government and be Canadian. My children, too, they must be Canadian."

By way of a joke one of our party said to him: "This lady," indicating the writer, "has come to look for a Doukoubour husband. Have you one for her in your village?" After looking at me gravely for a moment he replied: "Better die at once than marry Doukoubour man. Doukoubour women work just like slaves."

And so it had seemed to us as we watched the poor creatures, squat of figure, and stolid of feature, toiling behind the binders, digging the roots and vegetables, and shovelling out the mud and bricks left over from a house which one family were constructing. It is a healthy sign, however,