

# The Home

## The New Structure

The last weeks of the year are provocative of more emotions, more anxieties, more doubts and resolutions than all the rest of the year combined. As the triune holidays approach, memory is active; scene, incident, event, are recalled by the anniversaries of time. The yearly financial accounts compel attention; the day of reckoning is near at hand. Borrowing in advance from next month's allowance cannot continue, and expenses, income, and balance or deficit, must meet face to face in settlement. Never does one's judgment seem so poor and feeble a thing as now, when the day of reckoning comes. The decisions of the new year, now old, were so positive in wisdom and righteousness! Results show them to have been honeycombed with short-sightedness, prejudice, self-will. Resolutions that were giants in promise prove pygmies in performance. We seem to sit down in the midst of débris that must be used again in construction. The architect who can recognize beauty and fitness in what to the untrained eye is rubbish, is the man who justifies his training. He who sees possibilities where the superficial observer sees only destruction is the man who redeems life; who saves the salvable; who cultivates the possible, and makes the probable a reality.

He who sits at the closing of the year with heart bowed low because of a sense of defeat, and consequent discouragement, has lost a battle because he did not know how to fight. If the defeat, partial or entire, does not show him how to plan the coming battle, then the future may well be hopeless, for he has failed to get that which enriches life—knowledge through experience.

Out of the débris erect the new building; place the stones that have fallen on the solid foundation of strength and knowledge gained, cementing each in its place by patience and courage, so that it may withstand the elements that play in each man's life.



## The State Federation of Women's Clubs

By Helen H. Backus

The General Federation of Women's Clubs has done splendid service in rousing local pride, and has stimulated club members to better work. The National Federation preceded and assisted the stimulating co-operation required for the World's Fair. The records and mechanism of the latter are now largely available for State organizations wherever formed. And to the National Federation are all women indebted for the impulse that made State Federation possible, with all its rich opportunity for exchange of interest and sympathy. Large and small clubs, rich and poor clubs, experienced and inexperienced, have now a common meeting-ground in their own States.

The New York State Federation recently organized has aimed at combining the minimum of formal organization with the maximum of incitement towards practical co-operation. Thirty-six clubs participated, and enthusiasm and good feeling are said to have marked all the proceedings. The widest inclusion is made in the article concerning membership, which stipulates only that constituent societies of women shall be without sectarian or political bias, and organized on broad and human lines. This Federation will aim to bring into relations of mutual helpfulness alumnae associations and working-girls' clubs, professional leagues and literary societies, press clubs and philanthropic bodies. To this end its promoters desire that

groups of related societies may soon be formed, bringing into clear definition and general understanding the kindred aims of all workers toward desirable ends. The relation of the State Federation towards the General Federation is carefully guarded by making the State Chairman of Correspondence the connecting link between the two bodies, and a member of the State Executive Board.

Serious responsibilities devolve upon the officers intrusted with the first embodiment of this large ideal. Many crudities and vexations must be expected to attend the first association of so many diverse minds, temperaments, tastes, and prejudices. The infant giant born of the desire to "lend a hand" must often remember the associated motto, "Look forward, and not back; out, and not in; up, and not down." But back of the State Federation is the General Federation, with its rich harvest of liberal thinking and generous ambition; back of that is the womanly zeal for self-culture nourished by a quarter-century of intellectual freedom. As a guerdon of ultimate success these allied workers can point to many a hard-won victory which isolated groups of women have won in hospital and reformatory, in home and school, in city ordinance and factory law. The perseverance of the individual has triumphed over newspaper ridicule, financial stress, political contempt, and social narrowness. What may not the might of sympathetic numbers accomplish?

Maine, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, Massachusetts, and New Jersey have already organized in like manner, each State seeking to develop its own characteristic field. New York must meet the problems of the older communities, of the more complicated social order. It has begun in the true spirit of democracy, and rests upon a firm basis of sound economic principle. It will promote and not diminish the spirit of womanliness; it will nourish and not impoverish home life. It should mightily replenish that stream of new loyalty which has this autumn quickened the sons and daughters of the Empire State.



## Is Co-operative Housekeeping a Failure?

By Katharine B. Davis

The answer to the question, "Is Co-operative Housekeeping a Failure?" will depend upon the point of view of the student of the subject. If that person be a tired housekeeper, driven almost to desperation by the present unsatisfactory conditions; if she has looked around to find encouragement in some precedent before taking what seems to be a leap in the dark, and if she has found, as she undoubtedly has, that there is no place in this country where a complete plan has been successfully carried out for any great length of time, she will answer, "Yes, it has been tried many times, and it has always failed." She will fold her hands and submit to what seems to her the inevitable.

If, on the other hand, she is an enthusiast, she will see in these same failures only necessary experiments, each of which brings her a step nearer the goal. Her answer will be as emphatically, "No."

If she is simply an onlooker, with no vital interest in the matter, she will probably say, "Not proven."

The last answer is perhaps the correct one. It is too early yet to say whether co-operative housekeeping will prove eventually a success or a failure. Heretofore it has failed, but there have been good reasons for the failures, and they do not seem to be of such a nature that they cannot be avoided in the future.

A woman who has given considerable attention to the subject, and spent much time in investigating what has already been done, writes in a private letter: "Could the world be filled with perfectly reasonable and responsible human beings, it might be a great success just here and now." She touches upon the vital point in all of the failures. Sad to say, people, and especially women, have not yet learned to co-operate harmoniously. They are unwilling to yield personal inclinations, tastes, and prejudices,

particularly when the sacredly cherished traditions of the culinary department are concerned. This defect in human nature is the greatest hindrance to successful co-operation, as a practical difficulty, and increases as the scale on which the co-operation is to be carried on increases.

If the families of a neighborhood wish to venture an experiment, success attend them! But let them first look well to their "reasonableness" and strength of will.

Aside from this "original sin," which seems to make co-operation so much more difficult than autocratic rule, there are no unsurmountable obstacles in the way of success, providing there is an intelligent understanding of the ends to be accomplished and of the means to be used in order to attain those ends.

A letter was received by the writer asking for a complete financial statement of the cost of co-operative living, including laundry, for six families, comprising twenty-four individuals. Doubtless the editors of the household departments of our leading papers are in constant receipt of such requests. The inquirers do not realize the difficulties in the way of an intelligent and accurate answer. Without a detailed knowledge of the circumstances, the scale of living proposed, the amount of money available for apparatus, the situation of the homes with respect to each other, and many other items, no satisfactory estimate can be given.

Mrs. Coleman-Stuchert, of Chicago, has studied the subject carefully, and has prepared a complete plan of co-operative living, which can be adapted to meet the needs of people of varying income. This plan has never been put into actual operation. So far as the theory is concerned, no fault can be found with it, and only trial can disclose faults of detail. It avoids many of the rocks on which most experiments have split. It is adapted for a city or large town, but would necessarily be greatly modified in a village or in the country.

Mrs. Stuchert provides for the erection of a block of houses around an open square, which contains kitchen, cold-storage, laundry, and buildings for heating and lighting plants. Each family is served in its own house, thus interfering in no way with the private family life, while the modern scientific appliances make it possible to place the food upon the table in as appetizing a condition as if prepared in a private kitchen.

According to her estimates, for a family in moderate circumstances, an eight-room house will cost its owner \$2,800. The current expenses, including light, heat, insurance, taxes, and services, would not exceed \$15 per month. First-class table board would be \$2 per week per capita, and the laundry-work not over 25 cents per dozen pieces.

In most cases the people who have generally undertaken to do their housework on the co-operative plan have not felt like putting a large sum of money into a proper "plant." They have adopted makeshifts in place of absolute necessities, and the result has been disastrous. For example, in one city, the experiment of a co-operative kitchen was undertaken by a number of well-to-do families. As it was "only an experiment," they did not wish to invest much money in appliances for delivering the meals to each dining-room in a hot and appetizing condition. Ordinary tin wash-boilers were purchased, one for each family. Into these were put the meals, each dish being placed in a tin can. The result was that by the time the food was brought to the table it was quite cold, as might have been expected, and the experiment was given up, and co-operative house-keeping pronounced a failure. This difficulty, at least, might have been avoided.

In many instances the ladies of each family have undertaken to supervise the menu and purchase the provisions in turn, each serving a week. This is seldom as satisfactory as to give entire charge to some competent person. In the present state of knowledge few women have precisely the same ideas of economy and judgment in purchasing, and few are so strong-minded as to refrain from unfavorable criticisms of another's methods where their own personal interests are involved.

Another difficulty in experimenting on a small scale is the widely differing tastes in families of the same social

circle. The food cannot be furnished economically to six families if each family wishes a different menu. The same families, if driven to live in a boarding-house, will submit to much greater unpleasantness before they rebel against the table than they will if they have a hand in the direct management.

Up to the present time the most thoroughly successful experiments in co-operation in this country have been those conducted by individuals rather than by families. The Jane Club connected with Hull House in Chicago is a notable example of what can be accomplished in the line of a co-operative home by young women who earn their own living. In this Club about forty girls have the comforts of a cheerful, pretty home and a good table, managed by officers elected from their own number, for which they pay about \$3 apiece per week. A cook and two assistants are able to do all the work of the house except the bed-making, which each girl does for herself.

The success of this Club has led recently to the formation of a similar club, near Hull House, for young men.

A co-operative laundry is started more easily and is more likely to be successful than is the kitchen. Any community wishing to make a beginning would do well to undertake that first.

The writer wishes by no means to discourage co-operative housekeeping. On the contrary, she firmly believes that it is the housekeeping for the future. At the same time it is well for any community desiring to try the experiment to realize the difficulties from the first.

The answer to the question, "Is co-operative house-keeping a failure?" cannot be given until a thorough trial is made of some such scientific plan as that proposed by Mrs. Coleman-Stuchert.



## An Answer to a Question

"What Can be Done to Make a Little Girl in Love with Health?"

By Mary Taylor Bissell, M.D.

In these days, when out-of-door life and healthy sports have become fashionable for girls of all ages, the morbid and introspective child, happily, is not a common spectacle.

Memoirs of Charlotte Elizabeth and of her pallid kin, who loved melancholy tales and darkened chambers, and died at an early age, never having known a day of hearty, rollicking childhood, are not popular reading with the children of the twentieth century, and it is a healthful sign of the times that this is a fact. The tendency to robustness, or at least the admiration for it which is noticeable among girls to-day, is certainly encouraging to all who care for a healthy mind in a healthy body.

Occasionally we meet a child, however, who, either from unfortunate surroundings or from an inherited morbid temperament, has returned to the old abnormal notion that ill health is attractive, and who surrounds invalidism with such a sentimental interest that her whole ideal of life is colored by this feeling. How disastrously such a state of mind must react upon the child's own health, mental and physical, it is easy to imagine.

Such an instance fell under our notice of late. The little girl in question had been intimately associated with an invalid relation whom she greatly admired, and had fallen into the habit of imitating her ill health, with the most unfortunate results upon herself.

The question, "How can we make her in love with health?" was anxiously asked by her family. It is a question that might suggest many a sermon on the value of prevention rather than cure, and of the necessity for surrounding young and impressionable people with an atmosphere of healthful interests that may fill their minds too full to leave space for morbid thoughts.

It is very clear that the remedy for such a condition must be a radical one, for the whole ideal of existence in such a case must be gradually changed and differently colored until it gains a normal tone; and such a task can be accomplished only by patience, intelligence, and tact.