

# A Day With Mrs. Berry

**T**HE EDITOR had the very much appreciated privilege of spending a day with Mrs. Berry when she visited York County. And spending a day with Mrs. Berry is like spending a day with someone you have known all your life, and coming to understand why she gets along so well with people wherever she goes, regardless of ways and customs entirely strange to her. When Mrs. Berry says "I can eat the food of any country," we see something of her friendliness and understanding, her down-to-earth approach to whatever problem is before her.

## A Background That Helps

Perhaps because Mrs. Berry has always done the cooking for her family, also produced some of their food, she is interested in how people are fed the world over, and we can imagine her exchanging recipes with women from Finland to Malaya. Because as a pioneer rancher's wife, before she had electricity, she did her laundry with wash-tubs and a boiler, she is especially interested in the co-operative laundries set up by some of the country women's groups in Germany and the Scandinavian countries. These women cannot afford electric laundry equipment for their homes but their husbands have co-operative creameries and it is not too costly to operate a laundry in the same or an adjoining building, letting the surplus steam from the creamery run the laundry machinery. Because the women have a common interest in the laundry they have studied together textiles, detergents, buttons and how these should be handled in laundering. From this venture in a co-operative business some groups have gone on to establish co-operative deep-freeze plants.

It is well known that Mrs. Berry takes an active part in work for incapacitated Girl Guides in Australia, getting companies established in Homes for Crippled Children, Schools for the Deaf and Dumb and Hospitals for Spastics. She explained that this interest began because one of her own daughters, as a child, had a tubercular hip. Incidentally this daughter is now very well, is the mother of four lovely children and helps her husband in the packing sheds on their fruit farm. Mrs. Berry used to take this little girl to the association meetings and she feels that she owes the women a debt of gratitude for the friendliness and encouragement that was a help to both herself and her daughter at this time.

We learned more about our international president's personal interests and about her native country Australia, and about what the Associated Country Women of the World means to women in far away places when Mrs. Berry spoke at the York County Women's Institutes' Rally held at Dalziel Park—*or really on the grounds of the home of Mrs.*

Charles Agnew, York County Women's Institutes' president.

## Agriculture in Australia

Mrs. Berry is a widow operating her own sheep station, her husband having died as the result of his experience in the first World War. She owns 47,000 acres, running one sheep to six acres. This she can do with the help of only two men because there is no cold weather in the area, the sheep do not have to be kept in barns, and the shearing is done as custom work, the shearer bringing his own men, his cooks and food and the owner providing only dormitories. There are also no dogs or wolves or other predatory animals in the sheep country of Australia.

Water is the greatest problem of the Australian rancher or grazier. (A grazier is a person in Australia occupying Crown land or other land for sheep raising.) "The rivers mostly are only rivers when it rains," said Mrs. Berry "and then they flood. We can't plough the land or we would have a dust bowl; so we leave the virgin pasture as it is and depend on Nature's bounty." In addition to the ranches or stations, Australia has many small farms specializing in dairy, poultry or fruit. "Here the wives work closely with their husbands," Mrs. Berry continued. "A woman may take a baby with her to the cow barn and lay it in a manger while she helps with the milking. Australia exports a lot of dairy produce. It also grows and exports a considerable quantity of pineapples and other tropical fruits, peanuts and sugar cane."

## Australian Women's Associations

And what do the Australian Country Women's Associations do? Perhaps one of their most important functions is to provide companionship for women in a country where ranches are so large that the homes are often far apart and the women are sometimes lonely. But the associations do not exist just to make life happier for members. They are doing what we in Ontario would call the "soundest sort of Institute work" for their communities and their people. And incidentally, because they need funds to do this local work, some groups have a rule that they will not give more than a certain sum of money to any one of the many outside agencies that appeal to them for contributions.

The Australian Country Women's Associations are active in the "Bush Children's Health Scheme." Children from the bush country, suffering from malnutrition or other trouble, are given a recuperative holiday at the seaside with fresh fruit and vegetables to eat, dental care and hospitalization if this is needed. Members of the country women's groups act as escorts and assist in any way they can. They also work with health authorities to