

next section isn't worth worrying about—we may even get to feel so charitable that we get a dim idea he may have a little right on his side and that he isn't really a bad fellow at all.

I have once (my experience is not wide) been in a settlement where an inspiring community life was established. It was a Norwegian settlement—there was a strong, sensible religious life centred in the church to which all went. There was an exceptional teacher, and many older pupils studying at the school. The result was that every one turned out to musical evenings, debates, lectures, etc., at the schoolhouse and a very friendly spirit prevailed, and the people, as a whole, were far better informed and more interesting to talk to than many of British birth. One thing that I think no one will venture to dispute is that in the average British settlement the dividing factor is religion. Christ, as the strictest Christian will tell you, was wont to eat with publicans and sinners. But it does not seem to occur to most of us that He probably did so with a smiling countenance. I cannot imagine His being welcome had He worn the sanctimonious expression some of us are familiar with.

Do we not all know the people who won't help with this, that and the other project, because they disapprove. They are the ones who make community life difficult and the pity is that they are the ones who most conspicuously label themselves as religious. It may be religion, but it isn't Christianity.

In the country we all have plenty of things in common besides our post office address. Men can always find common ground in farm affairs, and women in the eternal cooking and babies. But the aim of a real community social life should be to give us a glimpse of the wider world and send us back to our plowing, and babies with a clearer view of how important they are to the rest of the world, and how privileged we really are to be doing work that is so absolutely necessary.

"MATER."

MRS. REEVE REPLIES

Dear Editor—In the November 6th issue of your journal, you print an unwarranted and gratuitous attack upon me, signed "Plough Girl," and you append an editorial note to this communication expressing approval of the sentiments therein stated. Under the circumstances, I request that you print the following by me:

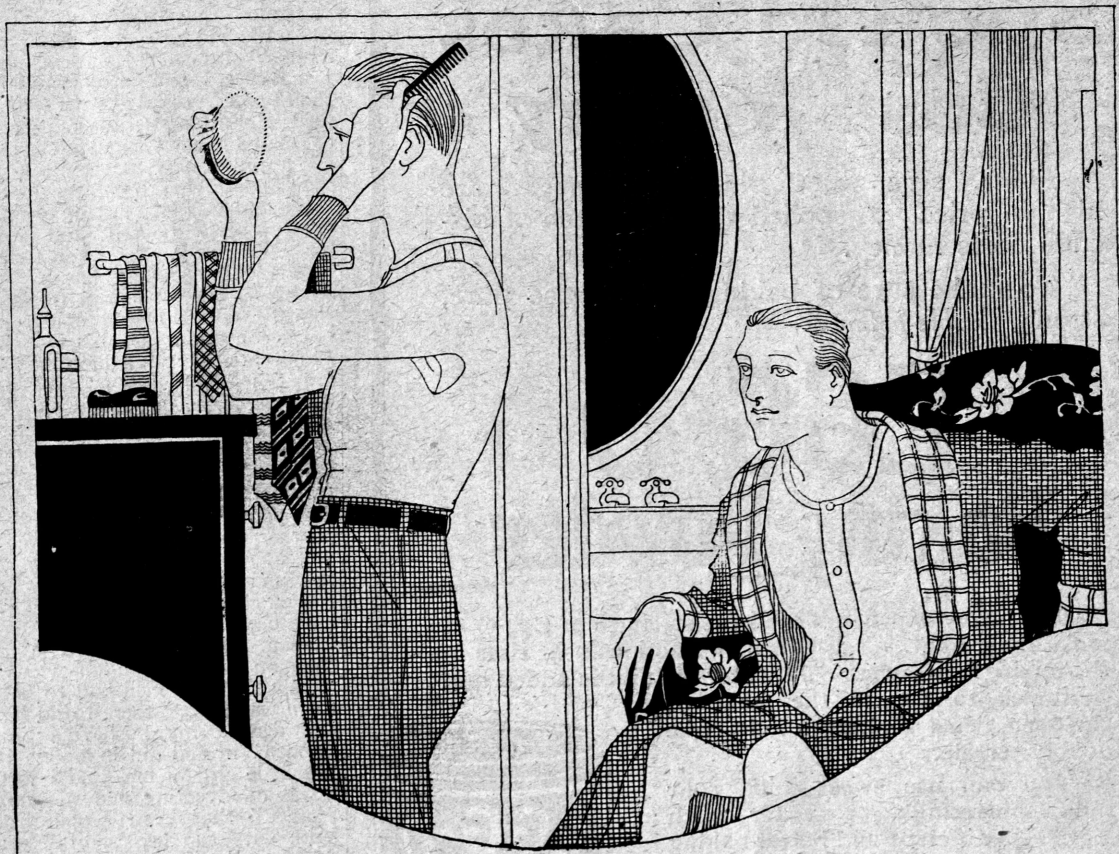
I object to being pictured by your correspondent as an idle, snobbish woman, living in luxury on a modern ranch, and making reflections upon the hardworking farmers and their wives of this country.

I have not seen the article in the *Canada Weekly*, purporting to be an interview with me, and from which your correspondent quotes. However, it is not true that I made any derogatory statements whatsoever concerning the farm folk of this or any other country.

The statement that a great many of the women on the farms grow old while young and often work as hard as beasts of burden, etc., is neither original with me, nor constitutes a reflection on their goodness and splendid qualities.

All of our writers have made practically the same observation. Mrs. McClung, in her poems and novels, Robert Stead in his novel "The Homesteaders," Jack Lait in a short story, and others. It is not a reflection upon these women, but a pathetic and self-evident fact. If I were to say or write a lot of slush and gush about their condition, I would simply state what is not true. Your correspondent herself, while in one paragraph righteously condemning me for this statement, in the very next paragraph makes the identical statement. The women, she admits, in their "feverish ambition and devotion to their families" do look old before their time, "owing to the dry air and extremes of temperature of our Western prairies. Farm women work hard, often beyond their strength, and in some cases ruin their health." She goes on to aver that this is not "through the goading of brutal husbands as Mrs. Reeve would have us believe," etc. Now, I never made any such statement or suggestion; nor have I yet encountered the brutal species of husband to which she so eloquently refers and seems determined to credit to me.

What is more, her sarcastic allusion to me as a "farmerette" is very foolish.



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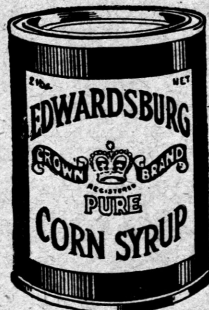
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I never made any such claim. I never came out here "at war time," nor have I been "lauded as a heroine under the name of the farmerette." I happen to be the wife of a ranchman and cattleman. Naturally, my place is in his house. I am sure I am far more useful there than I could possibly be if I went into the fields and attempted to do a man's work, as Miss Plough Girl suggests is the job for a professional farmerette. It is no light undertaking to manage a large ranch house and see that fourteen or fifteen men are properly housed and fed. That has been my job for some time on the prairie. "Plough Girl" has my "number" wrong. I am not loafing on some fancy ranch, and gathering material for a novel concerning a subject about which I know little save as a dilettante.

It is true ours is a modern ranch, and we have city conveniences, but when we first came from New York City to the prairies, the ranch was anything but modern. I lived for six months in a little two-roomed bunk house, and during the long period when we were building, I and another woman did all the work of the place. At one time when my cook was sick and taken to a hospital, I, myself, cooked for sixteen "hands." That would have been no light task even for a farm woman. However, looked at from a common sense point of view, I saw merely that our men had to be fed and there was no one there to do it but me, and against my husband's protests, I "boned" in and did it for several days. My little girl (of ten) and I just played it was an adventure, and we showed those "hands" that even people from New York City can be "sports" when "up against it."

One does not need to be born and brought up in a certain environment to understand it. In fact, an observer from the outside is often keener to get the points and the proper perspective. Those born to the life very often, from force of habit, find what seems to an outsider as a burden, an ordinary commonplace of life, and I do not doubt but that a great many of the women I have studied out here, who not merely have arisen long before dawn and worked well into the night—doing housework, "packing" water, milking, caring for the poultry and feeding pigs, and doing every imaginable work—both man's and woman's, are so used to working that they do not consider their lot a hard one.

It may be I shall not soon write a story of the "cattle" of this country, but it will not be for the reason attributed to your correspondent—that I am viewing the situation by the dimensions of my living room? No—not for that reason, but because the longer I am here, the more I feel the necessity of an even longer stay in which to do justice to my subject. A two years' residence gives one an opportunity merely to skim the vital details. Moreover, in spite of the contemptuous allusion to my supposed idle life on a modern ranch, I really believe my poor work here, such as it is, is worth while. You know, after all, the wife of the man who is producing cattle and grain in large quantities in these times, really has some little niche to fill. Do you not think so? Are her services not as vital as that farmerette in the field?

It is funny to hear myself described as an "advanced woman." What on earth is that anyway?

By the way, the interview attributed to me has several inaccuracies, judging from your correspondent's quotations. I am quoted as saying: "Jean Webster told me when I started for Alberta," etc. etc. Now, my friend, Jean Webster, died just about a year before I came out here, and I am ashamed to confess that I barely knew there was such a place in the world as Alberta—so provincial are we residents of New York.

Now, I believe an apology is in order from some direction? At least, you, as editor, owe it to me, if only for these several pages of script, which are sent to you gratis.

Yours truly,

WINNIFRED REEVE.

(We are really glad to know that the views attributed to Mrs. Reeve do not represent truly her attitude towards the life and people of the West, and we hope that perhaps some day she will give us a novel picturing some phase of prairie life.—D.D.)



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