

The Farm Home

Information Wanted.

By way of opening up a discussion that we think will be very helpful to all concerned, we would like to have as many short articles as possible from the readers of these pages dealing with the following topics. Contributors can write on any one or all of the subjects as they see fit:

(1) How can the long winter evenings in the farm home be most profitably spent?

(2) What are your ideas as to entertainment for young people in the country?

(3) What would be the best plan for arranging a reading circle in the farm home, so that every member of it who could read could take part?

How to Spend the Long Winter Evenings?

To the Editor of FARMING:

After reading your kind invitation to those interested in the "Farm Home" I am sending my quota of views on the subjects under discussion.

Always regarding the environments and associations of the young people on the farm of enormous weight in acting for future usefulness, the long winter evenings properly spent should be of much value in making up for the lack of time for self-culture so often complained of during the busy springtime, the hurried summer and the fall with its few leisure moments. How often, alas! is the scene in the rural home truly pictured with the cooking stove apparently the only magnet in the roomy kitchen! Around it are seated the different members of the family as though when the day's work was finished with it also was the day's aim in life. All praise to the farmer girl or boy who works each day as though their respective tasks were the most important duty; but, when that is cheerfully performed, life has, or ought to have, a broader horizon than that bounded by mere menial toil, which would mean a very narrow life indeed; so, then, let the evening be spent as a reward for the day's work—an interlining for the sandwich of labor.

A good idea at the approach of the long evenings is to systematically arrange a programme for each week's undertaking. Say, on Monday, if within access to a circulating library, have some of the standard poets, beginning with something simple. Try Tennyson as an experiment. Get whatever works you can bearing on his poems. Take, for example, his "Locksley Hall." Spend one entire evening on it, and you will not be sorry. Don't try to digest too much

solid reading. A few lines committed to memory will sometimes mean more of an educator than a whole chapter skimmed over.

On Tuesday have some lighter reading, a novel by a well-known author. If practicable, read aloud. Discuss and pick out the choice pieces. Talk it over at meal-time, and an added relish will be given to your reading.

By Wednesday a change will be welcome if the family are at all musical. Throw open the old-fashioned parlor or the new-fashioned drawing-room. Open up your piano or organ. Bring in the violin and mouth-organ. Let there be a family concert. Though the harmony, and sometimes the discord, would jar on a cultivated ear, practice will make the music at least pleasing to the home ones.

Thursday, we might have an hour with Shakespeare (?) Why not. "Oh," you say, "that great poet requires some one with more education than farmer folks have to understand him." Not at all. His wonderful simplicity is his greatest charm.

Friday evening ought to be our night out. Organize, or help to organize, some club for outdoor exercise. Sleighing parties, snowshoe clubs, or a few friends meet together for a night's skating. "All work and no play, etc.," is true for the grown-up as well as the little people. Let not our town friends monopolize those healthy pastimes.

Saturday evening will find us mentally and physically benefited by the week's evenings, and this night may be specially devoted to the weekly papers and magazines. Though daily newspapers may not be practicable we will find the summing up of the world's movements in any of the large weeklies, and there is no surer way of keeping in touch with the sphere of action which will become the history of succeeding generations.

A most profitable way of spending some of the leisure moments is to closely study the agricultural problems of the times from a scientific and also from a practical aspect. Nothing connected with our work is of small importance whether in the house or in the field. "Enthusiasm lightens labor," then as housekeepers and agriculturists let us be enthusiastic.

ENTERTAINMENT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

Perhaps a leaf from my own experience in this matter may not be out of place, and it will have the weight of being weighed and *not* found wanting. A few years ago our neighborhood was blessed with a number of young people with about the average intelligence and education. Most of them had spent some time at a high school, a

few had gone on with some of the higher branches. Socially we were at a loss how to spend the winter evenings. The idea was originated to form a society for mutual improvement and pleasure. All entered heartily into the scheme, and a full-fledged society with a membership of forty-five was the result. Each member pledged himself to do all in his power to aid the undertaking.

That society has had reason to be proud of its work. For five years it flourished. Most of its active members have found their wings and are now in scenes far distant from the home ones, but the benefit received from the friendly fellowship remains. The meetings were held every week. First in the form of a programme evening, as we designated it, when recitations, readings, songs and instrumental music interspersed with charades and tableaux, were in order. Nothing low or vulgar was ever permitted by the committee appointed to overlook this evening's work, and the president occupying the chair had little occasion to call any of the members to order.

Arrangements would be made at this meeting for the next, which took the form of a debate, and to those interesting debates many of our young men may thank the ease with which they can address an audience in a religious or municipal meeting.

The debates soon became famous, and it was considered a favor for an outsider to be allowed to be present at one of them. The mothers and fathers were soon as interested as the young people, and houses were gladly loaned for the evening, so there was no cash outlay, and the entrance fees were devoted for the purchase of some good books, which formed the nucleus for a library.

Nor was the purely social side forgotten. Three or four times during the winter one or other of the larger houses was thrown open and a jolly time was indulged in by all. The last generally was in the form of a sugar party or taffy-pull, and when the roll was called on this particular evening, at any rate every member was present. Of course in some country neighborhoods this might not be practicable. It required good judgment and some little tact to steer clear of shoals that often land a small society of this nature in entire disunion, and then—obliteration.

Our proximity, our knowledge of one another and a certain degree of mutual forbearance and respect rendered it possible to keep in unity.

The chief feature in indulging in entertainments for the country ought to be to try those things in which all can intelligently partake.

"What touches all should be approved by all."