

# Our Collect, Ode and Grace

## Mary Stewart Collect

**A**N INSTITUTE member suggests that we publish in Home and Country something about the origin of the Mary Stewart Collect, sometimes called the Women's Institute "creed," but which, as any reader can see, is not a creed but a prayer. The member suggests, too, that we reprint the Collect and encourage Institute members to memorize it. We think this is an excellent idea and that something might also be said about our Motto and the Ode and the Women's Institute Grace.

Mary Stewart, author of the Collect, was born in 1876 in the State of Ohio. With her parents she moved to Georgetown, Colorado, and, as she herself has written, her childhood was spent "high up in the Rocky Mountains, climbing over stony hillsides, hunting wild flowers, playing along tumbling streams." Later through her college days she tells us her eyes still lifted to the hills while her mind explored the classics.

It was while Miss Stewart was principal of the high school at Longmont, Colorado, where the friendly women made her a member of their Fortnightly Club, that she composed the Collect. She tells us: "It was written as a prayer for the day. I called it 'A Collect For Club Women' because I felt that women working together with wide interests for large ends was a new thing under the sun, and that perhaps they had need for special petition and meditation of their own. This must have been true, for the Collect has found its way about the world wherever women, especially English-speaking women, get together. Indeed it has been reprinted in many lands."

Mary Stewart has an enviable record of scholarship and service. She helped to organize the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs and was an enthusiastic supporter of woman suffrage. From teaching she went into the National Employment Service as assistant director general; later she was made assistant director of education in the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and continued in this work until a year before her death in 1943. Her Collect For Club Women, quoted below continues to spread its message to farther parts of the world:

"Keep us O Lord from pettiness; let us be large in thought, in word and deed;  
Let us be done with fault finding and leave off self seeking;

May we put away all pretence and meet each other face to face, without self pity and without prejudice;

May we never be hasty in judgment and always generous;

Teach us to put into action our better impulses straightforward and unafraid;

Let us take time for all things; make us grow calm, serene, gentle;

Grant that we may realize that it is the little things that create differences; that in the big things of life we are at one

And may we strive to touch and know the great human heart common to us all, and O Lord God let us not forget to be kind."

## The Institute Ode

The Institute Ode is so well known that it need not be quoted here. It has been brought to our attention however that where the Ode is printed on Institute programmes it is frequently broken into two stanzas of four lines each. The correct form is one stanza of eight lines as is followed in the Hand Book.

The origin and author of the Ode is not known, but it has been reported to the Institute Branch that it was used by the Sons' of Temperance" Lodge in its early days in Stroud, Simcoe County, in the late '70's.

## Motto And Emblem

In Muriel V. Powell's book "Forty Years Agrowing" we read that while the first objective of the Women's Institute was the improvement of the rural home, it was frequently said in these early days that the home must be raised to the highest possible level because "a nation cannot rise higher than its homes." Miss Powell writes: "No doubt it was this idea that prompted the women to adopt in May 1902 the motto 'For Home And Country' suggested by Laura Rose Stephen, then Laura Rose, the first government lecturer." The motto was chosen by a committee convened by Mrs. Adelaide Hoodless.

In February, 1903 a committee was appointed to arrange for an emblematic pin for Institute members. Again Laura Rose's suggestion was followed and an emblem was designed from a signet ring she was wearing. So we have our Ontario Women's Institute pin—a small oval in blue and gold with the letters O.W.I. cut in the oval, a small maple leaf at each end and the words of the motto engraved on the oval banding.

## The Institute Grace

The Women's Institute Grace was composed by Mrs. Clara Lintell Deakin, of City View and Merivale Institute. The tune is the Old Hundred; the words:

"We thank Thee, Father, for Thy care,  
Food, friends and kindness we share;  
May we forever mindful be  
Of Home and Country and of Thee."

It would save a lot of confusion and faltering singing if every Institute member would memorize this Grace.