

read by the general public, they must be taken from the libraries or bought direct from the publisher, as they do not appear for sale to any considerable extent in the ordinary market.

It is a curious comment on public taste to note that everything in the form of French history and memoirs is always salable.

Whether the reputation of the French kings and their favorites accounts for this popular demand we know not, but lives of Mme. Du Barry, Mme. de Pompadour, Mme. de Montespan, Marie Antoinette, Princess Lamballe, and all such well-known figures in French history command eager attention.

In examining the statistics of the year showing the number of books printed and the classes they represent, one gets an idea of what the public really reads. The following figures, although repre-

senting the publishing end of the business, are also fairly representative of the bookselling end. Fiction, imported and home-made, heads the list of 1902 by an output of between seventeen and eighteen hundred. Aside from technical publications which are merely tools for the workman, the entire lists of other works of literature for the same year, upon an acknowledged approximate estimate, number only between two thousand and two thousand five hundred.

We must accept, then, the fact that in these days we prefer our mental pabulum served in the form of fiction, and acknowledge at the same time that the boundaries between fiction and philosophy or psychology, or scientific statements, have quite disappeared, and everything included in the entire universe can, it now appears, be put into a story.

IV.—Reading in the Farm Home

By Martha van Rensselaer



HE long, quiet evenings on the farm offer one advantage over town and city life, where interruptions are frequent, and where there is more entertainment to divert the mind from quiet reading and study.

Delightful associations have sprung up in the companionship of books about the farm hearth. The accompaniment of roasted chestnuts and apples has not decreased the enjoyment one whit. Life on the farm is by some associated with loneliness and a separation from many of the enjoyments of life. However, no one is much alone who has the companionship of books.

Notwithstanding the advantage of uninterrupted time in farm life, there are other obstacles to be surmounted. The farmer and his wife are hard workers. When the active, physical labor is accomplished for the day, the body is tired and the spirit lacking for delight in books. Then it is that reading becomes perfunctory. The best efforts of the individual have been spent in physical labor, which taken alone soon causes

the spirits to flag and leads to monotony.

There is much in farm life which is mere drudgery unless brightened by interest in that which will cause one to look beyond the work to something more inspiring. The man who toils in the city finds his enjoyment in the companionship of his fellow-workers, and in the varied experiences always open to him. The toiler on the farm is left alone with his plow, or she with her frying-pan. Robert Burns found delightful comfort in the wee mouse in the furrow and the daisy in the field. The average farmer lad or girl will either grow spiritless in the work, or restless for a change, unless there is an appreciation of nature and books.

During the past few years Cornell University has sustained in its State Extension Department a Reading Course for farmers, and one for farmers' wives.

The subject matter has differed widely in the two courses to fit the needs of the worker in the home and the one in the field. Still, there has been a common interest, for the woman engages in farm

councils as well as in some of the farm work, and the man, partly by reason of his frequent presence in the home, and the fact that the family needs are supplied directly from the farm, has interested himself in the economics of the home. One lesson in this course has been on the subject of Reading in the Farm Home.

A quiz accompanies these lessons, and in this way the supervisors of the work have been able to determine much regarding the habit of reading in the farm home. No better idea can be gained as to the actual amount and the kind of reading, with the obstacles in the way, than is afforded by the answers to some of these questions from the farmers' wives. It must be remembered that the farmer's wife is an intelligent woman, having enjoyed in early life the same school advantages as many of her friends who have married doctors, lawyers, or business men, and moved to the city to spend their lives in different lines. We must also remember that the farmer's family is brought into contact with real, living, practical problems, which demand thought, cultivated observation, and intelligent study.

It is noticeable in the work of the Reading Courses that the farmer and his wife are not trammelled by conventionality. Their opinions are pronounced, they express their real feelings and experiences freely. Their testimony on the reading habit is therefore the more interesting as coming from them direct.

Among other questions contained in the quiz was the following:

What is the greatest obstacle which you have to reading?

The answers given indicate the thought of the majority, and not the exceptional condition.

"In my family the principal difficulty is to get them to stop reading. I think it is better to read one good book six times than six good books once."

"The greatest difficulty is to get the time to read. We have so much to do, yet we read good and useful books and papers with practical suggestions, and I am greatly interested in the Reading Course for Farmers' Wives, and thank you very much for it."

"Most of us read quite a lot. Poor eyesight is the principal difficulty. I should not think that I could afford to buy books."

"There is none, unless it is money to procure the books; still, we borrow many."

"Lack of time, with only one pair of hands to provide for a family of five and the occasional hired help out-of-doors."

"There are two of us. In the evening I have to sew, etc., and my husband is a hard worker. We have a large farm, and the buildings are in poor repair, so that much of the winter is spent in getting material for repair. He often feels too tired to read aloud, if at all."

"Lack of funds to buy books, and poor eyesight."

"My principal difficulty is to get the children away from their books and papers, and not to give more time than I ought to my reading. I think one can read too much as well as not enough. I know that I am inclined to do so. It is a great temptation to read just one more chapter."

"We do not read more because one daughter gives so much time to her music and the other daughter to her painting, and on account of poor eyesight, but we always read aloud a great deal—farm papers, religious, temperance, and political papers."

"I think we will try a traveling library in the grange next winter."

"If men would spend their tobacco-money on books that their children want, it would be the greatest investment of their lives, and would not be felt. Dances, card parties, and other social events are the greatest detriments to home life and reading."

"One member of our family reads aloud hours and hours, which is a help to me in some ways. But when one reads so long, and the others are obliged to work, it taxes the nerves, and one cannot digest it all."

"My husband reads while I sew, or I read while he prepares apples for the next day's baking of pies. We both enjoy it better, and I can read more in that way."

"When the day's work is done, we

want to rest. We do not feel like exercising our minds over books. We seek the bed, or walk to the neighbors."

"Am sorry to say I have not read one book the past year. Have three small children; do all my own work; have the care of the milk and butter; do not make my work a drudgery; it is a pleasure to me, but it keeps me busy."

In order to learn what reading is to be found in the farm home, this question was asked:

Read things that will make a lasting impression on the hearers, something that they will think about afterwards.—Many of the most entertaining stories and poems have this merit. Besides entertaining for the time being, they make you "feel better," they inspire, they help you over hard places, they give information that you want, they make you determined to do something.

What books which you have read this year have been the most helpful to you? Mention the desirable qualities of each.

The answers returned would indicate that the reading done in the farm home reaches a high standard. To be sure, the family that will be interested in a reading course is not one that is fed on trashy books and papers, nor one that lives in a bookless home.

"Arnold's American Dairying" taught me what to do with cream that would not come, and the 'Fool's Errand' makes me feel more independent, has given me a broader view and larger charity for the unfortunate."

"I am sorry to confess that the books which I have read recently have not been helpful. Papers and magazines have given me better reading."

"My son reads everything pertaining to stock with much interest. He reads quite promiscuously—that is, nearly everything he can get. (He don't get many trashy stories to read.) His general complaint is, 'I wish we had more papers or something new to read.'"

"Our reading is not 'books,' but magazines, papers, etc. We take two daily papers, one weekly, and six monthly magazines."

"Our weekly and monthly periodicals, seven in number, make about as much reading as I have time for. I have read 'The Hoosier Schoolmaster,' and am about to read 'A Fool's Errand.'"

"One semi-weekly paper, one daily,

and a couple of monthly ones, and all else I can get except trashy ones. I do not spend any time reading that stuff. Am fifty-five years old, so must save my eyes for good reading.

"Works of Ernest Seton Thompson, Abbott, Alcott, Cooper, and 'Youth's Companion,' 'Ladies' Home Journal,' and the weekly papers."

"Shakespeare, English history, and am studying sociology."

"The Cornell Reading Course for Farmers' Wives, the 'Ladies' Home Journal,' the New York 'Independent,' 'Sunday-School Times,' 'McClure's Magazine,' 'Country Gentleman,' 'New York Farmer,' 'Utica Press,' 'Youth's Companion,' and various books from our circulating free library, etc."

"What I can catch from the weekly, dailies, and monthlies, and circulars that come in the house. Have read about five of the books of the day, among them 'History of Education' and 'History of the United States' before the first of April."

"My reading is generally bits from the newspaper and the Bible, occasionally a book of history."

"Have just been reading Maclaren's works, 'Auld Lang Syne,' 'The Bonnie Briar Bush,' and 'Kate Carnegie,' also 'Black Rock.' I am going to begin a history or rather Life of Lincoln next. It rests one so to sit down, even in the midst of work, and read five or ten minutes."

"Longfellow's poems, Bible stories, stories written in an interesting manner that seem true. My son considers it a waste of time to listen to unreasonable stories. No fairy stories for him. Do you think the 'Arabian Nights' and fairy stories cultivate the imagination? Some think so."

"Elizabeth and her German Garden' has a great charm for me, and I feel I have many feelings in common with her, though I have to do my own gardening, which she often wished to do. I have studied the 'Wild Flowers of America' in connection with Gray's Botany, and enjoyed it very much. I have now 'How to Know the Ferns,' 'The Making of an American' is a delight to me—so modestly written. I also enjoyed

'Lorna Doone,' never read before though so old, especially the farming part of it."

"Ralph Conner's works, showing what men will do with and sacrifice for love of their fellow-men. 'The Trouble Woman,' 'Cosmopolitan,' May, 1902, showing how small and puny our troubles are compared with others. 'Cornell Nature Studies,' making one observant of things God has placed all about us. 'Lessons to Farmers' Wives,' 'Rural New Yorker.'"

Another suggestion made to the farmer's family brought fewer answers. When the child upon the farm is brought to have a cultivated interest in the beautiful world about him, he will see more of the "books in the running brooks," and dwell less on the hard lines of farming.

Just as soon as the boy or girl expresses a desire for a book on any practical or rural subject, get it. If one of the children likes poultry, buy a poultry book. You may need one on birds, or gardening, or trees, or horses, or pets. Remember that a good book well read is a good investment. No child is beyond hope if it likes to read in the sight of father and mother. The child that steals away to read in secret should be looked after. Can you not afford five books in 1903 on subjects connected with the out-of-doors? What are the principal difficulties which interfere with the reading habit in your family?

"There is but little to interfere. Reading is about the only recreation we have. I cannot afford five on subjects connected with the out-of-doors, but hope to have one."

"We might, perhaps, afford five books this year, but I should want them entertaining. Our evenings are short even in winter. We get twelve newspapers every week, and that takes about all the time for reading we have."

"No difficulties except lack of time for all we would like to do in that line. Do not know that we can afford five books, but will try some good book on birds soon, as boys are especially interested in them."

"Can you suggest what five books would be most helpful to husband and me? I would try to afford them. If anything, we read too much. I wish you could suggest some other way of spending our evenings—just two persons, past forty."

"We will think about the books on subjects connected with the out-of-doors.

Are always getting books on birthdays, and the holiday books figure very conspicuously."

The formation of reading clubs is being urged by the Extension Department of the University, and the movement is gaining ground. One of the questions and suggestions proposed was as follows:

Set aside one evening in the week for family reading.—Take turns reading aloud. Let your neighbors know that you keep open house that evening, if they wish to drop in. Do not try to make an "entertainment," but spend a quiet, restful evening.

Can you, with a group of women, form a reading club and use a traveling library? Make an effort and report progress.

An arrangement has been made with the New York State Library whereby there could be sent to the clubs of the Farmers' Wives' Reading Course traveling libraries composed of practical works on home economics, biography, fiction, travel, and poetry. The library may be kept six months, and a nominal fee paid to the State Library covers transportation both ways. Clubs receive ten books for \$1, twenty-five for \$2, fifty for \$3, seventy-five for \$4, one hundred for \$5.

In presenting the subject of reading to the farmers' wives, the following appeal was made:

The character of the farm home depends in great measure on the women who keep it; and the character of the women depends in good measure on the amount and character of the reading.

We want to know what is read in the farm home. Will you not co-operate by telling us what you read, what you find to be best, and how you solve the problem of reading in the home? Questions are appended to this lesson. Will you not fill them out as best you can and return to us? Our future agricultural condition will depend to a large extent on what and how much is read in the farm home. We want your help.

Read something that the children will like. Do not try to elevate the children to your points of view. If you do, the reading will be "dry," and the children will not stay to hear it unless they are obliged to do so. If you find that your boy is reading trashy stuff, do not upbraid him, for it may be partly your own fault. Read him a good story, but one that is full of the real, living, jumping, hilarious boy. If you have no such story, or do not know of one, ask your neighbor or the teacher or the minister to go to the village library. Write to us; we will try to help you.

Theodore Roosevelt
the Citizen

BY

JACOB A. RIIS

AUTHOR OF "THE MAKING OF AN AMERICAN,"
"HOW THE OTHER HALF LIVES," ETC.

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