

22,000 Wives and Daughters of Farmers Form Biggest Club on Earth.



IN New York state 22,000 women are busy testing a wonderful antidote for drudgery.

They are wives and daughters of farmers, and they form the biggest woman's club in the world, with one exception—over in Canada 30,000 women are doing the same thing.

Nowhere is the ordinary drudgery of woman's work so galling and oppressive as on the farm. It is about the only companion of many women during the day.

So these 22,000 farm women of New York have organized themselves into a gigantic club to get a strangle hold on the demon drudgery. "We propose no longer to do unnecessary work," they declare; "we are going to cultivate ourselves, to study closely those subjects touching the home life, and to enjoy our due of pleasant social intercourse."

How?

In this way:

FIVE years ago a reading course for the wives and daughters of farmers was started by the New York State College of Agriculture at Cornell University.

This is what has grown into the present club of 22,000 members. In every part of the state the membership extends.

While the general course of reading is the same for all, the various local sections may arrange programs of their own for their regular weekly or bi-weekly meetings—held from middle fall to spring.

Topics range from the destruction of fleas to the making of jellies; from the artistic decoration of the home to the nutritive values of foods; from studies of pictures of Psyche and statues of Diana to considerations of the dangers of bacteria in improper methods of dusting.

And the club is a success. A huge success. Just as the men learn what to feed and how to care for their cattle at the farmers' institutes, so the women learn how to care for the home and what to cook for their families.

"We're not only going to learn how to cook, however, but what to read," the women declare. "We're not only going to learn how to raise chickens and embroider and make extra money on the farm, but we're going to study art and the great masterpieces of famous painters."

Now, were you to take a peep into the village schoolhouse near Williamsville, on the road from Buffalo, some evening this fall, you'd probably receive quite a surprise.

The Auld Lang Syne Reading Club is one of the oldest of its kind in New York. It was founded in 1889. The leader then was the school teacher, and the members were former pupils who had passed from school into bustling everyday life.

They decided to continue their studies, and today the club is one of the banner organizations taking the Cornell reading course.

Suppose we take a peep at one of the fall meetings. The president makes an address, bright and witty, and then a member talks on how the summer vacation was spent. Then current events are discussed.

WIDE RANGE OF SUBJECTS

Suppose we drop in at the next meeting—there is talk on baking, and a history of the Niagara, from lake to lake, is read.

At the next meeting there is an interesting paper on Longfellow and a reading of "The Mayflower's Passengers." "How and When to Rest" is a vital subject at the next meeting, and there is an open discussion on "What to Do When Unexpected Company Comes."

What is most pleasant is the social spirit which prevails. At the close of every meeting the members pass around the room shaking hands with one another, all singing:

So here's a hand, my trusty friend,
And give a hand of thine;
We'll pledge a life-long friendship
For the days of Auld Lang Syne.

In Canada women's institutes have been in existence for eight years. The organization in New York was started about five years ago. The farmers' institutes for men had been in existence for more than twenty-five years.

But this work did not so closely touch the life within doors. Why not an institute for the wives and daughters of the farmers?

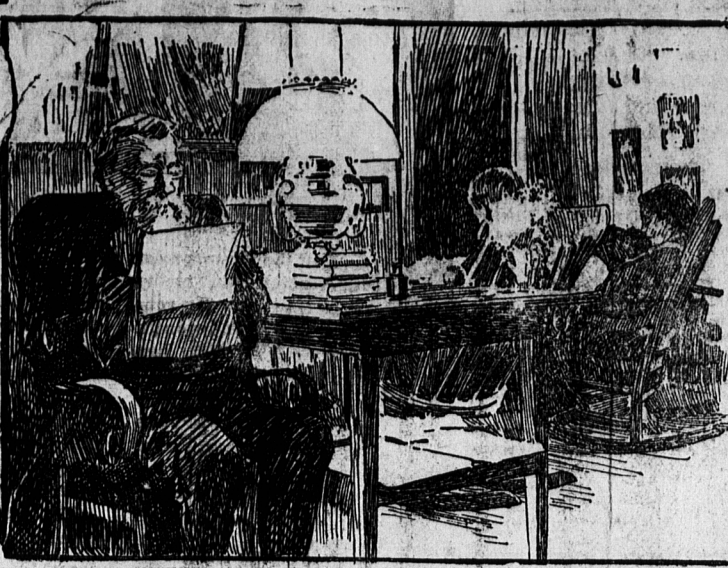
Why not tell them what to read, what books would interest them, how to save work and utilize spare hours to their benefit, what social organizations among the women of the lonely country districts? Why not bring about an era of enlightenment, social life and culture among them?

Miss Martha Van Rensselaer and Mrs. Helen Wells, of Syracuse, a speaker at the farmers' institutes, of the asked these questions. Frank Dawley, director of the experimental institute meetings in the state.

Circulars were sent out from Cornell to all farmers taking the reading course, asking them if their wives would be interested in a reading course of their own. To the surprise of the two women, there came 2000 replies. Yes, they would.

So the course was begun—and it was a great success. In two years there were 18,000 students.

But, fearing that the growth was too sudden and



Spending Quiet Fall Evenings in Study.

there might be padding of the lists, Miss Van Rensselaer, the director, abolished the membership, then wrote and asked all who wished to continue the course to renew their applications.

They did, and the number rose to 22,000. It is still increasing.

The members are confined to women living in New York state. The courses of instructions are given in pamphlets issued monthly from November to March. The neighborhood clubs are for districts of a radius of from ten to fifteen miles. Throughout the winter meetings are held every two weeks at homes of the members when the current subjects are discussed.

Dinner is a feature of the meetings. Naturally, this conduces to a more happy social atmosphere. It is the rule that a hostess shall supply tea, sugar, cream, butter and potatoes and the guests other articles of food. When the meetings are held in the evenings the farmers as well as the wives and daughters attend.

"It seems to be one of the tendencies of our age, on the farm as well as in the city, to train children to leave home rather than remain in it," said Mrs. Van Rensselaer, recently. "Girls are trained to become teachers, stenographers or for one of the professions. Why shouldn't our girls be trained for homekeepers?"

Why not, since home is woman's realm, her true domain?

DISCUSSION IS STIMULATED

"And so we are doing it in New York," continued the young woman. "With the pamphlets, which embrace every topic of interest, we send out discussion papers. On these the readers are requested to give their ideas on various topics, and relate their experiences. When they desire further information on any subject we send it to them."

The variety of topics treated in the pamphlets is fairly amazing. These are discussed at the meetings of the various clubs.

One of the earliest topics was "Saving Steps." It took up the question of how a housewife could conserve her strength and prevent a waste of effort.

Instead of going to the pump, suggestions were made for bringing water into the kitchen; instead of carrying dishwater from the kitchen, it was explained how a tile drain could be run from the sink at a cost of \$4.

A window cupboard, one of the suggestions for winter, consisted of a drygoods box outside a window. By keeping food in this it was explained that a housewife need not go to the cellar so often. A compact and clever arrangement of utensils was suggested, and various kitchen conveniences explained.

Naturally, the subject of nutrition came in for a good deal of attention. What shall a wife feed her husband and children? Is surely a more important question than what shall a man feed his horses and pigs? Yet until the women's clubs took it up, few women paid any attention to the matter.

From discussion on the relative value of foods the housewives learned what to feed children and various foods required by persons undertaking various occupations.

They learned the value of the elements of food, of protein, fats, carbohydrates. They were instructed in the proportion of these elements in various foods. There were discussions on what to put in the lunch boxes of the men and children.

Many of the clubs subscribed to traveling libraries sent out from the state library. Books on home economics, biography, fiction and poetry were included, and were secured at a rate of 10 for \$1, 25 for \$2, 50 for \$3 and so on.

The discussions also took up the canning and preserving of fruits; the dangers of sending dangerous bacteria into dough and jellies by injudicious dusting; how to rid houses of fleas, roaches and bedbugs, and the decoration of the homes.

There were literary evenings, and evenings devoted to art, when famous pictures were studied and discussed. The subject of farm industries, the raising of chickens and squabs, the keeping of dairies, the caring for bees and weaving were taken up, and women were told how to make money in their spare hours.

"I receive many interesting letters," said Miss Van Rensselaer. "Sometimes they come as personal let-



Learn to Construct Useful Devices as This Window Cupboard.

ters, but often as answers to the questions on the discussion papers.

"Letters on home industries were particularly satisfactory. One farmer's wife makes extra money by hatching chickens in her incubator at 34 cents per egg for every chicken twenty-four hours old. One weaves rugs and receives 75 cents to \$1.50 apiece.

"One has a greenhouse and raises winter vegetables; some raise herbs and others make extra money by knitting and embroidery."

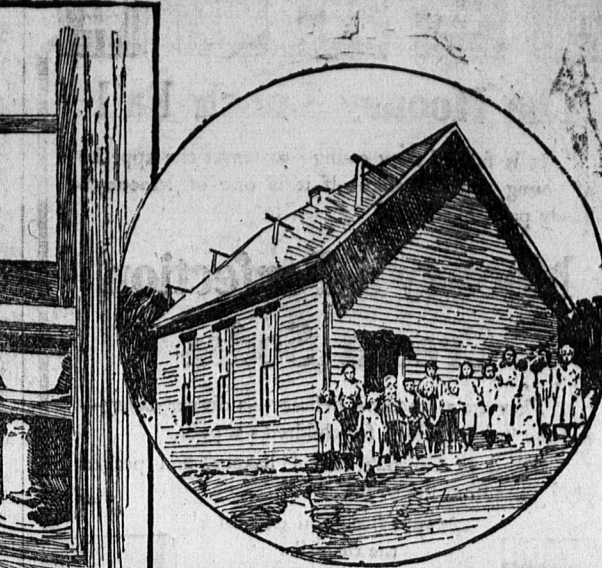
The school is a subject of vital interest to the women of the clubs. How to beautify the school, brighten the interior and make it pleasant is a topic of unending interest.

Traveling through New York state, a stranger might be surprised at the number of brightly painted school-houses. In many places old houses have been remodeled, flowers planted near the buildings and vines planted along the sides.

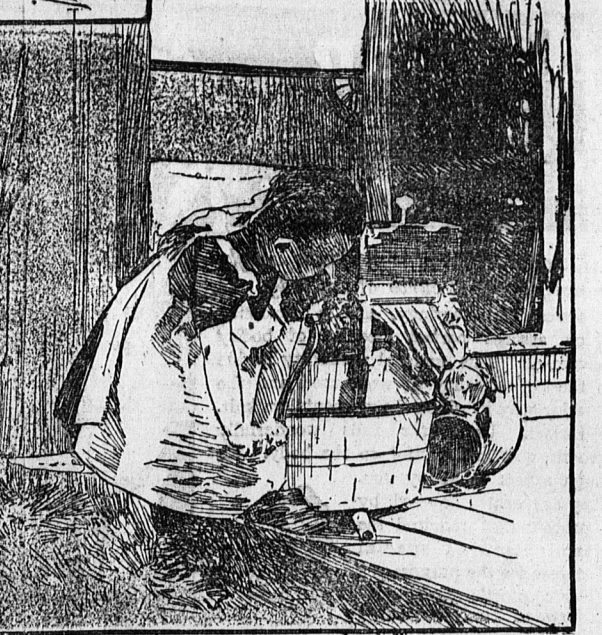
All the work of these women's clubs.

As often as possible during the winter lecturers are sent from Cornell to address the members of various clubs at their meetings.

A series of women's institutes are held each fall



They Hope to Beautify Such Rural Schools.



She'll be a Member—By and By.

under the direction of the New York State Department of Agriculture and the New York State College of Agriculture at Cornell University. Institutes have been held at Akron, Erie county; Webster, Monroe county; Hannibal, Oswego county; Clifton Park, Saratoga county; and Rhinebeck, Dutchess county. At the institute, there are musical entertainments, the reading of papers and exhibitions of home work.

These exhibitions include embroidery, painting, candied fruit, rugs, bed quilts, sofa cushions, house plants, etc. At Clifton Park there were sixty-seven entries, and this despite the fact that no prizes were offered.

COURSE IN HOUSEHOLD SCIENCE

Besides this, a winter course in home economics has been prepared in the extension department at Cornell University. For several years the College of Agriculture provided a winter course for men.

In 1905 a course for women was prepared. The course begins in January and ends in March. Tuition is free to all residents of New York state. The course includes lectures on practical physiology and personal hygiene, the scientific side of laundry work, household bacteriology, foods and cooking, household art and household management and farm home industries. The most eminent women teachers of domestic science in the country are selected to give the lectures.

"The farm women who have taken this course," declared Miss Van Rensselaer, "have proved themselves particularly valuable in organizing and directing study clubs in their neighborhoods. It seems wonderful how much a woman can learn in a few weeks."

In Ontario, Can., alone, there are 500 women institutes. They meet once a month and also hold most important annual meetings. The women at the head of the New York organization declare that they will surpass Canada in a short time.

The benefit which women derive from these clubs is incalculable. Indeed, one can hardly imagine how dear these social meetings must be to women, how they must delight in the exchange of recipes and experiences.

"No money that Canada has ever expended on agriculture has brought such large returns as that spent on the women's institutes," declared the deputy minister of agriculture at a recent meeting of the women's institute held in Guelph, "because when we educate the mothers we have educated the whole family of children."

Making Coke and Gas From Corn Cobs.

A NEW use has been found for the humble corn cob and the pile of straw in field or barnyard.

Experiment has revealed a method of transforming the corn cob into a coke that is hotter by far than that obtained from Pennsylvania coal.

The straw pile and the cornstalk have been found to possess more gas-producing power than the celebrated Youghiogheny or Pittsburg gas coal, used the country over as a source of supply for illuminants.

A CLEVELAND chemist, backed by wealthy eastern capitalists and operating an experimental plant at Beatrice, Neb., has proved the commercial value of an invention of J. Russell Coutts. As a result, the problem of getting cheap gas in a region hundreds of miles from coal mines has been practically solved.

The plant at Beatrice manufactures and sells gas at \$1.15 a thousand feet. Previous to its entry, gas brought \$3 a thousand feet. There are a hundred or more cities in the grain belt, between the Gulf and Canada, where similar reductions in gas will follow the introduction of the new process.

It was Mr. Coutts' innate love of a bonfire that indirectly led him to make what gas men say is certain to revolutionize the industry in those sections remote from the gas coal supply, and adjacent to the wheat and corn belt.

Something over a year ago Mr. Coutts was visiting a friend in Canada. The friend owned a big ranch. He had just completed threshing, and the great stack of straw that remained had no market that justified the expense of loading and hauling. So he followed the usual custom of burning it.

Mr. Coutts was given the job of lighting the straw stack. He was glad of the opportunity. He noticed that immediately above the burning material hovered a familiar blue flame. His nostrils were assailed by the sickly sweet fumes of carbon monoxide, a constituent of water gas.

Then the great idea came. Why was it not possible to produce for commercial use gas from straw?

The more he thought about it and the more he experimented the more evident it became that he had found something valuable. Being such a simple proposition, however, he feared that possibly it was an old idea, abandoned before his day.

Business called him to England within a short time, and there he put in several months delving in the scientific libraries of Oxford and Cambridge. Thorp, the great English chemist, to whom he made known his mission, assured him that it was something new.

Returning to America, he consulted with Dr. Chandler, of Columbia, one of the greatest agricultural chemists. Chandler declared at once that Coutts had hit upon something valuable, and in his enthusiasm he aided in making elaborate laboratory tests. They proved to be successful.

Mr. Coutts laid before capitalists of Cleveland his discoveries. They tested it in a suburban gas plant with wonderful success. Then they gave him \$100,000, and told him to make an experiment upon a large scale, and under such conditions as would prove or disprove its commercial value.

Manifestly, as straw, cobs and cornstalks were to be employed as fuel, it was advisable to get into the center of the grain belt. This led to the selection of Nebraska as the scene of experiment.

COST MUCH LESS THAN COAL

In the middle West it costs in the neighborhood of \$5 or \$6 a ton for gas coal. The cobs and straw from which the new gas is made can be secured for from 80 to 40 cents a ton. Most of this material is classed by farmers as refuse, and the greater portion of it is burned simply to get it out of the way. Mr. Coutts says that in the trans-Mississippi region millions of tons go to waste in smoke that might just as well be turned into gas.

Gramineous gas is the scientific name for the product. In common parlance, it is corn gas. The process of manufacture is simple. Practically the same apparatus as is used for ordinary gas-making is employed. Instead of shoveling coal into the retorts, bales of straw or cobs are dumped in. At the beginning the retort was heated with coal, but after the cobs were found to produce a better coke, the use of coal has been discontinued.

When the retorts get well heated the gas is thrown off, collected, purified and placed in reservoirs or holders.

Thirty per cent. of the original weight of the straw, cobs or stalks remains after the gas is extracted, and this is used to heat the benches or feed the boilers. This is about enough raw material to make the process self-containing, and eliminates any necessity for coal.

The original material is easily procurable. Within a radius of twenty-five miles, in the grain belt, there is enough of it ready at hand to supply a half million or more feet of gas a day. A ton of the cobs or straw will produce 15,000 cubic feet of gas. A ton of Pittsburg coal can be used but 10,000 feet.

In heating power the corn gas runs as high as 660 British thermal units without enrichment, while ordinary gas is a hundred units less. The new gas can be produced, if the inventors are to be believed, at a cost that will make it possible to control the industry within reasonable distance of the cob and straw supply.

In truth, they could sell gas for 50 cents a thousand, and make all kinds of money. The cost is almost as low as natural gas where the latter has to be piped any considerable distance.

Wheat in the West is now very generally threshed out in the open. The thresher goes out to the field, along with the reaper, and separates the grain from the chaff, right on the spot. The straw is tossed off to one side in big piles by a column of air, operated through a stacker pipe.

Under the new process the gas company's baler will come along, compress the straw into small bales, and make it ready for the farmer to haul to town and get his money. Twenty tons of it can be put in the ordinary car, so effective is the baling process.

Owners of the Coutts patents have secured franchises for gas plants in western Canada and the Dakotas in a dozen or more cities. They propose to erect others just as fast as they can.

They not only assert that they will inaugurate an era of cheap illuminating gas for the West, but that they can supply it for power and fuel purposes so cheaply as to make the competition of gasoline and soft coal impotent or impossible.

"Gentlemen Art Dealers"

LARGE fortunes have been made in recent years by the "gentlemen art dealers," who have become more of a feature of London life than American millionaires who have been their patrons have realized.

There is nothing of the shop or bargain counter about these exclusive establishments. Without an introduction, no one could get into them.

Nevertheless, they are strictly business propositions. A rich American is invited to dinner at one of these houses. Everything is of the oldest and best. And, in the most delicate manner possible, he is made to understand that he can buy whatever he admires—china, paintings or rare old mahogany furniture.

Whenever there is a sale of old art objects, these "gentlemen dealers" are represented. They pay big prices, but they get still bigger ones.

Occasionally the "gentleman dealer" does not rent a big house. He takes an exclusive apartment, big enough to display his wares without ostentation.

Sometimes the visitor is so charmed with the appearance of the flat that he buys the furnishings entire.

In one instance a "gentleman dealer" had arranged three dinner parties for succeeding evenings. The first guest bought out the flat. So did the second. Likewise the third. Only by the hardest kind of work and an army of servants was it possible to rent the flat in a day.

In all such cases the purchase is well protected from speculation, selling speculators are not allowed. As in the case of Mr. Orrock, of Bloomsbury, and Basil Diggleton, of Gower street, who made big fortunes, the dealers must be shrewd connoisseurs, upon whom it is next to impossible to impose.