

ADELAIDE HUNTER HOODLESS
(1858 - 1910)

Mrs. Adelaide Hunter Hoodless, founder of Women's Institutes, turned a personal grief into a crusade to save other women from a trouble like her own. Her baby had died from the effects of contaminated milk and she felt that she should have known more about how to take care of a baby. She was a cultured woman of great personal charm, but there had been nothing in her education to help her in her responsibilities as a mother. She wanted this education for every woman.

In her campaign for training in homemaking Mrs. Hoodless succeeded in getting household science introduced in the public schools of Hamilton, her home city. But this did not reach the wives and mothers who were already out of school and in homes of their own. A plan for these women came to her when, as a guest speaker at a meeting of the Experimental Union at the Ontario Agricultural College, she heard farmers discussing the care and feeding of live-stock. She argued that women needed an organization such as the Experimental Union to study the far more important problems of the care and feeding of children.

The result of this speech was that a young farmer, Erland Lee, secretary of the Farmer's Institute at Stoney Creek, invited Mrs. Hoodless to speak at his Farmer's Institute at a meeting open to women. The women were impressed and Mrs. Hoodless was asked to meet with them again to consider starting an organization of their own. It was at this meeting, in Squire's Hall at Stoney Creek on February 19th, 1897, that the first Women's Institute was organized.

The next problem was to provide trained home economists for the schools needing teachers and the Women's Institutes asking for extension service. With a donation from Lord Strathcona, Mrs. Hoodless had opened the School of Domestic Science and Art in connection with the Hamilton Y.W.C.A. of which she was president, but this was only a temporary measure. Having a special concern for the needs of farm women and the education of farmers' daughters, she wanted to move this school to a permanent place at the Ontario Agricultural College. She secured the promise of the Ministers of Agriculture and Education to maintain the school if a building could be provided. Then she persuaded Sir William Macdonald of Montreal to provide the building Macdonald Institute.

Finally, for advanced education, a school of household science at University level was needed. At a meeting of the Federation of Women's Clubs in Toronto on February 25th, 1910, Mrs. Hoodless made an appeal for such a school. While she was speaking she had a heart attack and died a few minutes later. But she had done the pioneer work for the founding of a Department of Household Science at the University of Toronto.

Mrs. Hoodless was in the vanguard of many movements in the interest of women. She had a part in founding the Y.W.C.A. in Canada, the National Council of Women and the Victorian Order of Nurses. But she will be remembered longest for what she did for education in homemaking and for the founding of the Women's Institute.