

The Tweedsmuir Essay Competition

The Rural Home

Editor's Note: The Ontario winners in the Tweedsmuir Essay Competition on "The Rural Home" have already been announced by Mrs. R. G. Purcell, President of the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario. They are: first, Mrs. Thomas D. Cowan, R. R. 3, Galt, Ontario; second, Mrs. Marshall Bethune, R. R. 4, Hamilton, Ontario; third, Mrs. Albert B. Cutler, R. R. 1, Chalk River, Ontario. The judges have asked me to explain that some very excellent essays could not be placed among the winners because they failed to follow the requirement that the writer give certain information about her own home. The judges also wish to express their appreciation of the fine sentiment in the essays submitted, and to commend one writer in particular whose story showed that she is making a brave effort to create a good home under great material difficulties.

Mrs. Cowan's essay won a place in the national competition and was sent on to ACWW for the final judging. The essays by Mrs. Bethune and Mrs. Cutler were also considered worthy to be entered in the final competition so all three essays are now the property of ACWW and cannot be published until the final judging has been done. In the meantime we give, here, a few excerpts from other fine essays that did not win prizes.

A Goodly Heritage

WHEN THE first settlers disembarked on the shores of America, they looked out upon a land of virgin forests, blue skies, and sparkling waters; a land of ice and snow and freezing winters; a land of hostile natives, and sometimes almost insurmountable obstacles. Then, as now, it was the farm woman whose task it was to make the four walls which sheltered her and her family, a home. In those days she had only her cheery hearth fire, a line of copper pots, and some colored pottery brought across half a world. But with a smile on her lips, and courage in her heart, she swept away the cobwebs of doubt and fear, the dust of despair, and the dregs of discontent. Into each wall she built her tears and her toil, her love and her boundless courage.

Yes, the structure of our rural homes have changed down through the decades, but the lives lived in them have remained the same, for things of the spirit do not pass away.

Many of our Canadian farm homes have been built up from the humble little cabin first settled by our great grandparents. Out big white brick farm house has been in the family for only two generations, but into its very mortar and cement are poured the personalities and temperaments, the laughter and tears of those who came before. Set back from the highway in its lawns and shrubbery, it never fails to give me a feeling of security and strength as it watches so solidly from behind the pines, oblivious to wind and weather.

* * *

Would you like to come inside this house in which I live? Then let us start at its nerve centre, my big, bright, sunny kitchen. Over the sink is a long, low window framed in red and white gingham curtains, and flanked by built-in cupboards. Here I am aided in my work each day by electricity for washing, ironing, cooking and refrigeration. There is hot and cold running water, a food mixer and a pressure cooker. Aluminum pots line my cupboard shelves, and bright flowered canisters march in single file along the back of my kitchen counter. Have you ever noticed how tiny red roses circling a dinner plate make meals more attractive? In my kitchen, too, is a little wood stove which takes the place of the furnace on cool days. How tangy its wood smoke is on a crisp fall morning as it mingles with the aroma of the breakfast coffee!

* * *

Yet with all these conveniences and labor-saving devices, the women of today have changed little from our pioneer grandmothers in their log homes. Now, as then, Mother is always there, for a farm wife seems to have little time for the business world. Mother fixes the arm of a broken dolly, oils the wheels of a tricycle, washes the cuts and scratches, dries the tears, and listens to the problems and disappointments. She helps with the farm business and planning, and attends to the thousand little details that keep the home running smoothly.

Perhaps the rural home plays such an important role in the modern world because it is a training camp and a proving ground for its youth. Together the farm family of today makes its decisions. The kitchen table seems to be the headquarters for the farm business, and there the budget is planned, work laid out and distributed, earnings divided, and a course plotted for the future. Everyone has a voice in the enterprise, so each child learns early the value of money and the need for work and planning.