

*He found this under
a linoleum
Lois Morgan*

Women's and Home Section

*"Oh for the gate and the locust lane,
and dusk, and dew, and home again"
Madison Cawein*

Teaching Youth to Think Things Through

By Ethel M. Chapman

Other questions which the director considers worthy of farm young people's consideration are:

"THE thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts," but beset by a popular tendency to detours and rests along the way. The boy following his team up and down the furrow all day, or the girl looking out on the world from the kitchen window, may see visions and dream dreams well worth sharing with other eager young souls. They are visions and dreams which could be realized, too—to youth nothing is impossible. But more often than not, when the young people of the community meet, in a gathering where intelligence should whet intelligence, where they should rub one another bright like a bunch of keys, the normal and stronger urge to play possesses them, and they have not learned to play with their minds. Or if they do settle down to an "educational" programme, perhaps someone is there to provide this for them. They have no stimulus to think, to attack their own problems. So we lose the benefit of the clear-sighted viewpoint of youth, and the young people receive no training in thinking for themselves.

Our Own Business," for which he gave us this interpretation,

"For years we have been discussing everything under the sun except our own business. We have been told that it develops class consciousness. But doctors have class consciousness. It comes from a pride in their profession and from giving a good service to society. We need more of this class consciousness in farming; we need to study our own affairs."

So instead of debating questions of which they know nothing at first hand, into which their researches might bring them considerable information but leave little for them to think out for themselves, and which would develop nothing to effect their own lives on their farms and in their homes the



"What sports are best adapted to a farming community? After we have been plowing all day, should we go out and chase ourselves around a baseball diamond under the stimulus of the cheering crowd? What is a typical rural sport? What about horse-shoe pitching, which has the element of sociability and can be played in any farmyard?"

"Could we revive the spirit of the old time, paring-bees by having a community canning day, bringing in a pressure cooker, sending the men for a truck load of fruit and meeting in the community hall to do our canning?"

"Eating for Health: How can we overcome the habit of storing vegetables in the cellar in the fall just to carry them out of the dump-heap in the spring? Why not take wheat to the mill and have a coarse meal ground for porridge?"

"Which gives the greater satisfaction, creating things and living simply as all the great people have done, or accumulating wealth and pyramiding things? Has a buyer any responsibility for learning the conditions under which an article is produced—whether it is made under fair conditions or sweated out of the people? What does the consumer want?" and a host of marketing questions.

ONE might suppose that the club leader, or the school teacher, or some older person would lead these discussions. Perhaps they do, sometimes, when the young people are just learning to find their feet and their tongues, but at Sharon the young folk take charge of their own discussions. We gather that the main part of the leaders and parents, is to beam their encouragement and call one another over the telephone the next day to exclaim over how well John Jones or Mary Smith handled things, and how wonderfully the boy who works at Brown's is coming on. Perhaps this commendation is the most effective help they could possibly give them, for a thing which elders are often slow to learn is that their young people need their sympathy quite as much as their supervision.

Of course a boy or girl is not thrust into directing a discussion without preparation. While the discussion practice leads to debating, the primary training comes in answering the roll call at each meeting with even the briefest response on such topics as "My part in world peace," "A present need of farm people," "Common mistakes in etiquette," and "How to keep good natured." Such a programme cannot fail to lead to independent thinking.

"Our young people are learning to entertain themselves, too," the director told us. "Only recently we heard of a very successful and purely original school trustee meeting."

And the influence of the club is reaching far beyond its own members. "One thing we stress more than anything else is our citizenship department," said Mrs. Wilmott. "—civics, public health, education and social service—our social service has been confined mostly to helping the Newmarket hospital. But if we can just get boys and girls started early to read along these lines for themselves, and to think for themselves, we will see the effect on the conversation around their family dinner tables and the whole household will be better for it.

THE influence of the Sharon club is already felt in the community. The meeting...

In the Sharon neighborhood in York county, there is a club of United Farm Young People, who have won a reputation for using their heads. Their leader, Mrs. W. H. Wilmott, is in no small measure responsible for this. She is quiet, winsome, tactful—a leader with the rare gift of keeping in the background and encouraging young people to express themselves. "A leader is often tempted to speak in a meeting when it isn't necessary," she said: "I find that if you depend on young people and let them do things in their own way, they seldom disappoint you."

And she went on to tell of a Hallowe'en social to which a crowd of outside guests had been invited and no one except a committee of girls knew what entertainment was being provided; they had the best programme of games in the club's history. And of the year when they had forty members on the roll and very member took part in a debate during the winter. Even though boys and girls as young as thirteen years, are admitted to the club, every member debates, and every member serves on the social committee. The membership roll is made up at the beginning of the year. The first four members on the roll make the programme committee for the first meeting, and the last four take charge of the refreshments, boys and girls alike serving and washing dishes. "And it is very noticeable," the leader remarked, "that boys who were once very diffident, now take the initiative as if they were hosts in their own homes. The club training is going to mean a lot to them later on."



Mrs. W. H. Wilmott, of Sharon, a leader with a rare gift for keeping in the background and encouraging young people to express themselves.

next day, these young people are discussing such things as "What arrangement should a farmer and his son make when the son is twenty-one?" Sometimes fathers who come to the meetings are set thinking as well as the boys and what might become a difficult situation for both is solved overnight. There is nothing at all formal about the discussions. When this question was brought up at the Sharon club, the general opinion of the boys was that "it was better to ask for some business arrangement than to wait till you got mad about something and then leave home for good."

The problem of the retiring farmer is a popular topic. When should a farmer retire? Should he retire to the city, the town or the village, or would an unpretentious home near the place of his life's work be better? Even if most of the family live in the city, is this the happiest place for the retired farmer? Can a man over sixty learn to dress differently and live differently and enjoy it? Should a retired farmer be divorced from animal life and nature? Should a retired farmer do nothing? Should a retired farmer or a farmer who is simply living retired on his farm, grow products for fun and sell them for less than the market price? What do the members of the club think they would do if they were ready to retire?

And could anything be more natural than that young people who still have their homes to build, should discuss the essentials of a good farm home? Some of Mr. Nodwell's suggestions for this topic are: "Where should the different rooms be placed? Do you like to eat your breakfast in the sun? Is it extravagant to build a farm house on one floor? In this day and age is there any sense in or reason or excuse for a parlor? What is an economical farm water system? Is it a crime to plant trees around a house? What is the best lawn grass to use? How can you keep sparrows out of a Jenny Wren's nest and how make simple bird-houses? Is it necessary that a girl when she is married should 'start where her mother leaves off', with a piano and all the comforts and luxuries acquired through years of industry?"

WE could understand this acquisition of social poise more easily than we could the general readiness to debate, until we learned of another feature of their programme. The club makes a specialty of informal discussions in which the members are led and encouraged and almost coerced into thinking for themselves. Mr. Nodwell, director of the United Farmers' Educational Department is particularly enthusiastic over this discussion idea and has sent out to the clubs a budget of original suggestions for discussion topics. "This is not a matter of debate," he explains, "but a little venture in co-operative thinking. It is situations, not subjects that are studied, and we speak as we think—not with the object of supporting one side of an argument." The theme of his study programme is "Minding