

HOME and COUNTRY

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OUT OF THE PAST—COURAGE, UNITY, SERVICE.

By M. Viola Powell

For Home and Country

Hitherto the country women had lived and worked almost entirely within the four walls of their homes. The Institute has shown that to live the eminently useful, happy life, there must be a constant giving and getting for the highest development of one's self and the greatest good to one's neighbours.

Discontent in many a farm home of the past arose from self-centred interest. We are not here simply for our own advantage and enrichment. There is a duty upon us to leave our sphere of influence richer than we found it. The contacts made in the Institutes gave and still give opportunity to exercise this duty to the fullest extent.

While it has called for patience and continued guidance, no organization has done so much for the general uplift of our rural women and for the betterment of Home and Country as has the Institute. Organized to assist women in their most important work of ministering to the health, comfort and general welfare of the family of the rural home was no mean objective. With such a worthwhile object as that of improved homemaking, better care and training of children, higher standards of home and community life, this organization could not fail to attract the type of women who would themselves furnish high moral standards and uplifting influences, recognizing that "a nation cannot rise higher than the level of its homes".

Interest in Health

At the very base of the Institute movement the pioneers realized a need of knowledge of those things that make for health, else the founder, Mrs. Hoodless, might never have been incited to spend her energies in the establishment of a movement which constitutionally provided for the pursuit of healthful living—"more scientific care and training of children". The loss of her own child led to the founding of the Women's Institute work.

While the early accepted meaning of hygiene dealt largely with preservation and restoration of health, in later years the higher ideal has been set as that which has to do also with the improvement of health. As the protégée of the Provincial Government the Institute had from its early days the advantage of advice and information along health educational lines, from capable and qualified Doctors and Nurses of outstanding ability. Thus each year has seen added and improved methods employed in more counties for the preservation of health, and each year has found the women better fortified by knowledge and skill to contribute to a higher standard of health in home, school and community. Institute members realize that there can be no perfect physical health without the mental and spiritual health, which gives happiness, and also that this higher health depends upon a true philosophy of life, a proper adjustment between all the activities of life. Thus they have made a real contribution to a healthier, and therefore happier Ontario.

Community Betterment

It was natural that these home living women should decide upon something more than immediate home practices. They recognized that

the ideal family relationships developed a broad field of interests outside as well as within the four walls of home. They therefore deemed it wisdom to co-operate with each other, and with the men in providing a better opportunity and better services for all individuals in the community, opportunities and services in which all the people were concerned. Community life is a reflection of the home life, and the social standards, activities and ideals of the community influence to a greater or lesser degree each home in the community and directly or indirectly each individual. By their counsel and encouragement; their contributions of talent and material things, the women blazed the trail for co-operative effort in human efficiency and uplift.

The advantages which we enjoy with all mankind in a Christian country carry also responsibilities, and we cannot well withhold the legacy to the whole people of any uplift that comes to the womanhood or childhood of the nation. Whatever elevates the home life is a blessing to the whole people.

The influence of the Institute on the home is then of a three fold nature, physical, intellectual and social or moral. Through the Institute our vision has broadened. We have learned to respect the feelings and rights of others. The provincial body aims still to retain the home standards and ideals and a wholesome home atmosphere.

Strong Educational Program

So rapidly did this organized group broaden in activities, and in educational facilities, that it has acquired the status of a "Rural University for Women". The educational program has been strengthened and made more attractive and effective, bringing to residents of rural districts advantages in education best suited to their needs, so that to-day Women's Institute Members are recognized as Leaders in Community, Provincial and National affairs—education, health, economic position, social and other interests in which the whole people are concerned. Thus are they fulfilling present day objectives—"To discover, stimulate and train leadership".

Because of their awareness of the relation between good health and an understanding of dietary requirements for the family, thousands of rural women have set themselves to acquire definite knowledge of nutritional needs and how these needs may be met. Intelligent discussions on food principles, or essential food elements to meet body requirements, now form a part of regular meetings of Institute members; and with this has come a better understanding of classes of foods and their functions in relation to body needs. This has undoubtedly given clarity of vision regarding choice and preparation of foods for adequate diet requirements of the family, considering age, size, occupation and seasons. Doubtless too, this knowledge has been of valuable service to the consumer buyer during the years of world conflict, as well as a definite aid in dissipating irritation and unhappiness from the family circle, since proper foods make for cheerfulness and contentment, remembering—"we are what we eat".

MISS GRAY HONOURED ON RETIREMENT

The announcement of the resignation of Miss Gertrude Gray from the staff of the Women's Institutes of Ontario will interest rural women in every part of the province where she has served so acceptably as Field Assistant in Nutrition.

At a staff dinner in the Windsor Arms, Toronto, early in December, Miss Gray was the guest of honour, when she was presented with a beautiful triple-strand pearl necklace and pearl ear-rings, also a handsome black leather hand-bag from her associates in the Department of Agriculture.

In acknowledgement Miss Gray gave an interesting resume of her association with the Women's Institutes since 1908, having personally known Mrs. Adelaide Hoodless, the founder, and Mr. Erland Lee, who encouraged and assisted the first organization at Stoney Creek.

The purpose of the new organization was somewhat similar to those of the Farmers' Institutes organized in 1885. Many women had attended meetings of the Farmers' Institutes when subjects of interest to both men and women had been discussed, and at these meetings Miss Gray frequently spoke on some subject such as "Nutrition" and explained the desirability of organizing an Institute.

One of the interesting features of the work in the early days was its effect on the women; developing a keen desire to know more regarding the basic principles of all phases of homemaking, to improve living conditions, raise health standards, and provide educational opportunities for the young.

From 1909 until 1912 Miss Gray assisted in organizing groups of rural women in Delaware and Ohio and also saw the beginning of Women's work in New York State, attending meetings of the "Grange" in company with outstanding leaders, one of whom was the late Miss Martha Van Rensselaer of Cornell University.

The record of the years presents a fine list of accomplishments, including medical inspection and music in the schools, libraries, community halls, besides a great contribution of effort and services during two wars. In all these activities Miss Gray gave her time, talent, and training through speaker service, local leader training schools, short courses and preparation of bulletins, lesson leaflets, radio broadcasts and magazine articles.

In a message of encouragement to those responsible for the peace-time program of the Women's Institutes Miss Gray said that each member of the staff should have a "vision of what this service should be, the understanding that it can be, and faith that it shall be."

Contributed by Miss Edith M. Collins.

The objectives of the Institute movement included higher living. The culture and refinement, which was inherent in the pioneer women, formed a part of the foundation for home and country betterment. As their vision broadened the women became aware that the environment in which is spent the formative years of life does leave indelible impressions on the mind, which are never entirely effaced. This knowledge led to a study of how best to furnish beauty and comfort for rest of mind and body;

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