

LITTLE THINGS

By Margaret Elsom

("Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes." Song of Solomon 2:15)

Lord, I come to You this evening with a special kind of prayer . . .
There were so many little things that bothered me to-day;
They placed my soul in fetters — they beset me everywhere,
And as they cluttered up my path they made me lose my way.
The little hasty word I spoke was anything but kind,
When a little dish lay broken by a very little child.
A little thought so wrong, filled up a corner of my mind.
A little bit of envy made my temper run quite wild.
The chocolate cake I fashioned failed to reach its proper size,
And when I took it from the pan it simply fell apart.
The little frown at dinnertime was anything but wise,
And the fly that quite eluded me brought anger to my heart.
I couldn't find the scissors though I searched through every drawer.
The telephone rang wildly as I tried to wash my hair.
I spoke in tones ungracious to a pedlar at the door;
And my purse I mislaid somewhere—couldn't find it anywhere.
Lord—I've lost the calmness of that inward solitude
That should be mine to-night, and yet Thy peace is not my own;
And Oh, I need assurance that my strength shall be renewed,
And that I stand forgiven at the heavenly Father's throne.
And if it be Thy will that all the morrow shall be mine —
Grant me Thy patience Lord, and give my fallen spirit wings;
And let me trim anew the lamp of faith and make it shine
In every pathway where I meet these trying "little things."

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is a need that must be met. We are determined not to play the part of the ostrich that buries its head in the sand or the humming bird that flutters about without ever quite coming to rest. Instead, we want to be the wise old owl that after carefully analyzing the situation moves straight to its objective. To help us, we, in co-operation with the Canada Department of Agriculture, are conducting a Farm Home Survey . . . This survey will be a landmark for future direction and we feel fortunate indeed to have such splendid co-operation from the Women's Institutes. We are fortunate, also, to have a skilled, well-trained, rural sociologist to direct the survey, Dr. Helen Abell.

The Farm Home Survey

Dr. Helen Abell, Supervisor of Rural Sociology in the Canada Department of Agriculture, discussed the farm home survey under the topic "Strengthening the Best in Rural Living." The purpose of the survey, Dr. Abell said, was to find from rural people what they considered the best things in rural living, and also the worst things.

"Only as we know this," she said, "can we promote the best and eliminate the worst."

As a sort of sample test, the audience in little groups where they sat, were asked to discuss the question of what features of rural living are the best and what are the worst, and to record their findings. Dr. Abell predicted that these findings, which she took away with her for examination, would correspond closely with opinions she had gathered from two other groups. These previous surveys had given the following views:

Among the best features of rural life were listed: 1. Independence. 2. Closeness to Nature — space, beauty, absence of crowds and tensions. 3. A good community life, neighbors and a sense of belonging. 4. Family unity, advantages for rearing children and for children to acquire a good sense of values. 5. The economic advantages as for example the opportunity to own a farm or a farm business; a chance to make a comfortable home; a lower cost of living. 6. The increasing availability of city amenities and opportunities for the cultural advantages of the city. 7. The proximity of home and work—no daily struggle with traffic. 8. Special educational services for rural people—extension services, consolidated schools, transportation to high schools.

Some of the "worst" features recorded were: 1. The scarcity and poor quality of community facilities—schools, roads, medical services. 2. Economic factors associated with farming such as the "price squeeze," lack of an assured price for produce, uncertainty of crops, weather and farm labour, long working hours. 3. The "negative personality characteristics" of some rural people such as a lack of interest or participation in community affairs, self pity, narrowness of outlook, intolerance of people who are "different from us," a lack of business management. 4. Lack of home conveniences and a low standard of living, material and otherwise. 5. In some communities, a lack of social life. In some places the girls have left the rural community and there are a great many bachelors on the farms.

Friendly Visiting

Mrs. E. R. Thompson, of the Senior Citizens' Committee of the Ontario Red Cross Society and Chairman of the Senior Citizens Committee of the United Church quoted one authority as saying that "Canada is a good place to have a long life but not a good place in which to grow old." "In many countries," Mrs. Thompson said, "old age is treated with deference; the old person is still the head of the household—here youth is in the driver's seat and some old people feel that they have lived too long."

One of the first basic needs of ageing people, the speaker said, is health service which lies mostly in the field of the government. Other basic needs are: to have friends, to have something useful to do and if still active, to have "some place to go." If denied these, people often become senile. Mrs. Thompson referred especially to the problem of loneliness and told of the diary of an old woman with page after page carrying only the notation "Nobody came."

This is where the friendly visitor can fill a need,