

“Woman’s Sphere of Action”



Canadian women, housework and the household, 1858 – 1921

Curated by Chris Willmore

Cover: Detail from Anonymous. (c. 1912). *Vancouver Bertie Mother [Photograph]*.
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Transcribed, selected and annotated
by Chris Willmore

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Woman's Sphere

“Woman's Sphere of Action”¹ (May, 1858)

A husband will talk to his wife about pictures, or the opera, or the last new novel, but he cannot converse with her about his business – this is Greek to her. Where he wants most counsel he is obliged to remain silent. They may be one in all things else, but here they are twain. And as if this were not enough, the mother is often pained to witness her son's ill-concealed impatience and contempt of her judgment in all matters that pertain to business.

I am no enemy to accomplishments in women. A good picture looks all the better in a becoming frame. Few things seem to me so perfectly harmonious as a good and beautiful woman, surrounded by all that is tasteful and lovely. But if for these graces and ornaments she must sacrifice the more useful accomplishments of life, far better would it be for her happiness as a wife and a mother that her education should be the same as that of her kitchen maid.

Instances are continually occurring where women are reduced from affluence to comparative poverty by the death of a husband or some other relative. And I have seen some to whom this trial has come manage to acquire such a knowledge of business as enabled them not only to preserve their children from beggary, but in the course of a few years to give them a fair start in life. I have known sons who have been indebted to such means achieve a more than ordinary success. And even when the parent had ceased to exercise a legal or moneyed control over these sons, I have seen them, shrewd and clever business men as they were, consulting her upon every emergency, and valuing beyond all price, that keen discernment and sound judgment which adversity had developed and experience had taught them to respect.

The great evil of narrowing down woman's sphere of action is, that all those branches in which she is employed are sadly overcrowded. It is surprising to see what a number of applicants there are on the slightest rumor of employment. The abundance makes female labor cheap, and it requires no profound knowledge of social economy to perceive the demoralizing influences to which women are subjected in times when employment becomes scarce or unremunerative.

“Fine Ladies”² (June, 1874)

What are called “Fine Ladies” are rather plentiful now a days. This high sounding appellation generally means a term of reproach, - it signifies those who are disposed regardless of consequences to sacrifice utility to display; it means a restless desire to appear more important than circumstances justify. Nothing is farther from

¹ From Grinton, G. W. (1858, May 10). HOCHELGA DEBATING CLUB. *The Montreal Gazette*, p. 1. Written by George W. Grinton (d. 1863).

² From FINE LADIES. (1874, June 17). *The Nanaimo Free Press*, p. 2.

our wish than to indulge in remarks that might check wholesome aspiration. That woman's sphere of usefulness has hitherto been too circumscribed we freely admit. There cannot be a doubt but in the commercial world, in art and science, and in several of the professions there has been simple scope for woman's operation, hitherto neglected; but it would be an evil hour, betokening calamity, if such enlarged conception of woman's usefulness should interfere with the due appreciation of good housewifery.

With all the advantages arising from the facilities now afforded for education, there cannot be a doubt, but that in some ill-constituted minds instead of assisting, it causes the plain duties of life to be regarded as so much objectionable drudgery. Where such feelings are entertained, woman instead of being a help-mate to man, becomes the "fine lady." How often does it happen in humble life, many a man is deterred from marrying by fear of expectations on the part of the woman he might ask to be his wife, that he could ill afford to gratify – that the nicely furnished parlour would be looked for, where as a beginning the comfortable kitchen should suffice – that there would be the thoughtless overlooking that cents in the early days of housekeeping are often more value than dollars in an after period?

A young woman whose father could give nothing by way of marriage portion, should not be heard to say "I would never think of marrying a man who could not keep a servant," and yet such observations are sometimes given vent to; in such case we have exhibited the "fine lady." Such ideas are not compatible with that economy necessary to keep her young husband out of debt – are suggestive of the weight charged by the butcher not being tested, of the number of loaves from the baker not being counted, and of complaints of the worthlessness of servants.

It is from circumstances such as these, many a man lingers on till he becomes a confirmed bachelor, and many a woman when marrying misses the happiness that wedded life ought to give. The industrious mechanic with his earnings of \$2½ (dollars) a day – the young tradesman beginning business – the young man with income from salary, when thinking of getting his meals at his own home instead of at a boarding house is filled with alarm at visions of demand for expensive wedding outfit, and for household requirements that might eventually embarrass him.

We have often thought on witnessing the examination of the attainments of our girls at the Public Schools, that if, when committed to the discharge of the duties of active life, there was the same proficiency exhibited in mending a stocking, making a pudding, sewing on of buttons and keeping a house in good order, they would be invaluable to those with whom their lot might be cast. In past times it was customary for the daughters of the working classes, of mechanics and small tradesmen, to earn their living by becoming domestic servants, and we should hope that with the number of young girls amongst us, just entering upon womanhood, that instead of the inevitable "John Chinaman being found in every house, up-stairs, down-stairs and in my lady's chamber," we shall find our young women qualifying themselves to become good housekeepers and prudent wives, by taking the place now occupied by him from the Celestial Empire.

Perhaps such suggestions will cause some of our young friends to turn up their noses at this proposition, as if it would be degrading to them to act upon it, but if our young men in their efforts to earn a livelihood, have often “to stoop to conquer,” why should our young women be too proud to do so? There cannot be a question, but domestic service in a well-conducted family, is an admirable school for the future wives of our industrious classes, and more especially would this be true as concerns this Province, inasmuch as we have any number of families here who have learnt what good housekeeping is from the “old house at home” gathered from the experience of mothers and grandmothers.”

“What a comfort it is”³ (July, 1890)

What a comfort it is, when house-cleaning is over, when the garden beds are all made – with only an occasional hen to scratch up the seeds – when the house smells of soap and water and paint, all dear to the heart of a good housewife.

“What is the good of cleaning house, anyway?” grumble the boys. But all the same they would not enjoy moths in their seal caps or gauntlets, nor any other intruder in their homes, and but for the regular upsetting, how is one to meet and vanquish enemies?

We feel settled again in all the freshness of clean curtains and new cretonne. It is pleasant to think, too, that around these grassy walks there is no chance of dust gathering for a little while, as beside a village street. “Rest after weariness,” sing the housecleaners who now have time to work a little in the garden to prepare for the summer, and to attend to the many items of home adornment that women enjoy, and men admire while they attempt to laugh at.

The aids to this spring work are many, but nothing seems to renew old paint and take off the dirt without injury like “Pearline.” I remember some winters ago seeing a little boy drawing his sister along in a sled, the box of which was improvised of a packing box with “Pearline” in large letters on the side. The was a pretty child with large dark eyes, set off by a scarlet hood, and my companion remarked, “a good advertisement for the Company;” but the half of the ceiling of my sitting-room, the washed and the unwashed, was as good an advertisement if it could have been pictured. And so these little helps save our strength and we should study to use them. In the resting spell we have time to take little journeys and to study human beings, and it brings to us glimpses of life that are very interesting.

“A happy married woman”⁴ (April, 1909)

My friends tell me I’m an exception, and maybe it’s true, but I really, truly am a happy married woman, and have reason to believe that my husband is as happy

³ From Jack, A.L. (1890, July 15). The Sitting-room Window. *The Regina Leader*, p. 7. By Annie L. Jack (1839 – 1912).

⁴ From MUSE. (1909, April 10). CORRESPONDENCE. *The Winnipeg Tribune*, p. 14.

and contented as myself. There is only one rule, and it is a very simple one, that I try to live up to every day. I try to be the same to my husband as I was before marriage. Supposing I were not married to him, and was hoping and expecting to be, I shouldn't always be polite and kind. When he was invited to have lunch or dinner with us I would have been exceedingly rude had I stayed away the meal through because of some social affair. I would not even be late. Had he even been paying us a week end visit, would my mother have allowed him to get his own breakfast, or would I have stayed in bed while he ate it? When he was expected to call in the evening and I was tired and worried, did I meet him with a frown or irritability? No siree, I bathed my face and tired eyes, curled my hair, and maybe to hide the shiny and distressed looks, I powdered a little. Why should I do differently now?

The self control I gain day by day in overcoming my feelings has given me mental strength and reserve, which I badly needed, being of a rather peevish nature previous to my marriage.

My husband discusses his business with me, and together we have solved many business and financial problems, for we have not an abundance of the wherewithal.

Do not imagine we do not disagree. Oh yes, but we are not "sulky," and we "thresh it out" just as two chums should do. Sometimes he is wrong, sometimes I am, and we are both game enough to acknowledge our mistake. There is one thing we never do, and that is "nag." Oh! how I abhor that, and I believe that more men are driven to the devil by this than anything else. It never pays.

Some may say "oh, well, you both have nice dispositions." Not a bit of it. Naturally my husband has the quickest temper I ever saw, while as I said before I am peevish, which I think is worse than his fault, but with God's help we daily try to overcome these failings. I think an easy going man spoils more women than a man with a quick temper. The right sort of woman likes to feel a man's masterly way, though she may not acknowledge it.

Love is the prime root of our happiness, but love without tact is utterly useless, and women must possess the latter, for men are too busy to always think how to act best.

They tell me [...] that some men can never be managed. I do not believe it. Besides, I do not believe there are many really "bad ones" on either side; it is purely a matter of education and environment.

Let the women cease their continued round of teas and bridge parties, take a pride in their homes and children, get their minds on something else besides clothes, and their husbands will find no enjoyment in clubs, or the society of other women. My heart aches for the man who comes home to a lonely meal twice a day, week in and week out.

We are shocked at the condition of a certain ward in our city, and we find fault with our policemen, our ministers, and our council. We leave it all for the men to do, while in our own homes the work must start. Less of the sporty nature among the women of our refined homes, will soon make itself felt in the outside world. By "sporty" I do not mean "bad." I mean "pleasure loving."

“The young man’s ideal in marriage”⁵ (June, 1910)

“There is very little difference among girls.”

“Oh, yes, there is,” said the young man, “some are better housekeepers than others.”

We had been talking idly about the many June weddings, the talk drifting on to general remarks about marriage.

Here in a nutshell was the young man’s ideal in marriage – a good housekeeper.

You will suppose I am going to condemn him, but I am not. I might have asked him if he didn’t want a companion, an affinity, or propounded some other soulful question, and tried to have squelched him; but I did not.

I discovered some time ago that men’s and women’s ideals are not the same, and never will be. No matter what arguments have been used to show that woman [shines] as brightly in other spheres than home life, men are still unconvinced. It is a Chinese puzzle to any man why a woman has longings to step outside a round of household duties and demand the right to study law and so emulate Deborah of the bible, who judged Israel for 40 years, to become a leader and ruler of a great people, as Miriam who was appointed jointly with her two brothers as such; or to prophesy and instruct as did Anna of old, who made known the tidings of the Messiah.

So girls, if you have matrimonial aspirations (and they are worthy), let me advise you to take a domestic science course, either at home or at school, and prepare for that most exalted of all positions – a housekeeper.

“Marriage as a vocation”⁶ (March, 1920)

It is a highly regrettable fact that some of the American magazines circulating in this country seem to be doing all they can to discourage home matters from their high office. What a deleterious effect they are having on young married women by the oft repeated advice of seeking outside employment and leaving the home and children to paid assistants cannot be measured – only guessed.

The idea of marriage as a vocation seems to enter not into their calculations. And what time these workers may have to devote to the highest of all vocations – motherhood – is left to the imagination.

It is only the part of common sense for a young man not to ask a girl to marry him unless he is able to assume the burdens and responsibilities of married life by his own unaided efforts. If he must depend even partly on her earning capacity he is frankly not in a position to marry, and should, as a matter of self-respect, await the time when he is able to do so.

On the other hand, the girl should regard marriage in all seriousness as the highest vocation, and fit herself for its duties with all her mind and strength. If

⁵ From WOMAN’S SPHERE. (1910, June 13). *The Calgary Herald*, p. 11.

⁶ From HOME-MAKING AS A WOMAN’S VOCATION. (1920, March 27). *Victoria Daily Times*, p. 25.

unwilling to face the endless devotion and sacrifice it demands, she is unfit for this particular business of life and would better devote herself to some other vocation than that of homemaker.

Some of the articles appearing recently in contemporary magazines refer to the drudgery of cleaning, cooking, laundry and chamber work, almost as if they were a degradation. Surely we all know that if intelligently performed there need be no drudgery or slavery in housework. And if, as these authors claim, the household work can be better performed by paid assistants, since, they claim, many homes are incompetently managed, how, we would like to know, is a woman without sufficient intelligence to run her own home successfully going to compete with the business world?

If the girl has no taste for the work for which she was primarily intended, if the mothering instinct is not in her heart, if there is present no love of service for the sake of the comfort and happiness of those dear to her, then that woman is not meant for matrimony and will find her happiness in independence, in her ambitions, in the many works and vocations with which this world of ours is teeming.

In the startling theory that housework is preventing the birth of children there seems to be no grounds for alarm. The woman who works in her own home, for her own home, for her husband, is less likely to shirk one more burden, or to be any less physically fit to bear children than her sister in the office or the factory.

In her home she is queen, she is under orders from nobody, she may relax her strained nerves or rest her tired body at any moment of the day; if the weather is bad she may remain in bed; she is not driven relentlessly by the fear of her job; she is not subject to any one's whims or ill temper; she does not have to battle for success, and if she has married the right kind of a man and makes the right kind of a home she meets with love, praise and gratitude from her dear ones.

On the financial side of the question it is reasonable to see that the salary earned in many cases, would not be sufficient to pay for a competent nurse who could take the same intelligent care of her babies as she herself would do, and also the wages of "trained assistants" so glibly referred to, though where one is to obtain these paragons many a woman would like to know.

Therefore, it frequently happens that without even material gain a mother foregoes the happiness of rearing her own children, the pleasure of home life and social intercourse; she has no time to grow in loving intimacy with her children, for she is almost a stranger to them. She must find her recompense in the fact that she is a wage earner, in the importance it gives her in her own estimation to be able to make an independent income, and in such admiration as she thinks her friends feel for her cleverness, though they may be secretly censuring her husband for allowing her to do so. Few men feel the same tender reverence for their wives as they would for the makers of their homes and the mothers of their children. Surely we must bring the highest ideals into married life or love will quickly fade and die.

Is even the finest income any woman in the world is earning to-day worth it if it means foregoing the happiness of husband, children and home? Sixteen hours, waking and sleeping, spent in the home. How much time does that really give for

family life? If of the twenty-four, eight hours are spent at work, one hour on average must go to and from the place of work at least one hour for dressing and bathing, eight or nine for sleeping, leaving five or six hours at best to be spent with the family.

If the children are young they are through supper and ready for bed when the wage earning mother reaches home, too tired, probably, to do more than kiss them good-night. Will they, think you, grow up with their earliest and tendered recollections of her or will she be as a stranger to them always? Or if, as is advised, the mother remains in the home until the little ones reach the school age, does there ever come a time when they do not need her?

Through childish illnesses, sorrows or joys, is not her sacred place in the home? Can any paid help, no matter how skillful, care for, train and guide as she can? Her loving touch must be there, her hand direct, no matter how many "paid assistants" she can afford – the more the better that her life may be free to be spent on her children and the higher duties of cultured home love.

"The women of her day"⁷ (June, 1920)

The modern woman finds it hard to understand the life that was led by the average woman of the past generation. She hears her mother and grandmother lamenting this vanished type of womanhood – the perfect wife, mother and homemaker of fifty years ago.

I often go up to my grandmother's room, and sit an hour or so with her. To hear her tell of the women of her day is to be carried back into the past. Her ideas seem so quaint and homely, judged by modern feminine philosophy. And yet there is a wealth of wisdom in her sayings. She is forever saying, "I can't understand the restlessness of women of today. Always gadding about from one place to another, and never contented. I used to be so happy with my husband and family that I hated to leave home, even for a day. These women that go off to California for the winter now, I can't believe that they love their husbands. Once, when I was run down, the doctor advised me to go and stay a fortnight with my mother. I was to have a complete holiday and not do a tap of work. I got so lonesome by night of the first day that I persuaded my old uncle to hitch up the buggy and drive me home.

"When my husband saw me turning in at the gate, he was alarmed and said, 'Mercy! Jo, what has happened?'

"I came home, Jim," I said, "I got homesick and couldn't rest till I got back.' How he laughed as he kissed the baby and me, but I knew he was tickled to see me."

One can read between the lines all the love and devotion there was between this old fashioned man and woman, and what satisfaction they found in each other's comradeship and sympathy.

It does seem sometimes as if modern couples have lost this art of being all in all to each other. In fact, it has become so rare that people single out, and remark

⁷ From JOAN. (1920, June 3). WOMEN'S SPHERE. *The Redcliff Review*, p. 3.

upon, a happy and devoted couple. There are a great many reasons for this state of things.

One cause is the keen competition of the business world. Men are so busy from early morning till late at night, earning the bread and butter for the family, that they don't have time to be interested in the small happenings that make up a woman's world. And women are so busy looking after the needs of their household that they haven't the leisure to enquire into the fine points of their husband's business. In this way the two gradually grow apart, as their interests grow apart.

Then, too, our modern scheme of living is so full of activities for men and women. You simply must belong to this club or that in order to be a well rounded character. Mother belongs to a literary club, while father is a prince of good fellows in the Booster club, is on intimate terms with the local hockey team and is chairman of the school board and a manager in the church, as well. Little wonder, then, that they are both so rushed that they hardly have time to say, "How do you do?" and "Good day," to each other.

It seems, too, as if the franchise has added another field to those which woman has already conquered. She is firmly convinced that her grandmother was nothing but a drudge, the slave of man, and that her life was narrow – shockingly so. Her world was bounded by her kitchen walls and her time was occupied by a round of duties preserving, pickling, spinning and churning. Worst of all, she didn't get a look in on the real live issues of the day. Men made all the laws, and women had to be contented.

Now, there were many laws unjust to women and children, and these have been righted largely through the women's vote, aided by public opinion.

But the trouble is that many women go outside their own province to find their duty. A zest for public speaking and a lust for office seems to possess them. They like nothing so well as to face an audience or to see their words in print. This is perfectly all right if they have anything to say that is worth hearing or reading, but they are not always well posted on the subject in question and often let personal and purely feminine matters cloud their reasoning and obscure the issue. The result is that many good and sincere women, who might influence the public through their social relationships, are wasting their time and that of others. They are educating themselves, at the expense of the public. There is only one woman in a hundred who is endowed by nature with the qualities of leadership. The other ninety-nine are at their best in the home, woman's true sphere.

And let me say right here that I can't think of any job that requires more brains than that of being a good wife and mother.

To be a good wife is to be charming, unselfish and concerned about your husband's needs – to see that he is well clothed, well fed and well housed. To be interested in his interests, sympathetic in his troubles, and joyful in his successes.

To be a good mother is to watch over your children with a wise and jealous love. To let nothing escape you of their daily life and habits, to know their companions, to study their needs, and to keep in close touch with them as they grow and develop. A woman's children need her far more than the public. Many a good woman has spent

all her leisure time on public reforms, while the neighbors were secretly scandalized at the goings on of her own young ones.

Whenever I see a girl in her teens with bounding health and clear happy eyes, I feel like placing the laurel wreath on her mother's brow. Whenever I see a fine manly boy with a healthy mind and body, and a sense of humor, I do homage to his mother, for she has done the greatest thing on earth. She has helped to shape the character of two future citizens of the race.

The women of the future have a great task laid on them – to “keep the home fires burning,” to be a source of help and inspiration to their families, and use their influence wisely and kindly in moulding public opinion, and so to raise standard of womanhood in the world. For even the men admit that it is we women who, after all, set the pace.

The Challenge of Housework

“Snubbed by everyone”⁸ (January, 1910)

If a girl has been educated in any special line, then she will be able to face the world much easier, but if she has to turn to housework, then her troubles are surely beginning, for it is the hardest work there is, and the most looked down on. Why, I do not know. They are snubbed by everyone.

[A WORKING WOMAN]

“The hardest work a woman can go at?”⁹ (January, 1910)

Dear Miss Laurie,

I always read with interest the woman’s page of the Free Press and particularly so the letter of a “Working Woman,” in Friday’s edition, where she makes the statement: “Housework is the hardest work there is and the most looked down upon.” It is with the former part of this statement I wish to deal.

Now, is housework really the hardest work a woman can go at?

In order to make that assertion one should have tried all the other lines of work, and that is scarcely within the limit of time of any one woman.

However, women who have worked at other things, such as office work, teaching music and school, and other occupations, affirm that housework is certainly the hardest work of all. I wonder why this should be. Is it due to a lack of early training, or the comprehensiveness of the work? I would be inclined to attribute the aversion to housework to a lack of training on the part of teachers, office women and others, were it not the case that very often we find these same women make most excellent housekeepers and the girls who have been trained and who have done housework and nothing else complain very loudly against the drudgery of it. On the whole we find women object more to housework than any other occupation. I mean women who really have to do the work, not play at it, with someone to do the dirty work.

Aye, there’s the rub, the dirty work! It is this dirty work, such as polishing stoves, scrubbing, washing greasy pots and pans, shaking and dusting rugs that the average woman rebels at, not the catering and cooking for a family. But when one pair of hands has to do all the cooking, dish-washing, bed-making, sweeping, dusting, scrubbing, washing, ironing and all the other “ings” in connection with housework, I wonder that they all do not go on strike. If it were only six days in the week it would not be so bad, but Sunday is no day of rest for the housekeeper. But I hear some good man or woman say, “Why not do your cooking Saturday?” Very well; that means just

⁸ From A WORKING WOMAN. (1910, January 14). Appeal to the Man. *The Manitoba Morning Free Press*, p. 9.

⁹ From SUSAN. (1910, January 27). Why Housework is the Hardest Work. *The Manitoba Free Press*, p. 10.

so much extra work for Saturday, and the few spare moments enjoyed Sunday are scarcely a compensation for the leg weariness experienced Saturday night. As I do my work day by day I have tried to find a solution of the difficulty and I have come to the conclusion our system of house-keeping is far too elaborate.

It is very nice to have the beds spread with snowy linen, to say nothing of the white counterpanes and pillow-shams on all the beds in the house; the table covered with a fine, well ironed table-cloth, and a table-napkin for each member of the family, but it means backache for one woman to do all the work of a household and keep things in apple-pie order.

We women are sometimes told (by husbands and others) that the women of to-day are practically no good as compared with our mothers and grandmothers.

Well, the average man of to-day forgets the way he himself was brought up – no white table-cloth every day. That was reserved for Sunday tea, and visitors, at that; and as to the use of a table-napkin, well, there might be one or two in the house for the visitors, and these were sometimes not bought but managed to stray into the household as things sometimes have the habit of doing. And by the way, that reminds me of a story I once heard – a true one, too – of how the now every-day table-napkin crossed the threshold of a down east farmer's home. The farmer was invited to go to dinner in town. He went, had a good time, and on his return was recounting the pleasures and good things of the evening to his wife, when he put his hand in his pocket to get his handkerchief either for use or to add emphasis to his remarks, when all of a sudden his wife exclaimed: "John, you have brought home Mrs. B's table-napkin in your pocket!" Needless to say, the remainder of the narration was cut short. That happened within the last thirty years, but now I can assure you that same family would not think of eating without first hunting around for a table-napkin, were one not provided.

Now, this all means work.

Our mothers and grandmothers, a great many of them, made their afternoon toilets in the kitchen by washing in the family wash-dish, drying in a roller-towel, combing their hair with the family comb, then donning a clean calico wrapper and a white apron if company were coming.

Times have altered so since mothers and grandmothers kept house that were we women of to-day to follow their example, our husbands and their friends would be very much shocked and in private would be telling us how to do things in an orthodox fashion. Another reason why housework is now such a drudgery: the whole family sleep late. The head of the house has not to get to his place of business till eight or nine o'clock, consequently he lies in bed till the last minute, swallows his breakfast and skidoos. The children, following their father's example, get up one by one, have breakfast, and by the time the poor mother sees the last of them, she is worrying about what she will have for dinner and how she will have it in time, and this with baking, sweeping, dusting, washing, ironing and dish-washing.

What a contrast to the well-regulated homes of our fathers and grandfathers, where we all had to be up and seated to breakfast at seven o'clock! Father got up and lighted the fire, went about and did a few chores, mother prepared breakfast, and in

a large family the older ones dressed the younger and all sat down to breakfast together.

This late-rising harks back to late retiring.

Just imagine the modern father being home at nine in the evening with his family seated around listening while he reads and mother sits by and knits or sews! Then, after the younger member of the family have been put to bed, father and mother sit talking and planning for their children. When 10 o'clock comes, father prepares the "shavings," and the family retire.

Contrast this with the father who comes in to tea at 6 o'clock, swallows his meal as quickly as possible; grumbles if everything is not served as in a first class restaurant, speaks a word or two to his children and probably ignores his wife by putting on his coat and hat and not often so much as saying where he is going. Perhaps he does go out to do a little business, and perhaps he does not, or perhaps to meet a man; however, the man or the business detain him long past legitimate business hours.

Mother does up the evening work with the help of the children, helps them, probably, with their lessons, puts them to bed and then sits down to sew (not read, for she cannot afford the time) and think and wait till the man who should be her best friend and companion returns. She waits and works and looks at the clock and finally decides to retire herself. If this happened only one or two evenings in the week, no woman would complain, but this is the usual week's programme. Probably once a month the husband does remain at home, but he is out of his element, he has lost his desire to entertain or amuse his children; he seems out of place, consequently he hies himself off to bed before the family retire. This course of conduct has made many a woman tired of housework and rue the day she took upon her its responsibilities.

The father of to-day seemingly forgets that he owes anything to his wife and family except to feed and clothe them. So, if we women are no good as compared with our grandmothers, the men are certainly no improvements on their fathers and grandfathers. Then, we women go to far too much trouble with our cooking, serving too many dishes at one meal. We try to ape the good hotels and restaurants and the homes of the few people who can afford to keep a cook and several other hired people.

For, after all is said and done, only a very small percentage of the houses in Canada can afford to keep even one hired helper. Some few years ago the percentage was eighteen in the United States. We broil and we bake and we stew and we fry, to the neglect of the higher things of life – that of storing our minds with good reading. If we are making a dress for our little girl, we worry over the cut and fashion of it, while the extra time spent in making it fashionably might be more wisely used.

Dress the children plainly, give them good wholesome food, porridge and milk for breakfast with bread and butter if they feel inclined to take it; for dinner vegetable and meat sparingly; bread and fruit for tea.

If we women would stop fussing over cake and pie and pudding and salad and get down to good plain food it would save us a lot of work and be much better for our children. There are other reasons for housework being a drudgery besides those I

have already mentioned, viz., too much furniture and bric-a-brac and useless stuff which all has to be dusted, or rather should be, several times a week.

But I think the early to bed and early to rise habit would simplify our work more than all the other put together. We know that in one hour in the morning we can accomplish as much as in two in the afternoon, moreover going to bed late and getting up late we never feel rested, and consequently our work is a burden and not a pleasure.

But I am afraid I have wandered from my starting point, viz., is housework the hardest work of all?

I maintain it is under conditions such as I have named, and I am wondering if there are other women who feel as I do upon the matter. If so, I wish they would give us all the benefit of their opinions. You know we women living upon the prairie are sometimes very lonely, but the coming along of the daily papers is always a pleasant break in the day.

The latter part of "Working Woman's" statement, viz., "that those who do housework for their own living are looked down upon," I have not touched upon.

If this letter appears in print I may take courage and follow up the second clause of Working Woman's statement at a later date – some night when I get the children to bed and my husband has made the shavings and wound the clock and put out the cat and ascended the stair – then perhaps, I say, when I hear him snore I will take my pen in hand again.

SUSAN.

"Housework is by no means drudgery"¹⁰ (February, 1910)

Dear Miss Laurie,

Will you allow me a little space in your valuable paper, as I should like to correct Susan's idea of the modern husband, and also let her know that "housework" is by no means drudgery. In fact, I rather think that doing one's own housework is a great pleasure, especially when a man appreciates everything a wife does for him; and if you do your work methodically you will find you have most every afternoon to yourself. I think when a woman does not bother to arrange her work in a practical manner, it is then she finds she is never through. Then again, Susan grumbles about men wanting snowy white table linen. Now, why shouldn't a man have a nice clean table cloth and a table napkin, if he fancies one? I myself take great pleasure in decorating my dining table for my husband and children, although my husband wears black overalls. Then again you say the average man of to-day goes out every night and does not return until his wife is tired of waiting up for him and retires by herself. Well, I think Susan's life must be a hard one, but if she does her best to make her home comfortable, I think she would find that her husband would be pleased to spend his evenings with her. My husband only goes out one evening a month without me, and then he gets home by eleven, because he knows I am waiting with a nice little

¹⁰ From BEATRICE. (1910, February 1). Housework Not Drudgery. *The Manitoba Free Press*, p. 11.

supper for us both to enjoy when he gets back. I know from lots of people in this city, that there are plenty of men here just the same, and as for a man forgetting his wife, why, you never made a bigger mistake in your life, Susan. If a man's home is always clean and a smiling wife, and a hot meal to greet him, which after all is his due, now, how could a man with any sense forget his wife? Again, you say about us worrying about making little girls' dresses. Well, if you get a paper pattern for 10c that will solve that difficulty for you. Now, in conclusion I should like to say that if Susan does her work singing a little tune to herself instead of grumbling, she will find that housework is certainly not the hardest life of a woman.

BEATRICE.

“Day after day the same”¹¹ (February, 1910)

Dear Miss Laurie,

It has been with interest that I have read your page for some time. I am now going to say a few words, as I think “Susan” has been very much misunderstood, and her letter not read in the light she intended it. I am sure I read all of “Susan’s” letter, and I do fail to find where she grumbled; in fact, she quoted the pure, undefiled truth. Housekeeping has become more complicated in recent years, and I think I am in a position to know, as I worked at housework from the age of thirteen to twenty-three, and I surely think I would get a good schooling. Of course, in some respects it is easier on account of the modern conveniences, but for myself I will tell Susan, and Beatrice, too, that I cling to the good old way.

It is not the heaviness of the housework that makes it a drudgery, if so it can be called; it is the sameness – day after day the same. And I will say from my own experience that unless a woman can get out once a day and away from the house and children, I am sure in time it would drive one mad. Or even get out with the children away from the house, is a change. So why would one spend all their time at the wash tub, or at the ironing board, or dusting and arranging nick-nacks instead of getting out in the air? Sewing, too, is a problem that even the 10c pattern will not solve, as it takes time to sew, and when one has two or three children on their hands there is not always time. I think if they are dressed cleanly and warmly that is all they require, and good sensible food to eat. Why spend fifteen to thirty minutes ironing a dress that will be soiled in five minutes?

The good old days were good enough for my mother, and they are good enough for me, and my husband shares my opinion. I do think, in fact I know, that if one has system to their work it lightens the labor to a certain extent. But then, the best laid plans of mice and men gang aft a-glee. One may have had their work laid out to the best advantage and have a caller or an agent come in to insist you must buy his goods. What then if you are alone and only one pair of hands, and then those same agents will wonder you don't open wide your doors and welcome them in? I know whereof I

¹¹ From M.B. (1910, February 7). Household Work is Harder. *The Winnipeg Free Press*, p. 9.

speak, as I have three children, one just five months old, and have only had assistance for two months.

Beatrice evidently believes in reaching a man's heart through his stomach. Certainly it would not do to starve him. While I would not take a back seat to anyone for being a good cook, I give good plain meals, with dessert twice or three times a week, and he does not leave me alone more than once a week, either.

Hoping I have not written too much, I shall still remain an interested reader of your paper.

M. B.

“Is our Homemaker work needed?”¹² (June, 1913)

Dear Fellow Workers, - It is a great privilege to be given the opportunity of speaking to you today. We have all left our regular work to come here for inspiration. We are looking for inspiration and encouragement, so we may go back to our homes strengthened and refreshed, and so that we may be able to be better homemakers for the future. In order to be here at all, we have had to work extra hard last week. And shall have to meet a pile of accumulated work when we go back; but we need not “cross that bridge until we come to it.” We shall go back with fresh hope and courage to meet whatever is in store for us.

You may think to yourself, “Little she knows about all I have to do. Didn't I see a paper once she wrote on ‘Washing Made Easy’? Just the title was enough for me, for I don't believe you can make washing easy.” What I did say was “washing Made Easier,” and the printer changed the last word to easy. It made me feel badly, because then the very women who needed most to know how to make washing easier, would never read beyond the misleading title. But in order to come here with a contented mind, I had to wash all day Monday and all day Tuesday and house-clean the rest of the week. So you can see, I can claim to be a fellow-worker.

It seems to me that the thought of our great work in the homemakers' organization is with us in all our daily duties. When I was a wee girl with a new autograph album, a friend wrote in it, “When you stand before the tub, think of me at every rub.” And do you know? That is just what I do now. On Monday morning, while I am washing, my thoughts are busy with all the other women whose backs are bending over the washing. It is such a pleasure to get our clothes clean; but one is so tired after a big washing.

A woman said to me last week, “I am so tired of the monotony. On Monday one gets up and washes, gets breakfast, does dishes and sweeps the floor, goes on washing, gets dinner, does dishes, and sweeps the floor, finishes washing, gets supper, does dishes and sweeps the floor. On Tuesday there are the same three meals; three piles of dishes and the daily sweeping along with the ironing. And so it goes on

¹² From Fyfe, Mrs. John. (1913, June 28). The Urgent Need For the Work of the Homemakers. *The Regina Leader*, p. 17. By Maude Olive Fyfe (1873 – 1921). This paper was originally given at the Homemakers' Convention, Saskatoon.

until Saturday night, when there is the whole family to bathe. You begin on Monday morning in the wash-tub, and you end on Saturday night in the bath-tub." Well, it seems to me that here comes in one of the great calls for our work in the Homemakers. It takes hold of this monotonous round and infuses new life into it. The drudgery is uplifted into a science to be studied and applied.

THE VILLAGE WOMAN

Is our homemaker work needed? Let us look at some real cases of pioneer women out West here and see. Take a village woman first. A woman with six small children to feed, clothe, care for, educate and strive to develop in good principles. There is no steady help possible, since girls expect such high wages. There is sometimes daily help to be obtained, and often none to be had. Yet the cooking, the dish-washing, the sweeping, the washing, ironing, scrubbing and mending are there to be done by the homemaker, sick or well, tired or rested. And she knows very little about work of this kind. As a girl she studied binomial theorem, permutations, combinations and distributions, six books of Euclid, German, French, Greek and Roman history, and other things like these. Now she has to salt down pork because meat is so high-priced; she has to wash for eight people, and she never saw a washing done until she was married, for in the east the washing and ironing were put out and beautifully done for three people at the price of half a day's light work nowadays.

The work of the Homemakers, the study of her own life problems, is just the work that meets her case. It puts hope into a poor, discouraged drudge who spends her energy to no good purpose because she did not learn her profession as a girl. When one is physically over-tired, the mind seems to refuse to work. And often the homemaker "feel like the poor old horse in a tread-mill," as a woman expressed it once. She was an Ontario woman with a good home, two little girls well-grown out of the trying years, plenty of help available, her lifelong friends and relations around her. If *she* could feel in this way, surely we western pioneer women feel it even more.

THE BUSY FARM WORKER

Secondly. – Then take a farm woman. A director in one Homemakers' invited the president to stay with her for a few days. She had her new home, and she waited until the men were all away threshing, except one, left at home to do chores. And she did up all her big jobs, washing, ironing, scrubbing, cleaning cupboards, churning and baking, so she could have time to visit. When without company she helped milk, and always she looked after the milk-separator, but the man turned the crank. She said she had nothing to do. Yet she was busy from six o'clock in the morning until eight o'clock at night; on the go all the time. She felt because she was not working at high pressure she had comparatively nothing to do.

How much the Homemaker work does for her? It gets her away at least once a month from this mountain of work, and she has a little social time with her friends in the village. She hears some good music and she adds her helpful suggestions to the discussions. Her mind is busy all the month between meetings, with helpful plans for next meeting. This work meets her needs.

DID WORK OF THREE

Thirdly. – Let me tell you of another woman. Likely you have met similar cases, for this is true. A young mother died and left six, seven or eight small children. I am not sure just how many children there were, but one was a wee baby. This wee baby, a neighbor took. The man was looking for another woman to come and look after the children, and still another to come and do work. Yet this woman did it all herself and would have done the work, boarded the men, looked after the older children and cared for the baby, had she lived. He could not get two other women willing to do part of the work without the care of the baby. So he had to give all the children away; and he is “batching” now. It seems to me that something should have been done long ago to make that woman value herself, so that she might be still living to do the work of the three women. She would love to work for those children because she loved them so dearly.

In old-settled Ontario, with its thickly-settled farm lands, its opportunities of all kinds for social life and for culture, there are over seven hundred Women’s Institutes, to which over sixteen thousand women belong. They have a supervisor, just for this work, and thirty-eight trained lecturers. Surely in sparsely settled Saskatchewan, with its lonely farms, its tiny villages, and its lonely, hard working pioneer women, who have left comforts behind them, the work is needed even more. We women should feel that we are “sisters all.” We should learn from our own needs the needs of others. And we should work for our sister women, and speak out for our sister women, whenever we have the opportunity.

Is the Homemaker work welcomed? At the second organization meeting I attended, we drove fifteen miles to a country school house. It was well filled with women who had to plan well to be there. The President elected was, of course, a farmer’s wife with the work of a farm woman to do. She also had six small children. And she served for the neighbors. She was a school teacher before she married and she tries so hard up her mental life. She is a splendid president and has been re-elected every annual meeting since.

At another meeting, the newly elected secretary came to me at the close to learn her duties. She was a farmer’s wife with seven small children. They had had many a crop failure, and you know what that means. Yet she wanted a Homemakers’ meeting in her district so much, that she was willing to take up most of the work. She said, “They will elect a new secretary at the annual meeting which comes in two months, as they will see I am not good enough for the position.” Yet she is still secretary, for she wrote a good account of their work for our recent Birthday Page. Her paragraph looked especially good to me, as I know a little of what it cost her to write it.

Another place had its organization meeting at the time of the big storm in the fall of 1911. There was a good attendance, one woman carrying her baby about half a mile as she walked to a neighbor’s to get driven the rest of the way. When spoken to of their courage in getting out, they answered, “Oh! We just could not miss a chance to be organized for Homemakers’ work. We had read so much about it.” When the two ladies went down the Arcola branch to organize, word was sent by a friend to the

Percy people for them to go to Kisbey or Arcola to join the Homemakers. They felt they wanted one of their own, so they wrote to Mr. Auld. He could not change the schedule at that late date. So they wrote to the Deputy Minister of Agriculture. He suggested that as Kisbey and Arcola meetings were to be held in the afternoon, a meeting be arranged at Percy for the evening between, and that someone go to Kisbey, drive the organizers to Percy, and then back to Arcola next day. That was done, and Percy, one of the finest settlements in Canada, or any other country, has a Homemakers organization, thanks to the dauntless spirit of one of its daughters.

What has the Homemakers' work done for us? It seems to me that one of the greatest things it has done for us women, is to teach us to take better care of ourselves. When we are physically over-worked and socially and mentally underfed, we are apt to let ourselves drift. "Who cares whether I take care of myself, bathe, put on fresh, dainty clothing, keep my teeth in good condition, go anywhere or want to go anywhere? I feel too tired to be bothered." This is how we feel. The Homemakers' work teaches us to feel differently. As one of my women humorously put it, "Good folks are scarce. So I must take care of me." I wish we would all feel like that. We are of more value than much work. The giving of money or land is not to be compared to the giving of homes, of real homes, where the spirit is uplifting and elevating. By our work in the Homemakers', the women are encouraged and strengthened, and hope is instilled. Housework is transformed into an interesting science to be studied, and the results applied towards better homemaking. Monotonous drudgery is changed into a cheerful profession. We get the right attitude towards our work.

We are gradually working towards this. Housework used to be considered menial. Anyone could learn to do housework without any training. Now we know better. We see that homemaking is the life-work of a woman. As such, it should be her life-study. The foundations, the right principles of her profession, should be taught from earliest childhood. And the working practice will be a pleasure when the work is understood and prepared for. Natural ways are right. The woman was made by Nature to be the Homemaker. And she should be trained in every way for her natural work. She loves to make a home for the loved ones. And we should see that she knows how, and does not destroy the happy home-life for want of knowledge. The women study their work in the Homemakers' meetings, and they give their daughters training in Domestic Science.

THE SOCIAL SIDE

The social side of the meetings draws the women together and they learn to understand each other better. Rest rooms have been established where the country woman can be cosy in a place of her own, instead of wearily waiting in the store until her men-folk are ready to go home. Libraries have been brought into communities to feed the starved brains. Prizes are given at fairs for junior homemakers. One little girl earned her winter shoes with prizes for bread, cake, pie and tarts. Flower and vegetable shows have been held in places where there were none before. Some bleak, dreary cemeteries have been fenced, and trees and shrubs planted. The farm women and the village women have been drawn together in a community of interest as they never were before.

But there is plenty more to do. We are just at the beginning. It seems to me we can get closer and closer to the real needs of the women as we go on in our work. We can see the especial needs of our home life, and try to meet them. We can plan to bring in women to our communities who are able and willing to go out to daily work. Women who will be glad of the money to be earned, and who will save our strength in much-needed ways. And we can try to see that there is at least one trained nurse in each community, and that the women who need such a nurse, obtain her services.

Lately, when a woman was ill from overwork, and there was a wee baby and a larger child to take care for, there was no woman to be obtained. The husband had to hire a man to do his work while he cared for his sick wife, attended to the children and did the housework. And no man enjoys this, or is able to do it very well, no matter how kind-hearted and well-meaning he is. A sick woman needs the care of a kind-hearted, skillful woman, and we all know the care a wee baby needs. In London, England, in connection with "Mothers' Meetings" they have a lending linen basket for illness. It contains sheets, pillow cases, towels, night gowns and a change of baby linen. The patient has the use of this and then is supposed to return it in good condition. It seems to me that we might apply this idea and adapt it to our own needs in our Homemakers' work.

All sorts of labor-saving devices are discussed at Homemakers' meetings. They are discussed at the social hour at every meeting, whether they are on the program or not. And women are induced to use them through the experience of others.

Our motto is "For Home and Community." So as we grow and develop, all matters pertaining to the welfare of the home and of the community will be considered in our work. We want our women to be large-hearted and broad-minded. Then their lives will be sources of blessing, wherever they may be placed.

WHAT THE UNIVERSITY CAN DO TO HELP

It seems to me that we should not be given things. That is, that we should make some of the effort ourselves. The ways of nature are right ways, and she does not force her gifts upon us. She has abounding stores, but we have to reach out and help ourselves. I would like to see the University publishing leaflets on all phases of our work. But I do not think that these should be mailed to everyone, except on request. The report of our first convention was most helpful in our work. Yet some women did not understand its value and let the one sent to them be carelessly destroyed. Then, when they learned its value, they asked for another copy, and treasured the one asked for.

It seems to me that if the College would keep a list of pamphlets that we might obtain on request, it would be very helpful. Such as Alice Ravenhill's "Phases of Growth," most helpful to the mother of a growing family; Mrs. Stirling's paper on "Why I Should Be a Homemaker;" a paper Miss Armstrong brought from the International Congress on "A Model Kitchen;" Mrs. Elliott's fine paper on "Canning and Preserving"; others that would be written on methods in washing, ironing, dish-washing, preparing meals, serving meals, raising, butter making, bread making, and others to cover all parts of our work.

And it seems to me it is helpful when an organizer is sent, when one is asked for. It is not easy to organize one's selves. An outsider is helpful even when she is no more talented than the homeworkers. I do not believe we in Bladworth would have been organized, had we not been sent an organizer when we asked for one.

Libraries of selected books which might serve as home text books on homemaking problems might be provided. These could be handled like the Redpath Libraries. When we want one of these Redpath Libraries, we apply to Regina College. A list of libraries is sent with different books provided under each numbered library. We pay three dollars, and the books are sent free of transportation charges. We made the readers pay for the books by charging five cents for each book taken out. These libraries can be kept for three months, or six months on request. This idea might be worked out for college libraries bearing on our work. We cannot leave home easily. Our help has to be sent to our homes, where we can use it.

Then it seems to me that we need a woman to interpret the needs of the women to our directors. Our directors are splendid men, kind-hearted and willing in every way to help us to the fullest extent of their powers. But no man can understand a woman's needs as another woman can. This woman would have to be large-hearted and broad-minded. Large-hearted, so she could enter into our lives and sympathize with our needs, and broad-minded, so she would help in the biggest ways. Some of us run to fads and side lines. But we need a woman helper who would be moderate and wholesome, and not given to fads.

As in Ontario, courses of work on sewing, cookery and nursing, might be provided when funds admit. These we could have in the more central points, where we could best use them. For these we should pay something, and not have them provided free. We should bear our share of the expense.

Our College of Agriculture is working towards providing the best course in Canada on domestic science for our girls. Let us show our appreciation of this by using it for our girls, and by upholding the work in every way.

For this annual convention of Homemakers, let us work and plan all the intervening year to make it the best convention held in Canada. Let us bring to it our problems, feeling sure of the best of advice and the most practical assistance.

In a word, the University can show us that it cares for the pioneer women of Saskatchewan, that it believes [that] in helping the women to develop in the best ways, it is doing the greatest thing towards raising the standard of the homes, and thus of the province and of the nation.

TO MEET GREATEST NEED

Where will the money come from? To do all these things requires money. [...] It seems to me that the University is likely similar to a home; that there is just so much money to meet all the needs. Then this money must be portioned out, the greatest amount to the greatest need. This will mean diverting the money from lesser needs. There is a great deal spent now on showing the men how to farm better. This is a good idea, a very good idea, and it has been well worked out. Yet it seems to me even better to spend the money on raising the standards of the homes. Good homemaking is of even greater importance than good farming. Good children are

more valuable assets than good colts, calves and pigs. And well-cared-for women are the most valuable asset on a farm with the single exception of well-cared-for men. The men, women and children are the most valuable assets of any country, and should be placed before stock and land. And it is on the highest part of their nature that this great value depends.

It is the business of a great university to educate. The form this education shall take should not be built altogether on the form it has taken in the past, but the best of the real education of the past should be used to guide us, and then, the greatest need of the present should be met in the best way. What this way is, the scholarly, trained minds of our chosen leaders must decide for us; but it seems to me that they must build on first principles. And of those real, deep-down, first principles, what is greater than home and love?

“Just Home and Love! the words are small
Four little letters unto each;
And yet you will not find in all
The wide and gracious range of speech
Two more so tenderly complete:
When angels talk in Heaven above,
I’m sure they have no words more set
Than Home and Love.

Just Home and Love! it’s hard to guess
Which of the two were best to gain;
Home without Love is bitterness;
Love without Home is often pain.
No! each alone will seldom do;
Somehow they travel hand and glove:
If you win one you must have two,
Both Home and Love.

And if you’ve both, well then I’m sure
You ought to sing the whole day long;
It doesn’t matter if you’re poor
With these to make divine your song.
And so I praisefully repeat,
When angles talk in Heaven above,
There are no words more simply sweet
Than Home and Love.”¹³

¹³ Home and Love, by Robert William Service (1874 – 1958).

The Farmer's Wife

“Why not our girls be given independence?”¹⁴ (August, 1910)

I have a girl 20 years, my oldest. Her brother is 18. My girl works on the farm for her father. Now, her brother has a homestead and pre-emption. She goes out in the morning before breakfast, feeds cows, hens, pigs; helps clean out barns, and her father and brother tend horses. After breakfast she milks four cows, I milk four. Then I feed calves, my girl goes out all day all season. Just now haymaking. She takes her place at driving [the] disk harrow, plow, mower, rake, and binder. Last year she drove a binder, cutting 90 acres of grain on her father's farm. This year her brother has got his farm. She is driving the hay rake for him. His father's team is doing his work. He lives at home, gets a dollar when he wants it without saying, or being asked, what he wants it for. If his sister asks for a pair of shoes, “Oh, why? It's only two months since you had shoes; you must wait.”

Why not this girl of 20 have a homestead of her own? Why not her father help her prove up on a place, as well as her brother? Why is she to be man's slave for nothing a week? She can work a farm as well as, and better than, dozens of young men who are given free homesteads. Why not our girls be given independence? Are they not as dear to us, and as needful to the world, as their brothers? So long as men can keep us down, they will.

“The farmer's wife works far more”¹⁵ (January, 1918)

Too many of the hired men forget that the farmer's wife works far more on an average than they do; too many look on her as being there to cater to their special needs in the matter of cooking, washing, cleaning, making beds; indeed, in the average farm home in this western part, the wife is merely the slave of the hired men, particularly on the larger farms. If she has help in the house there must be generally a very great need for it, and more work than two women can do and find leisure, or as in some instances I know personally, just so that the meals will be on time for the hired man.

Never will the average man in an office, or woman in a town home appreciate the strain on a farmer's wife. She must do so much [more] than the town woman without the conveniences for the work; except in special cases the well managed farm home is more like a factory than anything, and it is only in the fewer cases where the husbands give the consideration they should to the labor saving devices that could be employed for the work in the farm home, while none of them are too slow to install every convenience they can afford to lighten the work outside. If the farmer's wife got

¹⁴ From LEAH. (1910, August 24). YES, WHY NOT? *The Manitoba Free Press*, p. 9.

¹⁵ From A FARMER'S WIFE. (1918, January 22). THE FARMER'S WIFE. *The Saskatoon Daily Star*, p. 10.

the consideration the hired men and the horses get, in almost two-thirds of the farm homes they would think they were fortunate indeed.

And the grub. Yes, that must be provided largely out of the proceeds of the wife's poultry raising and butter-making. And it also must depend on the inclination of the Lord and Master whether there is to be a variety or not. Many times, too, the variety and large quantity is expected from a woman who is not supplied with the means of giving it. Again the hired man from the lumber camps forget that even if the materials were supplied, the house-mother cannot cook as the camp cook did. She has so many things to do beside; children to raise and care for, rooms to keep, washing and ironing, poultry raising, meat curing, gardening, beer and soap making, sewing and the hundred and one other things.

Female help on the farms is almost impossible to get, and when girls work there they recognize their necessity to such an extent, and the difficulty in getting their help, that they dominate the farmer's wife as a rule, and demand a high price for doing it.

Too often they come knowing nothing but the wages they are to receive and the free time they will get to attend the local dances and picnics, or to ride out with the neighbors' Dick, Tom and Harry in the boss's buggy, and sometimes auto. Too often the farm wife has to do the girl's work, because she must go to the dance and is too sleepy next day, and if she is not humored, she promptly takes her departure for good. She must have her time out if the Mrs. is sick, and also too often the farmer's wife has to scald the clothes of the hired man to kill the lice, before she dare try to wash them in the ordinary way. Too often she runs the risk of contracting disease from the men who lead fast lives, and suffer venereal diseases and other filthy things, for the hired man's clothes must be washed in two thirds of the western homes. Time and time again have I had to go over the same process of lice killing, after having got nicely rid of them, when a new helper would arrive.

Sometimes the hired men get so many good things that they don't recognize the fact that they are well fed; it is such an every day affair that the farmer's wife has to cut out some of the good things for awhile. I have known several cases where the men were studied in every possible way, and yet were dissatisfied. Finally the farmer's wife decided the men would have to be satisfied with what they could find time to cook comfortably. Usually it is working at high pressure for her, for sixteen and more hours a day, and too often all she has for it all is her board and a few, a very few, necessary clothes and a shaky interest in the place she calls home. Shaky because when a husband chooses to move away from it for awhile he can sell it without her signature.

A FARMER'S WIFE.

“One long grouch”¹⁶ (February, 1918)

The letter written by this lady is one long grouch. [...] We have had quite a few hired men ourselves and have not found it necessary to wash their clothes nor make their beds, have not known them to expect these jobs done for them. Some wash their own clothes, others send them to the C-----¹⁷. The dear ill-used woman is altogether at sea when she says her lord and master can dispose of the place without her consent, for we have had a dower law in this and the adjoining provinces for several years.

[A FARMER]

“The last person to be considered”¹⁸ (February, 1918)

On the majority of farms the farmer’s wife is the last person to be considered. She is always the first one up in the morning and the last to retire at night. In other words, she is a very necessary piece of machinery.

In regard to hired men, I have had my experience with them also, and I have yet to find one who ever was in a hurry to take his laundry to the “C-----.” Most of them wore their clothes until for common decency’s sake I washed them rather than have him come to my table filthy. As for the “hired girl,” I have never had one. Most girls are too wise to hire out to farmers and share the slavery of the farmer’s wife; they would sooner work for less money and where they are not required to work sixteen hours a day, and I for one do not blame them. [...]

Added to the work of the farm, the farmer’s wife has her little children to care for, and I am going to put it plain. [...] More women have sacrificed their good health by not having proper care during maternity, than all other things put together. Sometimes, the physician is not called in time; other times it is due to the fact that the wife has overdone herself trying to keep up her end of the work at a period when she should be shown all due consideration. [...]

I daresay if the ‘Farmer’s Wife’ in question had time to read all the daily papers she would not be at sea in regard to the Dower Act and several other items of interest.

A farmer was once reproached by a neighbor for not attending services at the church a few miles distant. The farmer made answer thus: My horses need the rest of a Sunday and they work hard six days a week, and I am not going to kill them working them every day of the week.

However, on entering the kitchen we found friend wife in the harness, busily engaged over a hot stove getting dinner, with a crying baby at her skirts, while the “lord and master” and the hired men were stretched out taking it easy in the shade of the house, waiting for the dinner bell.

FROM MISSOURI.

¹⁶ From A FARMER. (1918, February 4). THE FARMER’S WIFE. *The Saskatoon Daily Star*, p. 12.

¹⁷ An offensive term for Chinese people.

¹⁸ From FROM MISSOURI. (1918, February 9). THE WOMAN’S CASE. *The Saskatoon Daily Star*, p. 18.

“A little more wages”¹⁹ (February, 1918)

Farmers are constantly grumbling about the cost of things they have to buy, such as machinery, the clothes they wear, etc. How many of them complain about the price of an automobile? Very few. And none of them would put up a kick if the government had set the price of wheat twice as much as it is. I want to say right here, the farmer is managing things to suit himself fine lately. If they have to get the help of a woman to cook they hate to pay her a reasonable wage, forgetting she, too, has to pay twice as much for clothing as she used to. The farmer that gets a good, clean, careful cook pretty nearly gets her services free in the way she cooks and saves the food. But how many of them will acknowledge such valuable service by offering her a little more wages?

[ANOTHER FARMER'S WIFE]

“Mothers will sacrifice and work”²⁰ (February, 1918)

Some men seem to think that all a woman is for is to be a good, obedient servant and raise a large family and ask no questions. Perhaps this man is generous enough to give his wife the butter and egg money, but he wants all the cream, butter and eggs that can be consumed at home; the rest is hers. She sure has a time dividing her share buying for her children, and keeping them presentable. Mothers will sacrifice and work late and early to give their children an education, while lots of the boys, as soon as they are old enough to drive a team, will be kept at home by father to work on the farm. [...]

Now, about the finances. I am glad there is a dower law, but I think women should have more yet. There is nothing as humiliating to a woman as to have to ask a man for money and then, when she does ask for it, will often receive the reply: “Why, what do you want with money?” Or, perhaps, he will hand out a two-dollar bill and think she should buy out Saskatoon with it.

[A FARMER'S WIFE]

“Wifey is snug indoors”²¹ (February, 1918)

My boys have done my farm work and I have travelled all round for ten miles out as an agent for one thing or another for ten years, meeting the men and women on the farms at any old time; had meals with them, stayed all night. I know my neighbors well.

I am sure the great bulk of hired men and hired girls are genuinely beneficial, earn their wages and that farmers stand as high in all ways as the city man – indeed,

¹⁹ From ANOTHER FARMER'S WIFE. (1918, February 18). ANOTHER FARMER'S WIFE. *The Saskatoon Daily Star*, p. 12.

²⁰ A FARMER'S WIFE. (1918, February 23). THE WOMAN'S SIDE. *The Saskatoon Daily Star*, p. 20.

²¹ From A FARMER. (1918, February 26). THE FARMER'S WIFE. *The Saskatoon Daily Star*, p. 13.

the farmers and farmers' wives are just about alike as two peas for being good partners. He rises, lights the fire, chops kindling, saws the wood, brings it in; also coal, water; some dry dishes, peel spuds and some I catch turning the washing machine. Nearly all have either a hired girl or daughter to aid the wife. [...] Quite a number of farm wives do lots of work, but I see every year conveniences and improvements in the home and surroundings all the time.

Farmers also work hard, long hours, have worrying responsibilities, uncertainty of crops, weary, monotonous jobs going up and down furrows all day, sometimes chilled through, sometimes for days a scorching hot wind, dust and grit blown into mouth, eyes, ears, nose; looks like a miner. In winter every day has to be out (40 below) hauling manure away, fetching hay straw, hauling grain, doing chores, watering horses and cattle in piercing wind and blizzards. Wifey is snug indoors, hired hands have gone, no need to rise early; her work is reduced considerably every year for four months.

[A FARMER]

“A farmer’s housekeeper”²² (March, 1918)

I am not a farmer’s wife, but a farmer’s housekeeper, and have a splendid opportunity of observing. The farmer’s wife never gets done asking her husband for something. I have seen a farmer go out and work all day, come in at night all tired out, take care of his team and after supper milk three or four cows, feed the chickens, bring in the eggs, get water and wood and then he has his team to bed and rub down. He then would rock the baby to sleep.

In the meantime, what has the farmer’s wife done? She has cleared up the table, washed the dishes if she has not a hired girl. If she has a girl, she reads. I have seen cases where no girl was employed and where the man had to wipe the dishes. Can a woman blame a farmer for being angry?

[PEARL OLIVER]

“Two sides to the question”²³ (March, 1918)

There are two sides to the question, and one is as much abused as the other. I now know the work an extra man or two make from experience, and know all about their failings, for they are mostly failings, as a good reliable hired man soon becomes an employer himself. Therefore, rather than put up with the incompetence and unsatisfactory results of hired men, I decided to take his place on our own farm. “Slaving,” for the hired man in the house soon looked like a picnic to me.

Smoky stoves, fallen cakes and bread that wouldn’t rise seemed like holidays while riding around and around a field trying to keep the horses where they should

²² From Oliver, P. (1918, March 8). A HOUSEKEEPER WRITES. *The Saskatoon Daily Star*, p. 15. Written by Pearl Oliver Sears (1885 – 1958).

²³ From PRAIRITE. (1918, March 8). A SURE SIGN OF SPRING. *The Saskatoon Daily Star*, p. 18.

be and fairly holding my breath for fear something would break and land me – I didn't know where – and, when it did break or suddenly stop, the trouble, no matter how simple, was as much a mystery to me as wireless, and then I would have to walk, perhaps half a mile or more, to get someone to show me what was wrong. My husband said I put any green Englishman he ever saw in the shade. They certainly have my sympathy, for I was working for a patient, long-suffering husband, instead of a stranger.

The days in the field were never-ending. And no matter what the weather, we had to be there. Unlike house work, I couldn't crowd a whole day's work into a half day if I wanted to go some where or wanted to rest. A horse won't hurry through like a stove or broom when you want it to. Either you have to stay right there the full time, or quit altogether, and we all know what a half day or day means during the busy season.

Whenever house work seems like drudgery I just think of those days I was trying to take the hired man's place, and decide that of the two, house work is far easier, both mentally and physically.

PRAIRITE.

“A heroine”²⁴ (July, 1918)

Writing to an eastern farm journal, a Kent (Ontario) county farmer's wife who was a city woman up to three years ago and now has two babies to look after, condemns her country sisters who write fault-finding letters about city people. In part she says:

“I am a young farmer's wife with babies, and I am not sending my own to this war to fight, but, oh, how I want to make up to those city mothers and country mothers for what they are giving. We have no help at all but I am a good farmerette. I do all the light farm work, such as rolling the fields, discing, seeding on a riding drill, cultivating, etc. I prepare the dinner, make the beds, sweep, feed my hens, ducks, chickens, and wash the dishes and separator while my husband gets the team ready and the calves, pigs, etc., fed. Then I take a few toys for my babies and we all go back to the field.

“I can get dinner at noon while he attends to horses. We all lie down for a nod after dinner – he and I never taking more than ten minutes, but it rests us well again. The babies sleep two or three hours and I hoe in my garden or bake, iron or sew, or do any of the thousands of things needed to be done until they waken. Then away we go again. We are never in bed – my husband and I – before 11 p.m., and always up at 5:30. I am stronger than I have been for years, as I was always doctoring up to three years ago. My garden is a beauty, too.”

This young woman is a good example of the type of heroine to be found in all rural parts of the Dominion, quietly and with cheerful spirit taking on the added burdens brought about by the war and bearing them uncomplainingly. They have no

²⁴ From A HEROINE. (1918, July 16). *The Calgary Herald*, p. 6.

spokesman, these thousands of hard-laboring farmers' wives and daughters, and too frequently they are misjudged by their city and town cousins. Yet they do not complain, for they have the right spirit and in service well done they find their reward. The Kent woman, who signs herself "A Happy Farmerette," built better than she knew when she wrote that letter. It should serve to create a bond of real sympathy between the women of country and city.

"Heroine or slave?"²⁵ (August, 1918)

When the article appeared in your paper a few days ago and eulogized as a heroine the Ontario farmer's wife who, while doing her own housework, takes her babies to the field and does such work as rolling, discing, seeding, cultivating, etc., was read in this farm home a name with a different meaning was chosen, and unanimously decided upon by the household.

Years before the present war, with its added burdens, was begun, the writer lived in that same Ontario, and among her early recollections of that province is that of a farm woman with twin babies standing for a moment at the gate talking to friends. Her home was just beside a mud swamp, and the stump fence having a habit of giving way to jumping cows, she was obliged to wade mud and trail after the cows, returning at intervals to see her babies were not yet black in the face from too much screeching. And as she talked to her friends she stood first on one foot, then the other, resting each in turn.

Another recollection is that of a farmer's wife who worked hard in the field and garden, doing both light and heavy work, as well as housework, while several children were cared for, until her little girl was old enough to take her place in the kitchen, when, after a heavy crop of grain and several acres of potatoes had been dug and picked, her right arm became paralyzed, and today she cannot fasten her own dress.

Well do I remember another busy woman lugging home two great pails full of milk while her baby, left sleeping, came creeping on all fours trailing through the cow plasters and dust, in its one-time white dress and bare feet, and sobbing; while an older one met her to have her dress fastened preparatory for school. That mother sewed, and mended, and knitted with a baby, and often two, on either knee, and finished her sewing when her children were grown men and women.

Another did field work, always building the stacks, until one year, when unable, her husband did the building. They worked without bread, she leaving the field work to make hot biscuits for the meals, and the stacks were such that year as to cause the exclamation from their boy on returning from Toronto: "Had I built these stacks I'd have put a match in them," following which the farmer reached for a match, exclaiming: "And by ----- I'll do it!"

Another farmer's wife, until ten children were born, and the oldest grew up, not only worked in the fields sharing the light and heavy work, pitching grain,

²⁵ From A FARMER'S DAUGHTER. (1918, August 15). HEROINE OR SLAVE? *The Calgary Herald*, p. 10.

building stacks, plowing, etc., but was obliged to go with her husband on the wagon, or sleigh, when selling grain or cattle, through cold or sunny weather, five miles over a corduroy road to town to keep their pittance from the hotel, and her children have been found covered with skin disease, going about the house in winter time naked, and hiding under and behind the stove in a civilized community in Canada.

Nor is Ontario alone. In our delightful sunny Alberta are to be found farmers' wives rivaling their eastern sisters in farm work.

Not far distant in homesteading times a woman is described as "plowing with three oxen on gumbo land, and it raining; gumbo soil sticking to her boot tops and her skirts wet to her knees, while two children, bare-footed, and with just as much mud on them as on their mother, ran up and down the field after her, and her house inside compared beautifully with its mistress' appearance outside, while her husband was in town doing a nice, clean job of carpenter work."

At another time two women and two men, with several children, were digging and picking potatoes on a cold, raw day in October, with snow on the ground part of the time. Two children ran about the field, while the baby lay in a box, changed twice a day and fed out in that cold, wet field by a sick woman, with a typical bachelor's shack at home – this requiring no description on the prairie.

Another farm woman did her housework and, while her husband ate or was otherwise engaged, took his place on a field engine and kept it working the full daylight hours, while her children's faces were such as to disgust the beholder in their never-to-be-forgotten filth.

And young women with talent and ability are to be found working hard, as are young men, without one municipal advantage or the opportunity of cultivating talents possessed by them.

As stated in that article, these are but examples of many similar cases, but in no wise (if we may disagree) are they added burdens brought on by war conditions, and we are sorry for the married woman, with babies and misplaced sentimentality and patriotism, who feels it her duty to take her little children out to the fields in the blistering hot sun and winds and to allow them to remain there morning and afternoon while she wears herself out on jolting machinery or walking up and down a plowed field, with the alternative of a neglected home, with unswept and uncleaned floors, unmade beds, unwashed dishes, poor and half-cooked food, and mother and children neither washed, combed or bathed, or rushing all day doing the work of three women that nothing may be neglected.

We admire those city and town mothers who, with little tots to be cared for and housework to do, keep so perfectly clean and neat in home, and person, and appearance, and yet make time during the day to sit on the shaded verandah with sewing, or in the evening with book or magazine, and our whole interest is centered, not on how much more the country woman can do in work, but what municipal advantages might be offered that she too may be clean and neat in her home while doing her work, and caring for her chickens or garden, restful in her home life and intelligent in her social and business relations in the community.

When we see the wives of cabinet ministers or military officers, with assured thousands of dollars of salary per year by the country, they who are at the front and best aware of the needs of our country, out in the fields in Alberta plowing with a breaking plow in gumbo land in mud and rain, or running through the swamps of Ontario after cows until unable to stand upon their own two feet at one time; on wagons going to market, on seeders, binders, pitching hay, building stacks, or hoeing, digging and picking acres of potatoes. Or when the financial condition of the country reaches the state when these must take their babies to their husband's offices, and work there all day, rushing home only to prepare the meals and do the housework, and when these same ministers and officers are willing to eat those meals, prepared in 15 minutes, and have their babies playing with toys under their feet and coffee tables, then we shall consider it time for the farmers' wives, with infants and chickens, gardens, butter-making, washing, ironing, cooking, sewing, mending, knitting and bathing, ad infinitum, as well as the duty of setting the standard in discipline, motherliness, and womanliness, with all this should include, to recognize the need of their country and follow their leaders' example.

A FARMER'S DAUGHTER.

"It is a known fact"²⁶ (April, 1919)

I note your editorial²⁷ about Mr. Moore's remarks in regard to the farmer. All that he says is too true, but he might also have said something about the condition of the farmers' wives. They are indeed to be pitied – even the wives of the farmer of means. In a way their lot is less enviable than that of the wives of the farmer of more moderate means. In the latter case the household is limited in size, and her work accordingly. But the prosperous farmer hires considerable help, and his wife must either cook for a big bunch of "ands" or live in town, practically separated from her husband.

It is a known fact that the women who go as cook or housekeeper to the ranches will not take positions where there is another woman in the family. They prefer to work for "bachelors or widowers." The wife, where there is a cook or housekeeper on a ranch, is regarded with hostility and treated as an intruder often. Hers is not an enviable lot. There is such a shortage of labor of that kind that such as condescend to accept the positions are tyrants. The farmer's wife must either, therefore, retire from the farm and live in town, or take a secondary place in her husband's house. This is the simple truth.

²⁶ ONE OF THE POOR "RUBES". (1919, April 10). Considers Case of Famer's Wife. *The Calgary Herald*, p. 8.

²⁷ "A gentleman named Moore addressed a Forum audience on Sunday on the 'Farmers' Problems and How to Solve Them.' The picture of the average farmer as drawn by him was nothing but a mass of drab colored hues plastered one over the other until nothing but gloom was visible and one wondered how men could ever be so instance as to even dream of living off the land." A NEWSPAPER CRITIC. (1919, April 8). *The Calgary Herald*, p. 8.

It's not all sunshine and play, the farm life, believe me – and I know what I'm talking about. I've been through it myself.

ONE OF THE POOR "RUBES"

"There must be some reason"²⁸ (April 19, 1919)

In the Herald's edition of April 16 appeared a letter signed, "One of the Poor Rubes." The writer speaks of women who go as cooks or housekeepers to the ranches being few in number and that those who do go to the country prefer to go to the homes of bachelors or widowers, so that they will not work under a woman.

Now I would like to ask why there are so few girls and women who will work under a woman. There must be some reason, because housework is not in itself distasteful to women. The majority of those in their own homes take interest and pride in the work of the household. A great many girls take courses in domestic science, and teachers tell me that girls at school always look forward with pleasure to the day on which they take up the domestic science work, preferring it to the regular academic work. There is nothing in housework itself that drives girls to other occupations. It must be the conditions under which they have to work.

Has "One of the Poor Rubes" herself ever taken the position of houseworker under another woman? If not, her experience is one-sided. Does she know how it feels to be considered an inferior person because she does housework for a living? If a man's stenographer comes into his home, the family addresses her as "Miss Smith," but the houseworker, no matter how elderly or how dignified she may be, even the youngest children address her as "Mary" or "Annie." She is in the home but not one of the family; she is continually conscious of her social inferiority. She may be as intelligent or as well bred, and often more so than the family she works for, but, because she is the maid, a stigma rests on her. If she joins a Bible class in any of the churches, other girls draw aside from her because she is "Mary," Mrs. S----'s maid. I know in the country the social lines are not drawn so distinctly. There she is the "hired girl" and is more one of the family, but she is under supervision; she does not have a free hand to do the housework by methods that suit herself; she must bake the bread and make the butter the way the other woman wishes, although her own way may be as good or better. There is no room for self-development or independence of action. In a bachelor's or widower's home the housekeeper is her own mistress and can follow her ideas in carrying out the household affairs.

How many employers of domestic help would like to take the homemaker's place or would wish their daughters to do so? If they would occupy the position of houseworker for a time, I think they would soon be in sympathy with those who are trying to secure for the houseworker a social position equal with that of the business girl. When the eight-hour day is applied to housework and the dignity and importance of domestic work is recognized more, girls will be willing to fill the position.

²⁸ From ONE OF THE TYRANTS. (1919, April 19). The Other Side of the Servant Question. *The Calgary Herald*, p. 16.

The servant problem

“The foe in the household”²⁹ (August, 1890)

“Consider the lilies how they grow.” Outside of the window their tall spikes are seen, full of heavy fragrance. “They toil not, neither do they spin,” but we must work, or dire confusion comes to the household. It was Marion Harland who told of a housewife who got so discouraged she thought she would let the dust gather, and when it was too deep, she would get up on the table. But it would not do, there would still be the coming down. Better far to keep things even, and steadily do what one can to keep from becoming overwhelmed.

The duties of housekeeping in July and August are light to those who are at seaside or mountain, but a heavy burden when duty keeps the housekeeper over the stove in the sultry days. Gas and coal oil stoves reduce the trouble greatly, but these are not used everywhere, and the best plan is to cook in the early morning, and give cold puddings or other dishes as often as possible.

The labor problem is one that puzzles the world, and as we all know is often the foe in the household. What is the remedy no one can foresee, but the faults are doubtless on both sides. The dearth of servants is something remarkable when one considers the poverty there is in our cities. Ladies are even going to the gaols and engaging the women there imprisoned to serve them when their sentences have expired. The emigrant is not long in a place before she becomes dissatisfied and wishes for higher wages, and less work. The Emigration Agency is really of little use, and with all the labor saving machinery, with laundry work done outside, and every convenience, it seems difficult to run the domestic machinery. The servants are not altogether to blame. Lately one of the magazines gave a story of a young girl who tried domestic service and was brought nearly to death’s door by overwork. Of course she was a treasure to her mistress, but at what a cost! So much is often exacted, without consideration, and the help is made to feel the difference in “caste” so as to deter many neat and willing workers from attempting. Day labor is high and hours short, but there is an independence and freedom about it, and the evenings are her own.

My own life has been singularly free from this trouble, as after keeping a girl twelve years my own little daughters helped mother till they are able to do all the work – with a little day labor from outside. Taking turns weekly in the different departments, they do not find the burden so heavy, and are better able to manage a household with help if they know how to do the work themselves. I am quite convinced that the radical cure will be when the daughters of the home are the “help” and do not despise labor, when they are taught how to perform all domestic duties, and that any assistance they may gain from outside is to lighten their burdens, not to do the

²⁹ From Jack, A.L. (1890, August 12). The Sitting-room Window. *The Regina Leader*, p. 2.
By Annie L. Jack (1839 – 1912).

work they despise. It rests with all young mothers to so train their daughters that they shall regenerate the race – looking well to the ways of their households, and making a home for their parents and brothers that will banish forever the small talk of to-day about the shortcomings of domestics, that is a blot on social life among women. Hasten the day when the little girls are taught every department of domestic economy, when it becomes a science in our schools with fair girl graduates proud of the distinction, who receive their prizes for D. E. (Domestic Economy), with all the glory and pride that crowns their womanhood.

“There are two girls”³⁰ (May, 1903)

Regarding the servant girl problem I should like to say a few words: Doubtless there are two sides to the question, as has been stated. First of all there are two girls who come to town to work, one at sewing, the other at housework. The girl who sews comes to the front door, when the girl coming to do housework has to go around a back lane, even supposing there has just been one of the worst storms of the winter. Two hours later she has to open the front door for the sewing girl, probably from the same village. At meal time the whole family enter into conversation with the sewing girl and the girl at housework, although quite as intelligent, may have been in the house a year and proved herself trustworthy in every way, has never been spoken to while in the house, unless asked to do something. Again, should a friend call and the door is opened by the lady, she invariably says: “Well, just go around the back way and you will find the girl.” Probably that friend comes from as good a home, as the said lady.

Factory girls, shop girls and sewing girls have their Sundays, every evening, and every holiday. A girl at housework has very often extra cooking to do on Sunday, and if she does manage to get to church, has to turn in and wash dishes and have a general clearing up, to make up for the time she has been out. She is expected to be quite content with two or three evenings in the week, from eight or later even, till ten o’clock, and very often be asked to get supper at eleven o’clock. Then on holidays they are not allowed off, but very often work twice as hard as on ordinary days, and are never even expected to want off.

These are a few of the many reasons why girls prefer any other kind of work to housework. Another reason is, they are always treated as though they were so much lower than girls at any other kind of work.

“Hard to get – harder still to keep”³¹ (June, 1918)

“The servant situation has never been so bad in Toronto as it is now. That is to say, it has never been so bad from the viewpoint of the mistress of the house. Servants

³⁰ EXPERIENCED ONE. (1903, May 9). *The Ottawa Citizen*, p. 10. THE SERVANT GIRL PROBLEM.

³¹ From SERVANT PROBLEM NEVER SO SERIOUS IN CITIES. (1918, June 1). *The Regina Leader*, p. 34.

of any kind are extremely hard to get – harder still to keep. Good servants are worth their weight in gold – and their weight in gold is pretty nearly what they demand and command in wages. From the point of view of the servant, things are booming. They want more and more in wages and more and more in privileges and less and less in work all the time.”

So spake a harassed “lady of the house,” the other day. She is a woman born and bred in Toronto, who has lived there all her life. She is thoroughly abreast of the servant situation, as she is of most things that concern the social polity of the city. She is by nature no petticoated Jeremiah. But yet the foregoing was her summing-up of the present-day domestic servant problem in Toronto.

“It is not,” she proceeded mournfully, “as though, in comparison with the number of houses, there was any especial demand for servants in Toronto. For one direction in which Torontonians, as a whole, are not extravagant is certainly the matter of domestic help. I should think that, in proportion to the population and wealth there are fewer servants required in Toronto than in almost any city in the world – outside Russia, where the servants have become the household rulers and order their former employers about as they please. The reason for the scarcity of servants? For one thing, there is so much other work – particularly munitions. Girls seem to like almost any other work better than domestic service. This is partly for the same reason that keeps so many men from hiring out to farmers – they hate to live under the same roof as their employer. It is that, and not anything with regard to caps and aprons and so forth, that they regard as the real badge of servitude. But once let a girl leave domestic service and go into a factory, and she is spoiled for domestic service thereafter. This is not because of any snobbishness on the part of mistresses of households in Toronto. In their dealings with their servants they are more democratic than are women, similarly placed, anywhere else. But manners which may be winning enough in the factory employé are impossible in the household help.” [...]

As regards general servants, the average wages of the “general” in Toronto just now amount to \$25 or \$30 a month. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that they come to \$6.25 or \$7.50 a week. For the Toronto “general” [...] has resolved to shed old traditions. She wants her money – in very many cases, at any rate – by the week instead of by the month. For one thing, she likes to touch real money, and to touch it often. For another, if she leaves – as is not infrequently the case – at a moment’s notice, she does not stand to lose so vast a sum when she “packs up her troubles in her old kit bag” and gets out.

“Expressed desire of doing day work”³² (February, 1919)

Housewives of Vancouver who abandoned the servant problem and turned their attention to domestic duties, will again have the privilege of exercising their

³² From *Women Servants Take To Domestic Duties, but By Day Schedule Only*. (1919, February 9). *The Vancouver Sun*, p. 3.

diplomatic powers, providing, the reported return of women workers to housework materializes.

With former soldiers returning to civilian pursuits, many women who entered factory and store during the emergency find it necessary to seek other work; being replaced in their present positions by men.

While they are willing to return to the world of kettles and feather dusters, it is said that they are practically united in the expressed desire of doing "day work," in preference to taking resident positions.

Although work by the day does not carry with it any stated income, it is fairly remunerative, the present scale being about 30 cents an hour, with an eight hour day.

"While there are many domestic servant positions with a considerate mistress as the employer, yet, there are others who are overbearing and arrogant, and these create friction between the girls and the housewife. Just as many irresponsible employees cause employers to lose patience with the entire servant fraternity," said a leading employment agent yesterday.

This state of affairs suggests that the root of the trouble is a lack of reasonable standards of efficiency and of working hours. Wages seem to be standardized to the extent sometimes of paying the poorest worker the same as the best. This idea of standards for domestic service is nothing new, but is one which so far has not been acted upon.

A woman who advertised in the paper during the past week for a general houseworker said she had a dozen applicants and secured a satisfactory servant the first day, paying her \$20 to begin with and, if satisfactory, \$25 after the first month. That is for doing only the kitchen work, no sweeping, dusting nor making of beds. This same woman kept an insertion in the "want ad" columns for two weeks last September without having a single applicant. A second woman also received a dozen applicants in one week for a general housemaid. The applicants asked \$25 to \$35 per month with board and room. A third woman stated that she received four applicants after only one insertion of her advertisement. The first applicant wanted \$40 per month and no washing to do, but finally one was secured for \$25.

The head of one of the largest employment agencies in the city said that she had been visited by a number of girls who had been "let out" of stores during the past month. She supposed that it was on account of men returning from the war to their old positions. Some of these girls had been obliged to take housework in private homes, but did it unwillingly and only as a last resort, until something else should turn up. She said in fact it was impossible for her to get girls to go into private families. It was not that the majority objected to housework, but they did object to the lack of freedom, the average time off being one afternoon and evening each week, with possibly one other evening. While they remained in the house there was nearly always something for them to do, and most of them had to go out on their afternoon off in order to get away from work.

Getting women and girls for housework in institutions is comparatively easy. This agency advertised for six girls to work in an institution with regular hours on duty and the rest of their time free. All these positions were filled the very next day.

Two girls who absolutely refused housework of any kind, came to the agency every day for two weeks and now have been placed on a B. C. fruit ranch to do light outside work at \$30 per month with board.

This woman, who acts as a go-between for those who sell their services and those who want to buy, says that there are a lot of experienced stenographers and bookkeepers in the city without work, one such having come to her every day for three weeks without results.

Superintendent Geo. D. Ireland, of the city relief department, says that the situation in regard to the labor market for women is undergoing a radical change. Calling attention to an increase in the number of new women workers who were registering at the civic employment bureau maintained in connection with the Creche, Superintendent Ireland expressed his belief that in a short while there would be a less marked scarcity of women for domestic service. This is owing to the fact that many women were being released from munition work, and also in department stores and other places where they had been taking men's places.

Last month was by far the biggest in the history of the city employment bureau for women, 819 orders being filled for women to do a day's work. At the present time of year, there are usually more women available, but this year they are more numerous than ever. In some cases they must work by the day on account of the husbands being out of employment. The bureau supports Russians, Scandinavians, Italians, etc., besides English speaking women, but does not deal with O-----.

The mention of o----- brought a cautious expression to the faces of those interviewed. "If one cannot get a white woman, she is bound to take what she can get, o---- or anything else," said one. It was also stated that Japanese women work by the day for 25 cents an hour. It was also stated that Chinamen doing household work get from \$40 to \$60 per month and board for the same duties that a woman is expected to perform for \$25 to a very rare \$45 per month. It was said that the Chinaman is treated with greater consideration and sometimes with respect almost amounting to awe. Like all others, however, this question has two sides, for it was learned that some women who are mistresses of large and well managed households had gone to an employment agency in search of a white woman, offering to pay her the \$50 per month that has been going to the Chinese servant.

"Electricity will do this for you"³³ (June, 1920)

Good-by, Mary Jane! Your days are numbered, if indeed not entirely over. Those beautiful mountain streams have taken your place.

Electricity, that silent, safe force, has brought the power of these waterfalls into your home to wash your clothes, cook your meals, clean your house and solve your servant problems.

³³ From House Work Can All Be Easily Done by the Use Of Electricity Now-a-days. (1920, June 24). *The Vancouver Sun*, p. 10.

At breakfast time think of the joy of sitting at your table with an electric percolator making your coffee, a toaster stove frying your bacon and eggs or pancakes and a turnover toaster making your toast. Truly this is pure joy.

And the dishes – yes, electricity will do this for you – at a snap of the switch the dishwasher starts, and lo and behold! your dishes are clean.

Wouldn't Mary Jane be astounded to see the modern washday with the electric washing machine, washing the laundry for a family of six for 6 cents with practically no work? And then comes ironing day – the electric iron always just the right heat, saving countless steps to and from the fire, and irons smoothly and easily the entire washing for about 15 cents.

The old-time broom and duster have been traded for the up-to-date vacuum cleaner. Electricity will clean your home, rugs, curtains, floors, and all for a very few cents.

And milady wants to spend the day visiting, yet dinner must be ready at six. Again, electricity will turn the trick, for with the electric range milady can put her dinner in the oven in the morning, set the clock for the time she wants her dinner to start to cook, and set the electric thermostat at the desired heat. When the time comes, the clock automatically starts the electricity, heating the oven, and when the desired heat is reached the thermostat cuts off the electricity and the oven works like a fireless cooker.

Then milady comes home at six. A snap of the switch floods the house with radiant electricity and she finds her dinner thoroughly cooked, ready to be served.

Even sewing, electricity has revolutionized. No need of milady tiring herself with the old-fashioned foot treadle machine. Electricity will do this work, and many thousands of housewives find pleasure in sewing the electrical way.

And in the middle of the cold night the baby must be fed. A simple snap of the switch heats baby's milk without your moving from your bed. Just think of the great help electricity is.

On the breakfast table many good things can be cooked without even going inside the kitchen. The aluminum waffle-iron cooks fine crisp waffles right on your own table without any grease or smoke, just piping hot, ready to serve. An electric percolator keeps the coffee just right and always hot, and the toaster stove toasts just as much toast as you want, and no more. In the bathroom, the cozy glow of the electric heater gives a soothing warmth. After the bath and on chilly mornings, a snap of the switch brings the cheery electric rays to your bedside.

Truly, electricity is humanity's greatest friend. Think of milady's comfort. A small iron in her bedroom always ready at the snap of the switch to press a shirtwaist or skirt, or an electric curling iron, small and convenient, ready to heat at the right temperature to curl milady's hair.

Training in Housework

“Teaching daughters housekeeping”³⁴ (June, 1893)

A question difficult of solution for most mothers is how to send a daughter to school and at the same time give her a practical education in housework. There is such little time out of school hours that even to perform a few tasks about the house seems impracticable, and among the well-to-do it is often entirely feasible to defer the latter training till the former is completed. While there are some objections to the plan of permitting a girl to be entirely ignorant of the details of housework till she is grown, there is, on the other hand, the advantage of allowing her to bring to her new study a mind well-trained and able to grasp the subject as a whole at the same time that the practical details are being mastered.

But when the busy mother needs the help of the children, and it is a foregone conclusion that immediately upon leaving school the daughter must make her own living, or at least prepare to make it, the question presents itself in a more serious light. In such a case it is evident that whatever knowledge of housework a girl obtains must be gained during her years of schooling. But there appears to be so little time for systematic training that in many families the daughter never has the responsibility for any part of the housework, and learns only what she may happen to pick up helping mother. While mother sweeps, Jessie shakes the rugs and runs for the dust pan, then stands restlessly on one foot waiting for the next order or for the opportunity to run away to play. On baking day Jessie is called to stone the raisins, to get the flour sifter and the cake pan. When mother cooks Jessie must be around “handy” to pare the potatoes, to grind the coffee, to run down cellar, - in short, to wait on mother while mother does the work. The same method - or lack of method - is continued till the girl is sixteen or eighteen, when the mother begins to wonder why her daughter knows so little and cares so little about housework. If left to keep house by herself for a week, the resulting chaos would hardly lead you to suppose that the girl had helped about the house every day from her childhood up.

A little consideration would show the lack of knowledge and interest to be simply the natural result of having the girl help a little here and a little there, never learning to do any one branch of housework by herself. Mothers too seldom realize the fact that the children trained to orderly methods of work in school naturally find it unpleasant never to know just what is expected of them at home. The older ones would like to have certain definite tasks assigned to them, that they might know when their work was done, and feel free to plan the remaining time for extra reading or study.

Housework is a complex study, and to teach successfully all branches of it at the same time would require as many hours a day as to teach the several branches of learning they are required in the public schools. So, as the time each day is very limited, the best results will be obtained by teaching not more than one or two things

³⁴ From Teaching Daughters Housekeeping. (1893, June 22). *The Regina Leader*, p. 7.

at a time. The little girl should begin, of course, with some very simple task. She might first learn to wipe the dishes, or to do certain dusting, or to do both; but she should understand that the task is her own particular part of the housework, and that she must apply her mind to it and learn to do it well, just as she would study arithmetic or geography.

When she has learned how to perform one piece of work so well that there is no danger of forgetting it soon, others may be taken up in the order which is most convenient. When there are several daughters, the simple tasks can be handed down to the younger children when the older ones are ready to begin more difficult work. The dishwashing, sweeping, and bedroom work could be apportioned among the younger girls, while the daughter nearly grown learns cooking, baking, canning, preserving, laundry work, one thing at a time. In cooking, it is an excellent plan to teach the girl how to cook one article of food, and allow her to prepare that on every occasion till she feels confident of her ability to cook that particular dish at any time, at a moment's notice, and with no assistance.

In pursuing this plan of teaching one thing at a time, it will be surprising to see how rapidly a girl will become proficient in the various branches of housework. The understanding that each day when her allotted portion is properly performed, she is at liberty to devote some time to her own plans and pleasures, does much toward stimulating her interest in the work. System in teaching housekeeping is as much required and will produce as good results as system in teaching anything else.

“Encouraging her baby efforts”³⁵ (July, 1893)

As home is woman's sphere, we ought to teach our daughters how to make and keep a true one, and one of the principal and most essential qualifications of a good home-keeper is that she be a practical house-keeper; therefore we must give her every opportunity of becoming thorough in this branch of women's work.

When two-year-old Mabel comes along with her little broom to assist in the sweeping, let us not impatiently send her away, but encourage her, by allowing her to sweep a small space which will not interfere with us. By thus encouraging her baby efforts, we gradually establish the good habit of having our little girl assist Mamma in all her duties, and if we give her due praise when deserved, she will eagerly offer her assistance at every opportunity.

You say, “Oh, in the time it takes her to complete a task, I could do it a dozen times.” Very true, dear mother, but is it not better to have a little patience at first, and be rewarded later on by seeing her an accomplished house-wife, who thoroughly understands and can faithfully perform every one of her many duties?

Therefore, let us teach her to be a good economical cook, who thoroughly understands her work. She must also learn to properly sweep, if strong enough, and dust. In short, under our care let her become a systematic, tidy, careful and provident house-keeper, perfect in every branch of home work, so that, even if she is not

³⁵From *Our Daughters*. (1893, July 20). *Qu'Appelle Progress*, p. 3.

compelled to work, herself, she can, at least, understand what to expect from servants. Then, instead of being at the mercy of the latter, as so many housewives are, she can demand their respect and assert her own independence.

Every girl ought to know how to mend correctly and neatly, and we should insist upon our daughter keeping her own wardrobe in repair; not stowing away each article until the pile is so formidable that she fears attacking it, but let her, each week, as soon after ironing day as possible, darn her hose, replace buttons, and neatly mend all tears or rents. She must never be allowed to go with torn or buttonless gloves or shoes.

She must be taught neatness in her personal appearance, and must be instilled with a refined taste in dress. She should be taught neat sewing; making dolly's dresses and hats is a good beginning, and as she grows older she should be encouraged to make her own clothes. Underclothing is much more durable and cheaper if made at home, and at least the house dresses and simple street toilets can be made at home. Not that I think a woman should make her own clothes, but circumstances might demand the strictest economy, and therefore when a woman understands dressmaking and millinery, much may be saved. One can frequently work in odds and ends on a hat that could not be taken to a milliner.

We must, too, begin very early to teach our children the laws of health. Especially do girls require thorough knowledge, for much depends upon the good health of a wife and mother.

Some entertain the false opinion that it is all nonsense to educate girls. Education forms one of the most important features of a girl's training, and frequently the course of her life is determined by this. Many mothers welcome the time when their children can go to school, as then they are out of the way the greater part of the day, and never think of taking an interest in their studies, school-life, or associates. It is a mistake to leave our daughters' education entirely in the hands of the teacher. We must supervise her studies and wisely direct her mind in proper channels.

"The silver lining to the servant cloud"³⁶ (February, 1902)

"Tis an ill wind that blows nobody good," runs the old saying, and the present ill wind of the domestic service question seems to be righting matters behind the scenes. Teachers in the social settlements, in public schools and in Sunday schools have long been aware that a shoddy disrespect for manual labor was rapidly developing among the working classes, not only among the children of laboring men, but among the families of clerks and salaried men earning as much as \$3,000 a year, where the income does not justify the keeping of more than one servant to do the work of a large family and where a portion of the sewing must be done by mothers and daughters in the household.

When cooking and sewing classes were started in public schools, it was no uncommon thing for two or three girls in a class of thirty pupils to refuse to begin the

³⁶ From THE SILVER LINING. (1902, February 12). *The Chilliwack Progress*, p. 6.

work on the ground that “we always keep a girl,” or “my mother can’t cook and neither shall I; she says if I learn, I’ll have to do it,” and “ladies never go into the kitchen,” and “I hate to do housework,” or “we always have our sewing done,” etc. In every instance quoted the fathers earned small pay and the daughters looked forward to being teachers, stenographers, and a few actually went to the \$3 positions in the department stores. Suppose a girl married with notions of this kind, what sort of a home would she make? Where one housekeeper need not knit here brows over making income and expenses balance there are tens of thousands who make it a daily struggle.

So the silver lining to the servant cloud is that scarcity of help will send the daughters of the household to the kitchen to learn that after all, housework is not all drudgery when viewed in the light of common sense, that the more intelligent the mistress on housekeeping details the better able she is to manage a servant, that there is more science, variety and dignity in doing housework well than there is in much office and shop employment and that the title of a lady does not depend on the kind of work that is done, but on the character of the woman back of the work. Second, the foolish untrained foreign handmaids who come to this country and expect to receive home and pay for unskilled labor done grudgingly will learn that the housekeeper has demands on her side and will have none of their services or take only thoroughly competent and faithful labor for the generous wages which she pays.

“Housework Scholarships”³⁷ (December, 1914)

In an endeavor to solve the problem of the home, “Housework Scholarships” are to be offered in Toronto for women taking a domestic science course in the Technical school. The course will cover three months, and the student will be given residence with board and lodging in a household, where about two-thirds of her time will be devoted to doing the work of the household for a fair remuneration, the rest of the time to attending courses in the Toronto Technical school.

The instruction will be given by the regular staff of the school, and certificates or diplomas will be granted at the end of the three months to all who passed the course satisfactorily.

Twenty girls will be granted admission to these courses, and it is understood that no girl who is at present satisfactorily employed will make application. The intention is to help the unemployed girl to become efficient in her work, and at the same time provide her with a home.

The course in general will include the following:

- (1) Cooking – Eggs, meat, fish, vegetables, cereals, milk, etc.
- (2) Cleaning – Kitchen utensils, garbage, plumbing, sweeping, dusting, ventilation.

³⁷ From Housework Scholarships To Be Given in Toronto (1914, December 19). *The Edmonton Journal*, p. 8.

(3) General Housework – Making beds, plain sewing, first aid and home nursing, care of children.

The teaching of sewing, home nursing and the care and management of children have been specially requested in order that those who take this houseworker's course may be prepared at any time to take the place of the head of the household in an emergency and to manage homes of their own.

It is also intended that some lectures in the course should refer to the ethics of housework and the ideals of a houseworker.

“Toronto’s Downtown School of Household Science”³⁸ (June, 1921)

“Do you think Nancy knows enough about cooking to get married? I want to marry her soon, but every time I ask her she says: ‘No, John, I don’t know how to cook yet. Wait a while longer.’ So I thought I’d better ask you what you think.”

John was talking to Nancy’s domestic science teacher. It was the first time he had met her, although she had always called for Nancy every night after cooking class. Nancy was so anxious to be a “real” cook!

This time, she had persuaded her bashful fiancé to come upstairs and meet her teacher, for she had decided to let her decide the ultimatum. And she was as anxious as John, to hear what it would be.

Of course, Miss Jean M. Stevenson, director [of] Toronto’s Downtown School of Household Science – for it was she – said that Nancy’s cooking accomplishments were quite sufficient for matrimony. In fact, she assured John that Nancy would make a first-rate little wife.

Which goes to show that it isn’t just cooking and the household arts that Miss Stevenson is interested in. She has the personal welfare of every pupil at heart. For hers is a unique position.

She teaches cooking and dressmaking to girls of ten years and over, who live in the neighborhood between the Don River and Yonge street, and from Queen street to the Bay.

The school is the original Lilian Massey School, and it occupies several rooms on the top floor of the Fred Victor Mission building.

When Mrs. Lilian Massey Treble died a few years ago, she left an endowment fund for the maintenance of the school. So it is managed privately and is open to anyone who wants to learn the arts of cookery and dressmaking. All they have to do is to pay 25 cents when they join, and when they complete the course the money is returned to them.

But the majority of the students live in the surrounding districts and have enrolled through the churches. In the afternoons the classes are open to the younger children, and in the evening they are principally business girls who attend. And no less than 150 students are taught there in one week!

³⁸ From Clifford, C. (1921, June 27). DOWNTOWN GIRLS TAUGHT TO COOK. *The Calgary Herald*, p. 12. Written by Clara ‘Claire’ Clifford (1885 – 1923).

Table service is one of the household requirements they are most anxious to learn about.

“Now I know what I’m going to give my mother for Christmas,” a little ten-year-old girl said as she spread the tablecloth. “It’ll be one of these things,” indicating the snowy cloth. “She hasn’t got any, you know.”

USE MASSEY SILVERWARE

“But, teacher, teacher, Mary’s put two tablecloths on the table. She shouldn’t do that, should she?” another girl came running to the teacher. When Miss Stevenson went to see what happened, she discovered that the first “tablecloth” was the “silence cloth,” so Mary was allowed to put on two tablecloths after an explanation.

“Does your mother let you set your table like that at home?” was asked one little dark-eyed child the afternoon we visited them.

“Oh, yes,” she replied, “mother likes me to do everything at home just the way I learn to do it here.”

There were seven little girls learning table service that afternoon. The lovely dining room with its quaint furniture was an attractive and unusual background. And who would ever expect to see such lovely, antique silver in a downtown cooking school?

For in the center of the buffet stood a lovely silver tea service said to have been used at one time by the Massey family. And all the knives, forks and spoons with which those little girls eat their own cooking are of heavy, old-fashioned silver marked with the initial “M.” The attractive china is also said to have been donated by Mrs. Lilian Massey Treble.

In the center of the table, adorned with a spotless cloth, a beautiful vase of flowers stood. Then, at a summons from the teacher to luncheon, the little students came.

One little girl waited on the table while the others partook of the meal. To each she would pass what was needed. Then, at the conclusion of a course she would remove the plates and bring on the next course. She did it so expertly that many an older girl, and even some modern housewives, might envy her!

They had water lily salad with boiled dressing, bread and butter and cocoa. The water lily salad was devilled eggs shaped to resemble water lilies and served on a crisp leaf of head lettuce.

After the luncheon was finished, we saw the two bright, airy kitchens. One is for the older girls, and the second for the younger ones. Each desk has a tiny gas stove on it, with a deep drawer under it where all the utensils are kept.

“All this year we have been endeavoring to stress the value of milk, eggs and vegetables as foods,” said Miss Stevenson, “and we have been teaching recipes including them. Of course, they are among the cheaper classes of foods, and that is what they want.”

Laundry

“Cleaning works of a great city”³⁹ (July, 1907)

Winnipeg mud has been proverbial since the early days, when the Red River carts stuck on Main street, and perhaps, as some pessimist occasionally remarks, the citizens are not doing all in their power to rectify matters; but anyone who makes a study of the laundry business in Winnipeg, will be convinced of one thing, and that is that the citizens themselves are making a strenuous effort to be clean.

In Winnipeg there are six fully equipped steam laundries, employing between four and five hundred hands. In these laundries there are 57 steam washing machines, as well as women who wash the more frail articles by hand, in the good old-fashioned way. There are 23 extractors, 12 mangles, and numerous ironing machines. These machines are all at work from 8 until 6 o'clock, for six days a week, one laundry alone handling from twenty to twenty-five thousand pieces of flat work per day. The larger laundries each handle about three thousand bundles of work from private parties, exclusive of the hotel and restaurant work, which is kept separate.

CHINESE LAUNDRIES

Then, it must be borne in mind that there are hundreds of Chinese laundries in Winnipeg, all doing a flourishing business. The “National Laundry Journal,” in speaking of the condition of Canada as regards the amount of work done by Chinamen, says: “That the most unfavorable condition in regard to Chinese laundries is not so unfortunate in that respect as the best or most favored Canadian town, is probably as surprising as it is true. Yet the Canadians, or at least a majority of them, do not regard the situation as unfortunate; they really seem to enjoy it. They patronize the heathen in the broad sense of the word. They pat him on the back, as it were, in all their relations with him, and the Chinaman pats himself on the back in self-congratulation at having his lot fallen into such pleasant places.”

“It may probably seem like a fairy tale to the launderers of the United States, that 80 per cent. of the laundry work of Canada is done by Chinese laundries, but such seems to be the case according to the best information I could find, and the information is confirmed by my own observation. In the larger cities, or some of them, there are in the neighborhood of twenty Chinese laundries to every one managed or operated by citizens of the Dominion, while in the smaller provincial towns of 500 to a 10,000 population, there is always to be found a Chinese laundry, five or ten in some of them, and nearly every such town has no other laundry. In Toronto, for instance, there are about five laundries of the larger size, and about fifteen steam laundries all told, while there are about 300 Chinese laundries. Other cities which have steam laundries have about the same ratio of Chinese.”

“The reason for these conditions is given in one word, patronage. Of course, the laws of the country regarding the admission of the Chinese have been favorable to them, much more so than the laws of the United States, but a large portion of the

³⁹ From CLEANING WORKS OF A GREAT CITY. (1907, July 11). *The Manitoba Free Press*, p. 6.

people of the Dominion patronize them in a sense much broader than simply with their business favor. The church people take special interest in them. They champion the Chinese in many ways. In one Sunday school it is said that there are 400 Chinese scholars. These, in entering such schools, insist on having a teacher all to themselves, and it must be a lady. As one prominent businessman of Toronto put it, 'the flower of our young womanhood is thus engaged,' and this gentleman is a prominent and active member of the church."

PATRONS OF THE CHINAMAN

"Of course, these church people are expected, when profuse with other patronage, to bestow on the Chinaman what business patronage they have, if not to further interest themselves in influencing the patronage of their friends and acquaintances, which they do. From another extreme and a direction not to be expected – the labor classes – the Chinaman gets a large patronage. These two elements compose a very large portion of the Canadian people. There are probably a much larger proportion of the church people of Canada thus earnestly interested in the work of the church than is the case in the United States, and the proportion of the labor classes is quite as large, so that the two combined cut quite a figure."

[WASHERWOMEN]

There are, besides, hundreds of women who take in washing in Winnipeg, especially among the foreigners, and these women are patronized by whole families as well as by men and women who are boarding. It is a hopeless task to think of counting them, as well as the hundreds of women who go from house to house, washing day after day. It is impossible to give anything like an accurate estimate of the number of men and women in this city who are making their living in the laundry business, but it would be quite safe to say that there must be between two and three thousand, at least.

[STEAM LAUNDRIES]

Everyone likes the character of the work done by the steam laundries, the only objection being that the charge is pretty high. The people who make this complaint perhaps do not realize that there is invested in the laundry business of Winnipeg a capital of some \$300,000, and but few have any idea of the number of times their clothes are handled before they reach the state of perfection in which they are sent home.

THE TRAVELS OF A COLLAR

Take, for instance, a collar; from the time you hand it to the driver until he brings it back to you, it is handled some fourteen times. The driver puts it into the sorting room, where all the things in each bundle are checked over by the receiving girl, and she hands them on to another girl to check over again, so that there may be no mistake. Then the clothes are sorted, and put into lots of about sixty-five or seventy bundles in each lot. Next the things are put into steam washing machines, where they are washed, rinsed, and blued, and then transferred to the extractors, which are round metal tubs, making about one hundred and twenty revolutions per minute, and having perforations in the sides so that the water can escape. After being a few minutes in one of these machines, the flatwork is ready for the mangles, but not so

the collars. They are taken to a girl who rubs them flat, being careful to see that all the wrinkles are out, and then she passes them on to the starcher. After they are starched, another girl takes them and rubs off any surplus starch. Now they are ready for the drying room, where they hang until they are quite dry.

After drying, the collars are very stiff, and are next dampened, and in one laundry I noticed that, after dampening, they are put into a pressing machine having a pressure of 550 pounds to the square inch. Next they are ironed, but the ironing machine leaves them perfectly flat, so it is necessary to run them through a little machine that dampens the edge where they turn over. Now they are put through another machine that hardens them when turned over, and then they are put in the shaper. Now they are sorted, checked over twice, and given to the driver, ready for wear.

THROUGH A LAUNDRY WITH A SHIRT

A shirt has almost as interesting a trip through the laundry as the collar. After it is taken from the extractor, it is rubbed out smooth by one girl, and then passed to another to starch the bosom. Another starches the neckband and cuffs, and another rubs off the surplus starch. The shirt is then hung in the drying room, and, when taken from there, is dampened and put in the press. One girl now irons the bosom, another the neck-band and cuffs, and another the body of the shirt. Of course, this work is done on different machines run by these girls. Now the shirt is handed to a finisher. This girl looks the shirt over carefully to see if it is alright, and if it needs any little finishing touches, she gives them with a hand iron. If it has not been properly done, she returns it to the one at fault, and if necessary it is all done over again.

There is no machine yet invented that is suitable for ironing ladies' blouses, underwaists and skirts. These have all to be ironed by hand, and large numbers of girls with electric or gas irons are busy all the time, this part of the year, at that kind of work. In one laundry twenty-five girls were busy ironing by hand, and as they were all very expert with the iron, it will give some idea of how much of that kind of work there must be to do.

Sheets, pillow covers, table cloths, towels and all such work is put through the mangles, just as it comes out of the extractor. A number of girls sit at one side of the mangle feeding in the articles, and the same number are at the other side receiving them when they go through; and others are there, folding them. After going through the mangle, the clothes are as dry as if they had hung on a line in the backyard for a day, in a July sun.

The steam laundries each have their own well and softening plant, and one manager informed me that they have succeeded in reducing the water, which has about sixty degrees of hardness, down to six degrees, which is a pretty good reduction.

THE DARNER

Many people may be surprised to learn that there is a woman in each of the steam laundries, who is called the darning. All day that woman sits there darning socks or stockings for people, the most of whom, if told that their stockings were darned at the laundry, would likely declare that they never had a stocking darned

there. The reason of this is that people always notice when there are holes, but they never notice when the holes have been darned. At any rate, this woman, called the darner, seems to be a very important person at most of the laundries, and she never seemed to be idle. One manager, when asked if her work was not quite a boon to the bachelors, hesitated, and then said that married men seem to appreciate her efforts as much as anyone.

The laundries also employ a mender, who has to sew on buttons and mend. She, also, was always busy, and one manager said that their button bill in one year, is something appalling.

A number of the laundries do considerable outside trade, one laundry having as many as fifty outside agencies, and each send in considerable work, if one might judge by the large number of express bundles in the receiving room.

The steam laundries are also fitted up to do dyeing and dry cleaning, and the amount of this kind of work demanded of them is constantly increasing. This work is, of course, the heaviest in the spring and fall, but the regular laundry work does not vary very much. The drop trade varies the most, but according to the "National Journal," before quoted, most of the drop trade goes to the Chinese laundries, so that the work of the steam laundries does not vary very much from one end of the year to the other.

Many housekeepers in Winnipeg, mourning over the loss of a good servant, do not feel very kindly towards the laundries, for large numbers of girls leave domestic service to engage in laundry work. This seems to be owing to the fact that in a laundry there is a chance of advancement, better wages, regular hours, and uniform work. The laundries do not seem to have any difficulty in securing plenty of help. The manager of one laundry said that if he advertised for help, he would have dozens of applications in a very short time, but they were very particular about the class of help they engaged, and so would not take more than a very small percentage of those who applied, and his employees seemed to be a very fine class of people. Most of the laundries take inexperienced help, and start them at some simple work, and train them, so that they are prepared to take a better position when there is an opening. In this way the larger laundries do not have the difficulty of securing experienced help that smaller laundries must have.

DYEING AND CLEANINGS

Scattered over Winnipeg are a number of rather unpretentious buildings, with unpretentious signs, that tell the passer-by they can get dry cleaning, pressing and dyeing done there; and yet the work done in those buildings, and buildings similar to them, has caused a regular revolution in the manufacture of light goods for ladies' and children's wear. Years ago, only wealthy women could afford to wear light dresses, unless they were of a material not injured by the application of soap and water, for even after a few evenings the garment would be soiled, and a new dress would have to be purchased. Now there has been introduced the chemical process of dry cleaning, and by it the most delicate fabric is not injured; and even if much soiled, it comes out looking almost new.

Another line of manufacture that has been greatly influenced by the introduction of dry cleaning, is that of the manufacture of trimmings for light dresses. Before, it was necessary to use something that would wash. Now, whether it will wash or not is not the question, but rather, is it pretty? Of course, the manufacturers were not slow to respond to the demand, and the change in the manufacture of dress trimmings has been similar to that in the manufacture of light colored dress fabrics.

The millinery trade has also been influenced, and now light colored plumes and other light colored trimmings are much more in demand than ever before, and as a consequence, the whole of the feminine population appears in brighter, colored clothes, and presents a much gayer appearance.

Five years ago, the chief dry cleaning and dye house in western Canada was started in Winnipeg by Henry Bros. with a staff of four – two bosses, one engineer and a presser. Now they have a staff of forty-seven.

The dry cleaning, which is done by a chemical process, is the most important part of their work, but they do considerable dyeing. Few people know that the garment to be dyed is first stripped by a new process that removes all the color, and is then dyed, put through the extractor, dried and then steamed to bring it into shape, and then pressed. The reason that a garment will not always take the color desired, is because sometimes, after it is stripped, there is a poor body left in the goods that will not take the desired color.

My Wardrobe, the Maple Leaf, all the laundries; the numerous other establishments are building up a good trade in dry cleaning in Winnipeg, many of them receiving considerable outside trade.

“Washing made easier”⁴⁰ (August, 1912)

It seems to me that the washing is one of the hardest jobs that the homemaker has to perform. The washing heaps up and the housekeeper has either to do it or to see that it is done, with system and regularity. Especially is this true with a large family of small children. Then it is generally the case of “no washing done, no clothes for the children.”

When one of our homemakers was east for the winter, she found that her friends there had the same difficulty in obtaining help that we find out West. Many who would gladly have hired their washing done had to do it themselves. But they were using a washing tablet that made their washing much easier. Two winters ago, she simply reported this. Last winter she brought back the tablets. Now most of us are using them and finding them such a help that we wish to pass on the good news.

There are directions for using the tablet in the paper that surrounds it. But I will tell you just what I do. And just here let me say that I obtain no benefit from recommending it, except the idea of helping every homemaker to make her washing easier. If it is a small washing, use only half a tablet with one bar of any kind of soap.

⁴⁰ From Fyfe, M. O. (1912, August 10). WASHING MADE EASY. *The Regina Leader*, p. 8. By Maude Olive Fyfe (1873 – 1921). At the author’s later published request, the title of the article has been changed to ‘WASHING MADE EASIER’.

Having six small children, I use two bars of laundry soap with a whole tablet to each washing. These are sliced finely into four quarts of soft water and boiled, the day before we wash. Then on wash day, as soon as we get back up, we put the boiler on the back of the stove, filled with water, while we use the front of the stove for cooking breakfast. The dissolved soap and water is heated to melt it, then half of it is strained into the boiler for the first boiler-full of fine white clothes. The other half is saved for the second boiler-full. For we have two boilers full and a machine full of colored clothes besides. And we wash twice a week. And last time it took me only two hours-and-a-half, and I am not very experienced at washing.

Best of all, the clothes were beautifully clean. As one of our home-makers says, "The clothes get a better color every time we use the tablet."

While we are having breakfast, the clothes are drawn to the front of the stove to boil well. After breakfast, I take some of the remaining melted soap and thin it with cool soft water to the required heat for our flannels. As water is not too plentiful, the water from washing and rinsing the flannels is saved for the second boiler-full of clothes. After the clothes boil about 45 minutes, they are dumped into the washing-machine, water and all. The second boiler-full is left to boil while the machine is turned – by the good man – just a short time. Then all that has to be done to the clothes is to wring them, rinse them in clear water, and hang out. Of course, some have to be starched, but they do not have to be blued, as the tablet is blue.

The colored clothes just have to be put through the machine, then rinsed. If they are very dirty, they can be rubbed a little by hand, but the dirt appears to fall out. No washboard is required.

The way we get them is from the woman who bought them up. She is kind enough to supply use at cost and we are learning to value them. One experienced homemaker said she had tried everything to make washing easier, but never met with anything as good as this. It robbed wash-day of its dread. One of our merchants is ordering it for us. But if we could not get them in this way, we were going to order them by the box through our Homemakers and sell them out at cost.

The name of this great labor-saving device is "Mack's No-Rub Laundry Tablet," manufactured by Mack's No-Rub Tablet Co., Almonte, Ontario. They seem to be in great demand in the east, but have not been widely introduced into the west⁴¹ yet. But any Homemaker here who has used a tablet does not wash again without one.

⁴¹ British Columbia saw them as early as 1911. From an ad for Spencer's Grocery, Vancouver: "MACK'S NO RUB – Have you tried it? We have sold thousands of cakes the last couple of days. It will do the washing while you are attending to your other household duties. It will remove all stains, cleansing without rubbing, saving all wear and tear. It makes the laundry pure white without bluing." Grocery Bulletin. (1911, September 22). *The Province*, p. 25.

“A picture of a laundry room”⁴² (June, 1913)

I will try to describe to you a picture of a laundry room that is in my mind's eye, and would be a useful addition to every farmhouse on account of the high winds and severe frosts that we have here in the west. A room 15 x 15 would answer the purpose. A larger one would be better, with a southwest exposure, with wide low windows, and door opening into the yard. This should be in the basement, but as our houses are not built with basements it would have to be on [the] first floor, or if water attachments are in the house, in the attic with roof windows, equipment. To be up-to-date we should have hot and cold water attachments and a heater for heating irons or water and drying purposes. Three set tubs with attachments, a washer and wringer and board. A one and a half horse power gasoline engine to run [the] washer; cloth boiler and stick basket, pan clapper and pail, and enough hooks and lines to hang the wash; an ironing table, skirt and sleeve board padded and [a] thick pad to stand on while ironing, two sets of irons, different weights, spring handled, or one set of gasoline, electric, or gas irons if one lives where they can have those things; a mangle for flat work, which does as good work as lots of ironers do their flat work. This would save lots of time and hand work. In connection with this room there should be a cloth chute from upper floors, with door opening into [the] laundry, which saves carrying heavy hampers and cloth bags; also a small sewing or mending room, equipped with all kinds of thread and darning yarn and piece bags, that the mending may be done before folding clothes, ready for their different places. Every minute counts for the busy housewife.

Now, this may seem a great lot, but if one would count the loss of time in labor and strength, it would not seem so great. For the washing, I know you can all do that as well, and perhaps a good deal better, than me, but I will tell you how I do mine. First, good water if possible, good soap and lots of elbow grease. I separate my wash; all the fine linens, the soiled ones, colored and flannels each by themselves. Since coming west I use my own make of soap, made with Gillet's perfumed lye, as the common laundry soap is no good with the water we have, and the best Fels Naptha is too expensive. It takes much more soap to do a wash on the farm than in the city.

I try to remove all bad stains such as blood, tea, coffee, and fruit, and grease stains before putting [them] into [the] tub. I rub out of sud water, rub each article with soap if for boiling or scalding. I do more scalding, as the water makes the clothes yellow in boiling them, but for bad stains I boil. I add soap powder to water, as it helps remove stains. I find Pearline the best. For black engine oil or any machine oil, I rub with coal oil before washing, as that removes all stains. Wash out of second water; don't rub much, but examine closely to see if all dirt is gone, then put into a generous tub of rinsing water, then through the bluing water and starch any that need it before hanging out.

⁴² From Hancock, A. (1913, June 21). LAUNDRY WORK. *The Regina Leader*, p. 31. Written by Annie Florence Rix Hancock (1877 – 1929). Paper originally read at Wessel's Homemakers' Club.

Colored garments should be treated to a bath of salt water to set the color, two coffee cups to ten quarts of water. Garments treated this way can be washed again afterwards without this precaution.

Flannels: I turn all wearing apparel inside out and brush with [a] whisk broom, as there is always lots of dust that can be brushed out. That makes the washing easy. I use hot soapy water for flannels, also rinse in hot water. Probably you will say, "Doesn't it shrink them?" No, it is cold water that shrinks flannels after being in hot soapy water; while flannel blankets will be soft and white if a tablespoonful of ammonia is added to the first tub of water. Shake well as it raises the wool and makes them soft. To bleach yellow ones, use one tablespoonful of borax to a gallon of water and dry in [the] sun. Borax will also restore the gloss to sateens when washed, also removes all leather stains from white stockings. In washing colored cloths use as little soap as possible and dry in the shade.

For starching I use satin gloss starch for boiled starch, and elastic for cold starching. If a bit of lard or a little coal oil is added to boiled starch, the irons will not stick when ironing. I double starch for all collars, white shirts and any article I want very stiff. In using cold starch, wipe off all surplus starch before ironing. In ironing, I like to have my clothes sprinkled and colded over night as they iron so much easier. Table linen I make quite damp as I never starch linen for the table.

I iron good skirts on the cross, as it does not stretch them. Linen and embroidered waists look better ironed on the wrong side; in pressing heavy seams put a cloth over seams, and they will not be glossy. Colored dresses look better ironed on [the] wrong side with not too hot [an] iron, as a hot iron fades more quickly than the sun. To clean flat irons: Sand, soap and coal oil, dip cloth in oil and scour with sand soap; sand paper is also a great help in keeping the irons free of starch.

To cleanse silk waists, ribbons, gloves, laces, lace waists, or any light colored dresses, wash in gasoline. Put gasoline in a large basin or pail, and set into a tub or pail of hot water to heat the gasoline, use soap on very dirty spots, finish washing in gasoline, same as if you were using water; hang in the sun. To clean white plumes: Make a thin paste of gasoline and flour; dip plume and cover with the paste; lay aside to dry, then shake well and [the] plume will come out white and fluffy.

I will now give you a washing fluid that makes all washing easy if you want to use it: 1 can Gillet's lye, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. muriate of ammonia, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. salts of tartar, 1 oz. sulphate soda. Dissolve in three gallons of water. For an ordinary wash use one teacup to each tub [of] water. Soak clothes over night, wring out and boil, wash out; they will hardly need any rubbing, and will come out beautiful and clean. This is called Chinese fluid; they use it in the laundries.

An excellent soap is made as follows: $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. salsoda, 1 oz. borax, 1 oz. sulphate soda, 5 lbs. of yellow bar soap. Dissolve the salsoda, borax, and sulphate of soda in $2\frac{1}{2}$ gallons [of] water, shave soap fine and put in water, stirring constantly till melted; remove from fire and add [a] tablespoonful of aqua ammonia; pour into a tub, box or pan. When cool, cut in pieces; don't let freeze. Another good soap is made by Gillet's perfumed lye, which I use; recipe will be found on can.

I will now give a few stain removers:

Grass stains may be removed by wetting them in clear cold water and rubbing between the hands. No soap is needed.

A cloth dipped in ammonia will often remove stains from [the] collar of a coat.

Ink stains may be taken out by soaking in sour milk.

Paint stains that are dry and old may be removed from cotton or woolen goods with chloroform. First cover the spots with olive oil or butter.

To remove iron rust, wet the spot with lemon juice and cover with salt. Lay in [the] sun or use salts of lemon in the same way; repeat till it vanishes.

Tar stains may be removed by rubbing lard into them thoroughly before applying soap.

Blood stains – Soak in cold salt water, then wash in warm soapy water and finish by boiling.

Perspiration stains may be taken off white waists by applying lemon juice and salt; expose to sun.

To remove engine oil, soak in kerosene oil, wash in warm, soapy water.

To remove tea, coffee or fruit stains that have turned black – Chloride of lime in a little water, dip spot, and expose to sun.

To remove scorch from linen – Cut an onion in half, rub the scorched part with it, then soak in cold water, or expose to the sun under glass.

To bleach garments white – 1 tablespoonful of borax to a gallon of water; dip and dry in [the] sun; repeat the process if necessary.

I have done a rough reckoning what the equipment of my laundry room cost. It would be less than \$250; that is counting water, cistern, and boiler, and all attachments. That is small when we come to think of what some of the farm machinery cost.

Washing and the War⁴³ (August, 1915)

You'd never for one moment imagine – would you? – that this terrible war which seems to be shaking the world to the very foundations, would ever deign to affect so prosaic a thing as the wash day, and not only affect it, but remove one of its sturdiest props. Of course, we all know that since the war it has been possible to get all sorts of washwomen, needy and otherwise, except in a few notable cases such as one I personally met with wherein my washwoman, previously excellent and most dependable, suddenly failed to appear, and in her stead arrived a little note saying, "My husband has gone to the war, so I'm not going out to work no more!"

Neither did she. She just retired from active labor and sat down to enjoy life on what she received from the patriotic associations. Fortunately, there are not so very many of her kind, and washday does not suffer greatly on that account.

But there is a horrible possibility that Toronto faces a future when she will have to wear clothing that is much unbleached, for the supply of blue has been cut off

⁴³ From LA CERISE. (1915, August 6). VISIT TO LAUNDRY REVEALS SURPRISE. *The Windsor Star*, p. 11.

by the war, and every housewife knows what a serious want that is going to be. Previously, all the blue that was used was imported altogether, but now the source of supply has been completely closed and unless Canada soon discovers a substitute, she runs a great risk of being referred to as "The Great Unbleached!"

This outlook makes one long to try the laundries, but there has always been a lurking fear that things are carelessly handled, and maybe some highly unscrupulous germ might impudently attach himself to one's belongings. But if women really knew the absolute cleanliness that prevails, and the extreme care that is taken of the clothing, I think the bugaboo of washday would cease to exist.

SYSTEM COMPLETE

For my own part, after a recent trip through one of our largest laundries, I would not fear to send my most highly cherished possession there, and I know it would come back to me in the best of condition and exquisitely clean.

In this laundry, washing has been reduced to a science and most of the work [is] done by men (which were it not rank treachery to my sex, I might be inclined to say accounts for the absolute order in which everything is conducted). When your bulging laundry bag comes in with the driver, its contents are dumped out on the floor and sorted carefully by a little army of men who do nothing else all day long. Your handkerchiefs are put in strong net bags, and all your other things are put in piles of the same kind as they are.

"There," you say, "I knew it! All mixed up with everybody else's things. Not for me, thank you!"

But, wait a moment. Every one of these things is put in huge containers and 100 pounds of live steam turned into them. If any lurking germ can emerge from that fiery blast alive and kicking, well, he is a more vigorous germ than science has yet discovered.

It is not as monotonous a job as you might imagine, in this sorting-room, for all sorts of funny things are found in these parcels which come in. Of course, cuff links, shirt studs, and brooches are ordinary finds, but they told me that some most peculiar things sometimes stow themselves away in the laundry bags, and sometimes a little mouse runs out in a terrible fright, and once when they opened up a bundle out walked a little, half-grown black kitten, which had evidently been having a nap in the soiled linen and got tied up by mistake. He was none the worse for his little journey, they said, and merely stretched himself out sleepily as though to say, "Well, well, that was quite an experience!"

ITALIANS WORK MACHINES

Downstairs is the huge washing room, with its great washing machines run by electricity, and which consume such enormous quantities of soap and water and starch and blue. This particular laundry also makes its own power and has two engines which generate 450 horsepower, and moreover, most of the machines have their own motor, so that the breaking down of one motor does not mean the disabling of an entire section and the consequent failure of your laundry to appear at the very time that you need it most. And who do you think tends and manages these mammoth washing machines? None other than the Toronto representatives of that brave race,

the Italians, whose brothers and friends are doing such excellent work on the battlefields of Europe. Needless to say, there are no Austrians employed here, so the fear of a racial war is not realized.

At home, if you insist on the washwoman using three waters to rinse, you may be referred to as "one of them cranks," but in the steam laundry your pet theory is well vindicated, for each and every article passes through six separate and sparkling waters. They use 3,400 pounds of chip soap in a week and 150,000 gallons of water are used daily, and every drop of this water is filtered before being used, so it is an utter impossibility for germs to get into your articles, through the water, at any rate. Steam is the most perfect sterilizer known, and three huge steam boilers, each seven feet in diameter and 21 feet long (the largest in Canada), use up 10 tons of coal per day in their greedy mouths to produce ample steam to sterilize the clothes of all Toronto if required.

GIRLS LOOK CONTENTED

Did you imagine that these laundries have huge yards of clotheslines, where all the garments flutter in the breeze to dry? Not at all. The fickle weather (which seems to love to pour on washday) is ably defied by the most wonderful extractors into which the clothes are dumped from the washers, soaking wet, and after the steam has been turned on, and the extractors whirled about at a dizzy rate, the articles come out almost dry and ready to iron. Of course, all the household linens are done by themselves, and many of the finest articles are washed by hand by flaxen-haired Finnish washerwomen. These things are dried in special drying rooms, huge closets, where the heat is most intense, and where the articles are carefully spread out to dry, emerging as softly fluffy as when new. They are then sent upstairs to the ironing room.

Almost all the ironing is done by girls, and very happy and contented they look, too, in their cool, light dresses and well-ventilated and well-lighted quarters. There are almost all nationalities represented here, for if ever there was a great melting pot of the nations, I believe the big steam laundry can lay substantial claim to be that pot. Here come the newest of immigrants, and after working for a while in these splendid surroundings, they are turned into faithful Canadian citizens, willing to swear allegiance to the King. A great majority of the ironers, however, are dark-eyed Italians, probably the wives and daughters of those same men we saw in the washing room.

There are all kinds of machines for every conceivable purpose, which makes one marvel at the ingenuity of man in labor-saving devices, but many, many things are ironed by hand on long tables facing the windows, by white-clad girls plying electric irons of exactly double voltage to the ordinary household iron, and one wonders what longing thoughts run through their minds as they carefully iron and fold the exquisite lacy garments which come under their gentle fingers.

IRONING COLLARS

For all the filminess and daintiness of Milady's wear, it is Mere Man's shirts and collars which receive the greatest fussing over, and one shirt before it is finished goes through about two dozen hands. So it is absolutely impossible for such a thing

to occur as that which happened when a certain washwoman, in a fit of abstraction, carefully starched the whole shirt stiffly from neckband to hem, and when it was ironed one almost expected to see it walk off of its own volition, so stiff and dignified was its lordly bearing. However, in the laundry, one girl runs the machine which irons the neckbands, one does the cuffs, another girl does the yokes, and still another machine does the bosoms, and finally the whole shirt is ironed over by hand before it is passed over to a woman who sews on all the missing buttons.

Then there is the whole corner devoted to collars, with the funniest little machines imaginable to make them sooth and crimp for “My Gentleman” to wear. The collars are put through a machine which by means of a wide strip of Russian toweling immerses them in starch; and, by the way, this Russian toweling is another thing that the war has stopped the import of. Then the collars is wiped off, run through a dampener, and ironed out flat. It is next put on a machine which somewhat rounds it, and then goes into a queer, funnel-shaped affair, to come out the other end in a tight little roll, and it is then passed on to a girl who puts it on a glistening machine to smooth off all rough edges.

At the end of my trip through this wonderful laundry, with its 324 immaculate employés, I came to the conclusion that there is only one thing in which the laundry must bow to the washwoman, and that is that, while it washes your clothes, it cannot come into your home and scrub your floors and wash one’s windows, as well.

“A mighty strong argument in favor”⁴⁴ (May, 1920)

One evening last week I had a unique experience for me. I was invited to join a group of electrical salesmen and departmental heads to discuss electricity from the woman’s point of view.

I wish that all of you who are interested in the subject could have been with me. I learned more in an hour than I have learned in months – not about electrical appliances – but about the average woman’s attitude toward them.

One salesman told me that he learned from a customer to whom he was demonstrating a washing machine that the woman herself did not want the machine particularly, had never thought about having it, but that hubby was obliged to help do the laundry for the family on Sunday, as the wife was not strong and overburdened with other tasks. Hubby got tired of it and finally sent up one of the best machines, because he did not propose to waste his Sundays helping either with the washing or minding the children while wifey did it.

STRONG ARGUMENT

That struck me as being a mighty strong argument in favor of the washing machine. And another case of a similar occurrence strengthened my viewpoint.

One salesman stated that he had no trouble in talking to men even when they were busiest in their offices, but that women seemed to think the average salesman

⁴⁴ From Electrical Appliances. (1920, May 12). *The Vancouver Daily World*, p. 14.

was “trying to put something over on them,” and were not only unapproachable but oftentimes extremely rude.

I know, and you know, that women are not so easy to sell goods to, especially household goods, but right here I want to ask your consideration for the salesman who is honestly trying to make a living in an honorable method with a reputable firm behind him.

Personally, I would not permit a man in my house if he came from a firm that I did not consider honest. Nor would I purchase an article from any but reliable, established firms.

That is where women oftentimes have trouble. Not knowing, they accept the word of the clever representatives and are persuaded to purchase a washing machine, or sewing machine, or whatever it may be from an unscrupulous dealer – and I regret to say we have them. When their appliance fails to give satisfaction, they have trouble to get a satisfactory settlement.

CASE IN MIND

I have in mind one woman I know who purchased a certain washing machine (electrical, of course) from a certain store. The machine did not give the proper satisfaction, and she could not induce the store to repair, or rather put the machine in proper shape. She was told to go to the electrical house where the machine was purchased by the department store.

The wholesaler said, “I did not sell it; I won’t be responsible. Go to the man you bought it from.”

To make a long story short, it took weeks to get the matter adjusted, and finally an electrical dealer who had no interest in the matter investigated and examined the machine. He had found that every week for almost three months she had never cleaned the tub nor drained the collection of dirt from it. He told me he was obliged to take a small wire and poke the sediment down through the drain of the washing machine before he could get a chance to clean it.

It was simply inexcusable on the part of the growly woman, yet she blamed the machine. Others think that the machine should be superhuman that stains should be removed, fruit stains for instance, without the ordinary care. You and I know that hot water will set a stain, but not so some of the women who are trying to make the machine do more than common sense things, and who cannot understand why cold water must first be used on the stain. Yet if they were washing by hand, they would use cold water.

Of course, I have found similar cases with other electrical appliances, but in most of these the dealer immediately adjusted matters.

“Washing by electricity”⁴⁵ (June, 1920)

Many apartment houses in Vancouver which have installed electric washing machines for general use by their tenants find that the added accommodation is not only appreciated by their tenants, but a paying investment.

One apartment house owner reports that he installed two electric washers at a cost of \$315, and within thirty days from date he had received from his tenants \$185 in rentals. His rental plan was to make a charge of 25 cents an hour for the use of the wash porch and the privilege of the electric washer.

He states that rarely a day passes that the washing machine is not in use, and that his tenants are very appreciative of his new and added accommodation, and that many have admitted that it has been a saving to them in laundry bills.

Basing their judgment on the statements that have been made by apartment house owners, washing machine dealers have a plan now under way where they will place electric washing machines in apartment houses and let the machine pay for itself. This seems to be not only a means of apartment house owners obtaining a machine free, but will be an accommodation for their tenants.

⁴⁵ From WASHING BY ELECTRICITY IS LATEST PRACTICE. (1920, June 24). *The Vancouver Sun*, p. 10.

The Kitchen

“Pot-luck”⁴⁶ (March, 1898)

How many women have execrated, at one time or another, the thoughtless, inconsiderate man who, in a cheery irresponsible way, asks a friend to accompany him home and take “pot-luck?” Probably hundreds, possibly thousands of otherwise sweet-tempered wives have been driven to recrimination – or worse – by this intolerable nuisance. The friend arrives with his too hospitable host, as unwelcome to the lady of the house, as he is unexpected, and consequently becomes as illogically angry with his hostess’ coldness as he is vexed with himself for accepting the ill-advised invitation, reserving meanwhile his most awful and effective curses for “the man who did the deed.”

The hostess, having made a hasty toilet, descends and carries on an idiotic conversation with the now much perturbed guest, her thoughts, that wildly stray kitchenwards, sadly interrupting the genial flow of polite inanities. “Oh, yes!” she remarks fervently, “I do so dote on Wagner. (I am sure that chicken will never be cooked in time.) No, we have never visited the music halls. (Phew! That’s the bread sauce burning.) You must tell me all about your dear wife’s sweet cats. (Great heavens! I quite forgot to tell Mary to go to the nearest pastry-cook’s for a tart.)” Exit hostess precipitantly.

Subsequently, the guest forces a few mouthfuls of ruined food down his throat, and makes a ghastly pretence at believing that he is taking “pot-luck,” that he has not upset the whole household, that the cook is not preparing to give instant warning, that he has not made his hostess his implacable enemy for life, and that he would not like to slaughter the unconscious author of all this misery, who with sublime selfishness has complacently eaten his dinner, congratulating himself meanwhile on being a model host. But after all, it is the hostess who demands our real sympathy, her complex misery entirely overshadowing the minor troubles of the guest. Now, it is just for such unfortunately situated hostesses that a kindly inventive genius has set to work and devised the “emergency shelf.” This “emergency shelf” is quite simple; it is just a big shelf in the larder set apart to meet the case of the happy-go-lucky host (every hair of whose head ought to be sacrificed, and sometimes is at the shrine of his wife’s outraged feelings), and the chance guest. On this shelf should be neatly arrayed boxes of sardines, cans of tomatoes, concentrated soups, tongues, tinned salmon, shrimps and lobsters, mutton, corned beef, rabbit, pots of preserved fruit, and other like staple and keepable commodities. Armed with such a stock of food, what woman need fear the unexpected guest? The only point to be carefully observed is that each article on the “emergency shelf” must be renewed immediately after being taken for use.

⁴⁶ From ZETA. (1898, March 26). Woman’s Kingdom. *The Vancouver Daily World*, p. 3.

“For the unexpected guest”⁴⁷ (March, 1901)

It is always well to have something in the pantry that can quickly and easily be prepared, should a friend happen in about lunch time, whom you would like very much to invite to remain for a cup of tea.

Farmers' wives usually have a full larder – eggs, canned fruits, meats and vegetables, but our readers who live in town and are not always so well supplied may find the following suggestions helpful.

For the unexpected guest, always keep on hand a can of some good soup and several cans of vegetables, these with a variety of crackers that come in dainty packages, and bread and butter and tea will make a lunch good enough to invite anyone to share.

You may have on hand some left over cake or pudding that will do for dessert – if not, a package of bromongelon or minute tapioca is quickly converted into a dainty pudding.

During the cold weather a jar of beef extract is always ready to prepare your friend a delicious cup of bouillon, that is very welcome and appetizing.

A little cheese grated on crackers and browned in the oven is nice to serve with tea after the bouillon.

Every housekeeper will have eggs in the house, and an egg fried with bacon and daintily served is always a standby.

If you happen to have milk and chocolate in the house a nice dessert can easily be made.

Make a regular cornstarch custard, and, while the milk is getting ready to boil, melt some chocolate in a bowl or sauce-pan over the tea-kettle. As soon as the cornstarch custard is made, turn into it the melted chocolate, using enough chocolate to make it of a dark, rich color. Then flavor with vanilla. A hot custard will take more flavoring than a cold one. Pour into custard cups, and stir into each one a little whipped cream taken from the top of the milk. This makes an appetizing dessert, eaten with split and buttered crackers, that have been kept in the oven long enough to brown them.

Have an unexpected guest shelf in your pantry. Keep it supplied with a few cans of soup and vegetables, some beef extract, crackers and other things your taste might suggest, and you will never be worried and anxious when a friend “drops in” at lunch time.

“Uses of beef extract”⁴⁸ (November, 1902)

The modern housewife is not on to all the “culinary wrinkles” if she does not keep a pot of beef extract in her larder and possess the knowledge of how to use it. It is a mistaken idea that extracts of beef are only of use in the case of sickness; of

⁴⁷ From FOR THE UNEXPECTED GUEST. (1901, March 21). *The Regina Leader*, p. 7.

⁴⁸ From USES OF BEEF EXTRACT. (1902, November 10). *The Ottawa Journal*, p. 7.

course, they are of great value then, but they are also of inestimable value in the ordinary kitchen work, as the extract takes the place of meat and soup bones in soup-making; supplies the foundation for gravies and meat sauces, and also strengthens and flavors stews, curries and salads.

A quarter of a teaspoonful of the extract to a cup of boiling water and seasoned with pepper and salt, makes a delicious and harmless stimulant at all times; and by adding a thin slice of lemon to the above and serving in bouillon cups, you have a nice refreshment to offer an unexpected guest. Serve this with plain crackers or zephyrettes.

To make a plain soup stock, take one medium sized onion, stick four cloves into it, one small carrot, one turnip, and one root of stalk celery, eight pepper corns, one bay leaf, and one even tablespoonful of salt; add two quarts and one pint of water, and one ounce of beef extract, and boil for 20 to 25 minutes over a slow fire; strain out the vegetables and use the stock as a foundation for soups and sauces.

In order to produce the sauce, less water is necessary, or more extract, than in plain stock; to two quarts of water add the ingredients as in plain stock, and proceed in the same way. The result will be one and a half quarts of very rich soup stock, or consommé.

“A model kitchen”⁴⁹ (February, 1911)

Summary of a paper given by Ella Cora Hind (1882 – 1942), one of Canada’s earliest women journalists. She was known as the “Oracle of Wheat” for her grain reporting, and the Winnipeg Exchange stopped for two minutes in her honor upon her death.

In dealing with the subject, “A Model Kitchen,” Miss E. Cora Hind, of the Winnipeg Free Press, devoted her time to some of the conveniences which can be put into any kitchen.

Her opinion in regard to the kitchen in farm homes is that it should be large and should be so arranged as to do away with a needless amount of walking.

In dealing with kitchen conveniences, she tried to keep the expenditure for the various appliances within the price of an ordinary binder, namely, \$140.00 or \$150.00. There is not a farmer that does not consider the purchase of a binder an absolute necessity. The conveniences for the kitchen should be considered equally necessary.

On the Canadian prairies where all the natural supply of water is hard, where it is too often limited in quantity, and where the smallness of the buildings preclude the catching of a large quantity of soft water, washing and dish-washing become extremely difficult and laborious.

A Sanitary Dish Washer, which in Winnipeg costs \$20, would prove an inestimable boon.

⁴⁹ From A MODEL KITCHEN. (1911, February 2). *The Regina Leader-Post*, p. 8. Written by Ella Cora Hind (1888 – 1942).

Next to the washing of dishes, washing of clothes is one the greatest bug-bear on the farm. Miss Hind recommended the use of a comparatively new washing machine, the Lily White Electric Washer, so constructed it can be purchased without the electric motor, but with a special belt by which it can be attached to the power of the gasoline engine which is used in chopping wood on farms.

This washer wrings clothes, as well as washing them. The use of the gasoline engine in running the dishwasher, the sewing machine, etc., would do much to lighten labor.

The Fireless Cooker of which much has been heard of late had an enthusiastic advocate in the speaker. Long standing over a cook stove and the intolerable heat of it in the small houses is one of the greatest trials of the woman on the farm. Fireless Cookers are now constructed, and can be obtained in Winnipeg, that will not only boil and stew, but also bake bread.

Kitchen cabinets were not ranked as important as dish-washer. Kitchen tables should be covered with tin, which is sanitary and easily kept clean. The kitchen table covered with tin should be placed against the wall, convenient to the stove. Above it should be nailed a strip of oil cloth three feet high, and at the top of this a shelf with pepper, salt and other things in daily use. Across the oil-cloth, three strips of wood might be nailed, with hooks and nails on which to hang forks, egg beaters, etc. used in cooking.

A high stool on which to sit when ironing and performing other duties was mentioned as a necessity. Next came an ordinary lounge on which to drop down for a few moments' rest.

For two dollars, Miss Hind had purchased in Winnipeg the following simple devices for making kitchen work more easy: an egg separator, box for dicing potatoes, tin pepper and salt shakers, a wire pot cleaner, a soap shaper, a funnel, a meat chopper, an asbestos mat, a meat saw, a hook for lifting meat, a granite spoon, a granite scoop, a can opener, a device for cutting cookies, [and] a grater with a knife one side for slicing vegetables.

In closing, Miss Hind stated that her qualifications for dealing with such a subject lay chiefly in the fact that she had been over the country and knew the difficulties of the women. No women were doing a better work in the world than the prairie women, who were "bringing up their children to be good citizens, and doing hard work every day and not grouching about it."

"Never a real larder"⁵⁰ (August, 1913)

If anyone has the temerity to arrive unexpectedly at one of the thousand and odd apartment-house homes of the present day, consternation ill describes the emotion of the family thus molested. In the apartment house home, there is never a real larder. There is no room for it. People live from day to day, from meal to meal. Even whilst greeting the unexpected guest, the mistress of the tabloid home sends

⁵⁰ From ALEXANDRA. (1913, August 16). Concerning Hospitality. *The Province*, p. 13.

her soul swiftly into the refrigerator for some remnant of the commissariat to spy. Between exclamations of surprise that Georgina has changed so little in all these years, she, poor creature, engages in a fearful conflict of mind. Agonizingly she wonders what she can make out of a cupful of tomato juice and half a tin of condensed cream; until, happily, some good angel, rallying to her side, whispers “tomato bisque.” Between more talk she decides that she must make scones to eke out the bread, if she can leave Georgina long enough; and she would give her best hat to know at that moment whether the tin on the top shelf contains lobsters or lye; because, if it’s not lye, she can turn out a nice dish of curried lobster, or a salad; and the situation will have been saved. If she appears distraught, is it any wonder?

“Fritter Making” ⁵¹(May, 1916)

Fritters are a quick dish that ought to be a good friend to every cook in case of emergencies. If unexpected luncheon guests come, fritters can be made to fill in the place of dessert, an extra vegetable, or an entrée. Of course, fritters can be made to do the same duty at dinner, but unexpected guests are not so disturbing at dinner. Dinner is almost always of quantity and quality enough to be served to an extra guest or two; in many households where no men are at home in the middle of the day, luncheon is ordinarily very simple.

This is the batter for fritters – Flour, milk, baking powder and salt are essentials, and eggs are usually added. There should be twice as much flour as milk. Two level teaspoons of baking powder and a quarter of a level teaspoon of salt are used to each cup of flour. This is for a fritter batter which must be stiff – one to which some juicy fruit is to be added. The batter is the same for other purposes, excepting that more milk is added. Some cooks use a batter made of equal parts of milk and flour.

The flavoring of the fritter includes sugar, fruit and vegetables. Sugar is added direct to the batter when some tart filling is to be used.

Canned pineapple fritters are made by draining the slices of pineapple and letting them stand for an hour, then cutting them in halves and dipping in fritter batter and frying in deep fat until brown.

Apple fritters are made in several ways. The apples should be pared and cored and then cut into small pieces and added to the batter, to be dropped by spoonfuls into the hot fat, or else sliced rather thick and each slice dipped into the batter and fried.

Celery fritters are made by cutting celery hearts into inch-long stalks, dipping into batter and frying.

Orange fritters are made in this way: Peel the oranges and divide into segments. Remove inside skin and seeds, but do not break the segments. Soak in the liquid from maraschino cherries in which orange rind has been grated, drain, dip in

⁵¹ From FRITTER MAKING. (1916, May 10). *The Ottawa Citizen*, p. 10.

the thick fritter batter, and brown. Peaches can be made into fritters in the same way.

Here is a good fritter sauce: Boil together a third of a cup of hot water and a cup of sugar six minutes, and then add a teaspoon of lemon juice and a third of a cup of claret. For fruit fritters, fruit juice can be substituted for the wine.

“Save time and labor in the kitchen”⁵² (October, 1916)

Perhaps there is no article of kitchen equipment that is quite so important from a labor-saving point of view as the kitchen sink.

There are lots of simple devices that save time and labor in the kitchen. Any housewife who appreciates the systematic scraping and scouring of dishes will be glad to invest in a wire draining basket. If a regulation draining basket is not available, the kind that is used in offices for letters, etc., will do. Put your silver in one, glassware in another and china in another. Washed in hot suds, they need but a dash of hot water from the faucet to leave them shining and almost dry. If they are left to drain in their baskets for a few minutes and the electric fan turned on them, you do not need to touch them with a tea-towel.

A wooden rack over the sink also saves many steps. You can store all your sand-soaps and cleaning powders on this, and put a couple of silver waiters on the bottom to be used in conveying dishes from there to the cupboards. One woman has a dozen or so of what she calls “handy hooks” on the bottom of her rack. On these she hangs her various time-saving utensils. One is a large dish mop, another is a soap-shaker for gathering together the tiniest remnants of soap, a fibre brush for scrubbing vegetables, a couple of colanders, an aluminum measuring cup and a combination can and bottle opener. Another remarkable combination instrument is a vegetable peeler, slicer and corer. It, aided and abetted by a tall stool and a stiff brush, makes potato-peeling and carrot scraping an easy job.

A small cylindrical grater hangs on this rack because it is always washed by the first brush, then scalded and left hanging to dry. Here also hangs a triangular basket strainer for the sink into which every particle of food, refuse, parings, grease, etc., destined for the garbage pail goes, leaving the sink as clean as possible.

Lastly, there hangs upon the side of the rack a brush of bristles about three inches long, with a long handle of twisted wire that is used for cleaning out the waste pipe of the refrigerator. If you are able to superintend the installation of the sink, have it a convenient height from the ground so that you do not have to stoop over while you are working there. Have your stool a convenient length.

⁵² From LABOR SAVERS IN KITCHENS. (1916, October 5). *The Ottawa Citizen*, p. 11.

“Her emergency shelf”⁵³ (December, 1919)

When an unexpected guest arrives, the hostess naturally wishes to, not only entertain them, but to get her own share of pleasure from the visit. But that continual matter of “something to eat” makes her ill at ease at all times. She telephones wildly for this or that, or rushes into the kitchen as soon as the guests have become seated.

Later, in taking stock, she finds that she has spent more than she could afford, and that the refreshments were needlessly lavish or sadly one sided. No matter if stores are convenient, the hostess who is backed by a well, if small, stocked emergency shelf and menus arrange do fit this stock and any occasion, opens her doors to the party of friends who just drop in, with absolute joy.

She comfortably visits with her guests, for she knows that she can serve dainty, satisfying refreshments in a twinkling from her emergency shelf. In this stock there should be canned fish, meats, chicken and fruits. A jar of sweets, packages of plain and fancy crackers, jars of pickles, beef extract and some canned soups.

A small case of bottled grape juice or ginger ale will answer the call in almost every emergency for a beverage, or to help out in a dessert or salad. Keep a pail of lard on hand to quickly mix up pastry, and in which to cook croquettes.

⁵³ From *The Home Comfortable*. (1919, December 1). *The Windsor Star*, p. 5.

The Cost of Living

“Housekeeping expenses”⁵⁴ (October, 1913)

Even neighbors are sometimes slow to understand an extraordinary situation next door, and it was a long time before Mrs. Brown could bring herself to believe that Mrs. Price had actually no money in her purse. She was convinced that this must be the truth when Mr. Price was away for six weeks, and Mrs. Price came in three times to borrow ten cents because she had no money to buy postage stamps. Mrs. Price was pretty, she was young, she had three charming children; but her husband would not give her any money. To say that Mrs. Brown was shocked is putting the case very mildly indeed. Naturally, she was indignant with Mr. Price. But Mrs. Brown could not help admitting to herself that although Mrs. Price was pretty and had attractive manners, still she was rather a silly woman. The woman of thirty-six who behaves as if she were sixteen never had been able to secure Mrs. Brown's respect.

MRS. BROWN A STRIKING CONTRAST

Before we hear anything further of Mr. and Mrs. Price, let us understand just what kind of a woman Mrs. Brown is. Mrs. Brown is a college graduate. She is thoroughly modern and up to date. She is a good bridge player. Mr. Brown is fond of bridge, and she likes to be able to play a hand which is good enough to go with Mr. Brown's. Mr. Brown himself is one of these husbands who is as well pleased to see his wife win a game as he is to win the game himself. The Browns have two children. Mrs. Brown is about forty and her husband is a few years older. They are both interested in church matters. Besides this, Mrs. Brown is a good cook and an excellent household manager and buyer. She will not let the baker leave her bread unless it is a wrapped loaf. I have known Mrs. Brown [to] send the baker away and walk down to the corner store herself for bread rather than be compelled to give up her principle of the wrapped loaf.

When Mr. and Mrs. Brown were married, they went thoroughly into the question of the Brown income. They decided how much they could afford to spend for the house, how much for rent, how much for insurance, how much to save and so on. Since then, Mrs. Brown has always had her household allowance, and she has kept to it. There has only been one change. Mrs. Brown saw, after she had been keeping house for a couple of years, that she could do a great deal better with her buying if she were able to buy in large quantities. Mr. Brown now pays over the housekeeping allowance three months at a time. It stands in the bank in Mrs. Brown's name; and she is in the habit of buying half a barrel of sugar at a time. For quite a while after they were married Mrs. Brown did all the work of the house, except that three days in the week a woman came to wash, to scrub, to sweep and dust.

MRS. BROWN'S REMARKABLE MOTHER

⁵⁴ From MacMurchy, M. (1913, October 18). MONEY TALKS WITH CANADIAN WOMEN. *The Regina Leader*, p. 17. By Lady Marjory Jardine Ramsay MacMurchy Willison (1869 – 1938).

The Browns have never had any difficulties with their housekeeping expenses. They have never been in debt. Mrs. Brown is not worried about her bills. Mr. Brown is not worried by the fact that Mrs. Brown is overworked and can't manage the housekeeping allowance. In fact, the Brown household is a successfully run business. Mr. and Mrs. Brown are happy and well, and so are the children.

Unfortunately, the Brown household is not representative of all households. The Price household next door is of quite a different character. Does this happen just because Mrs. Brown is lucky, and poor Mrs. Price, although she is pretty, young and attractive, is unlucky about housekeeping? Luck has nothing to do with it.

Mrs. Brown had a mother who insisted that each of her daughters should learn, while still attending the public school, how to cook and serve meals for the house. Mrs. Brown at the age of sixteen was a carefully taught cook. She knew how to keep house in every particular. She had been in charge of the housekeeping allowance and knew how to buy economically and wisely. She had been taught how to apportion a housekeeping allowance so that enough is given to each requirement. She had learned the great secret of keeping down expenses to the necessary level. Her mother had also taught her how to cut out undergarments, how to sew, and something about millinery.

Mrs. Brown had a remarkable mother. Candidly, she is the only mother I have ever heard of who really and truly made her daughter thoroughly proficient in the art of housekeeping. Then Mrs. Brown went to college. Later she became a college professor, and a clever professor, too. Then she married Mr. Brown; and naturally when they began housekeeping she and her husband consulted together over the management of the family income. Mr. Brown also consults Mrs. Brown about his business affairs, and also greatly to the benefit of Mrs. Brown. Mrs. Brown is a happy woman. She is as broad minded as a little given to worry over small matters as if she were a man. On the other hand, Mr. Brown has grown to be almost as understanding and considerate about household and social affairs as if her were a woman.

TROUBLES OF THE PRICE HOUSEHOLD

The Price household is quite another story. Mrs. Price's mother could not be bothered teaching her daughter anything. Eleanor was pretty. Nothing else mattered except that she should be prettily dressed and have attractive manners. Mrs. Price wasn't so very young when she was married, twenty-seven or eight. But she had never roughened her hands with work of any kind, nor strengthened her brains with work of any kind, either. She had danced and dressed and gone to parties.

As her mother was fond of saying, Eleanor knew no more of the world than if she had been a child. All her life she had been led to believe that people wanted her to be a child, so she tried to please them. Then she married Mr. Price, and he began by giving her a housekeeping allowance. What a capacity Mrs. Price had for spending money, something unbelievable! Mr. Price told her to keep accounts, not to spend so much money, always to know what she had spent in a day, and for goodness's sake to add up straight, for heaven's sake don't you know what a bank account is?

He told Mrs. Brown the other day that he had tried to teacher her, but that his wife spent so much money he couldn't possibly give her a housekeeping allowance. It does not seem quite right that Mr. Price should have told Mrs. Brown about it, but he

was worried, and besides this was when Mrs. Brown had to lend Mrs. Price fifty cents a week, because her husband had gone away for six weeks and left her without one cent of money. Of course, she can run accounts at certain stores where her husband has opened accounts for her. But Mrs. Price never has any money, poor little woman, and poor Mr. Price, too; he has to do all the work in that family, run his business and run the house, too. He has no one to talk things over with when the house is a bit crooked, or the children aren't behaving as they ought to behave. Mrs. Price is pretty and attractive and well dressed, and that is positively all she can undertake to do.

IGNORANCE OF REAL LIFE

Whose fault is it? Is it Mrs. Price's fault? I don't think so altogether. Few of us are so clever that we can learn how to work without being taught. No one ever taught Mrs. Price anything about work or real life. It is probably true that she ought to have known how to keep house and how to buy carefully before she was married. But no one ever told her that. Her mother didn't tell her. She married Mr. Price without knowing anything about money, or the proper spending of money. Mr. Price supposed she knew. When he found that she didn't know, of course it was his duty to teach her, although in reality it is not the proper work of husbands to teach wives the use and value of money. This is one of the duties of schools and mothers which seems to have been thrust on husbands. However, Mr. Price thrust the duty away. He wasn't a good teacher. Mrs. Price was extraordinarily ignorant. She didn't try to learn. Perhaps she hadn't it in her, but somehow I cannot believe that. She could have been taught something if she had been taken young enough.

One thing is perfectly clear, however. There is something very much wrong with educational and social affairs in Canada when the husband of a woman like Mrs. Price can't trust her with money because she does not know how to spend it. Mrs. Price is a real person, and she represents a large class of Canadian women. She is one of the people who pulls down a nation; she does not build it up.

"I find there are many families in dire need"⁵⁵ (February, 1920)

Calgary is inhabited by many starving children. [...] In looking over the reports prepared by the Associated Charities, I find there are many families in dire need. In going into Red Cross reports I note from 150 to 200 families in dire need during November and December. [...]

Why is there malnutrition in our schools? Why do we need soup kitchens there? Why do we need such institutions as the Red Cross, the Associated Charities, Sunshine and the Salvation Army? Read the following statement of how much it takes to feed a family of four – man, wife and two children – and all employers of labor, ask yourselves, has the worker a cause for unrest, or is he a "scallywag?" The quotations given are for the weekly menu.

⁵⁵ From McWilliam, J. (1920, February 17). Jean McWilliam To Rev. Dr. MacRae. *The Calgary Herald*, p. 10. Written by Jean McWilliam McDonald (1877 – 1969), then living at 313 Fifteenth avenue east, Calgary.

Butcher meat \$3.20, 8 quarts milk \$1.28, 2 lbs. bacon \$1.20, 10 loaves bread \$2.50, 4 lbs. sugar 68c, half lb. tea 35c, half lb. coffee 35c, 2 lbs. butter \$1.40, 2 lbs. jam 60c, salt 5c, oatmeal carton 40c, potatoes \$1.00, vegetables \$1.00, apples 80c, lard 60c, flour \$1.00, baking powder 10c, house soap 30c, toilet soap and paper 30c, laundry articles 10c, fruit for cakes, etc. 60c, 1 lb. suet 15c, syrup 15c, rice and macaroni 25c, eggs 80c, 1 lb. cheese 40c, flavoring 10c, sauce 25c, fish 30c, toothpaste 15c, shaving soap 10c, matches 10c; weekly cost \$20.56, monthly cost \$82.24.

I have not mentioned rent, insurance, shoes, clothes, fuel or light, which should be included in the weekly expense. You will understand how difficult it is for a man earning even \$130 a month to keep up appearances. What about the janitors in our churches, schools and business blocks? How about the poor fellow who can only get a day or so of work each week? How about the widow who gets a mere pittance from the government? Where are the offspring of these people getting their nourishment? I blush with shame when I read about our distinguished men and women giving freak dinners and lavishing costly things on their animal pets while such conditions exist in the city.

[JEAN McWILLIAM]

“My weekly budget of prices⁵⁶” (February, 1920)

In reading over Mrs. Jean McWilliam’s letter, [...] I was much interested in her schedule of prices for the weekly menu of a man, his wife and two children. As that is the size of my family, and I calculate to the cent what it costs us to live, I beg to submit my weekly budget of prices:

⁵⁶ From CAREFUL HOUSEKEEPER. (1920, February 21). THIS WOMAN DOES WITH MUCH LESS. *The Calgary Herald*, p. 8.

Mrs. McWilliam		Mine	
Butcher meat	\$ 3.20	Meat	\$ 1.50
8 qts. Milk	\$ 1.28	10 qts.	\$ 1.60
2 lbs. bacon	\$ 1.20	3/4 lb.	\$ 0.45
10 loaves bread	\$ 2.50	10 loaves	\$ 1.25
4 lbs. sugar	\$ 0.68	4 lbs.	\$ 0.68
1/2 lb. tea	\$ 0.35	1/2 lb.	\$ 0.35
1/2 lb. coffee	\$ 0.35		
2 lbs. butter	\$ 1.40	1 1/2 lbs.	\$ 1.02
2 lbs. jam	\$ 0.60	2 lbs.	\$ 0.60
Salt	\$ 0.05	Salt	\$ 0.03
Oatmeal, carton	\$ 0.40	R. oats	\$ 0.15
Potatoes	\$ 1.00	Grown, in lot	
Vegetables	\$ 1.00	Grown, in lot	
Apples	\$ 0.80	Apples	\$ 0.75
Lard	\$ 0.60	Lard	\$ 0.35
Flour	\$ 1.00	Flour	\$ 0.25
Baking powder	\$ 0.10	Baking powder	\$ 0.05
House soap	\$ 0.30	House soap	\$ 0.25
Toilet soap and paper	\$ 0.30	Toilet soap and paper	\$ 0.15
Laundry articles	\$ 0.10	Laundry articles	\$ 0.05
Fruit for cakes, etc.	\$ 0.60	Fruit for cakes, etc.	\$ 0.25
1 lb. suet	\$ 0.15		\$ 0.10
Syrup	\$ 0.15	Syrup	\$ 0.15
Rice, Macaroni	\$ 0.25	Rice, etc.	\$ 0.50
Eggs	\$ 0.80	1 dozen	\$ 0.50
1 lb. cheese	\$ 0.40	1/2 lb.	\$ 0.20
Flavoring	\$ 0.10	Flavoring	\$ 0.05
Sauce	\$ 0.25	Pickles	\$ 0.10
Fish	\$ 0.30	Fish	\$ 0.25
Tooth paste	\$ 0.15	Tooth paste	\$ 0.05
Shaving soap	\$ 0.10	Shaving soap	\$ 0.03
Matches	\$ 0.10	Matches	\$ 0.06
Total	\$ 20.56	Total	\$ 11.72

This is a correct statement of our weekly menu expenditure; our two children are six and eight years of age, are healthy and well nourished, and we live well on this expense.

[CAREFUL HOUSEKEEPER]

“Ill health is the only excuse for poverty”⁵⁷ (February, 1920)

For the six months ending January 31, it has cost us \$335 to live. This includes rent, gas, light, water, accident insurance, union dues, subscriptions to various organizations, amusements, in short, everything. This is our total expenditure. We are two, but our rent, gas, light, etc. would do equally well for four. We have no baker’s or laundry bills, neither do we pay 60c lb. for bacon or 35c for lard; no, it is not done that way.

Mrs. McWilliam asks why there is malnutrition in our schools. I should say because women are too lazy to cook a nourishing meal and wont take the trouble to learn food values.

I don’t know what is meant by “scallywag,” but the man who spends money on tobacco and his various other amusements while his children are underfed is deserving of censure and not pity.

I don’t know if we would be considered badly nourished. All I can say is we have withstood every epidemic up to now. Is that a sufficient test? Ill health is the only excuse for poverty. I shall be pleased to show Mrs. McWilliam how it is done so that she can instruct the ignorant and improvident and thus bring more sunshine into their lives. You have no idea, Mr. Editor, how much fun is to be got out of beating the high cost of living.

[YOURS FOR MORE THRIFT]

“A thrifty mother”⁵⁸ (February, 1920)

I was greatly pleased to see two ladies take exception to Mrs. McWilliam’s budget for [a] family of four, as I consider 50c daily for meat or fish, in addition to bacon \$1.20, cheese and eggs, also 60c for fruit for cakes and loaves \$2.50, altogether too high. The supreme test of anything is a willingness to apply it personally, and some time ago when soldiers’ wives, including Mrs. McWilliam, complained so bitterly of the \$70 monthly allowance, I resolved to test whether that sum meant semi-starvation or not; and from June, 1918 until now have provided for a household of five (man, wife and three children) on \$65 monthly. This has to cover everything excepting the payments on our home, which we are buying. It is difficult to give a weekly budget, as I buy in quantities monthly, so effecting a certain saving, but fuel,

⁵⁷ From YOURS FOR MORE THRIFT. (1920, February 21). LOTS OF FUN IN BEATING H. C. OF L. *The Calgary Herald*, p. 8.

⁵⁸ From A THRIFTY MOTHER. (1920, February 28). DOES WELL ON \$65 A MONTH. *The Calgary Herald*, p. 8.

light, water and taxes average \$7.50 monthly. I allow 35c for meat or fish, and use one quart of milk daily, bake bread at home, using 75 lbs. of flour monthly, and have a varied diet of nourishing food, including oranges and apples.

The only sure way to beat the H.C. of L. is – waste nothing – pay cash, and so have no debts worrying – and be cutting out frittering over trifles. Always have a little reserve money in hand to take advantage of a bargain. Personally, I make most of the clothing for self and three children, ages 6, 10 and 13, and we are comfortably, if not ultra-fashionably clad; incidentally the saving is enormous. Our food is good, for I buy butter, eggs and vegetables when they are cheap in summer, and store them away in the cellar. [I] also put up my own pickles and jam, which are economical, pure and wholesome.

The trouble is, so few women take housekeeping and food preparing as they would a serious business proposition, although it is the most important business in the world. And one cause of malnutrition in schools is through mothers being out to the movies and dances every night in the week; getting up wan and tired next morning late, and rushing to shop just before dinner time, for something ready-made to “shove” on the table, for husband and children; oblivious as to whether it is suitable for the latter’s stomachs and ages or not.

After all, there is something more in life than what we eat and drink and wherewith we are clothed merely. It is these fantastic ideas of such as Mrs. McWilliam holds, of what is “absolutely necessary” which is responsible for a lot of the present unrest; and moreover, it is the improvidence of some women which causes men to become discontented and disheartened and throw up a job (some of them returned soldiers, and not “scalliwags” at that) which in these troubled times with a little planning and careful management would have yielded a decent and comfortable, even if not luxurious, living.

[A THRIFTY MOTHER]

“A working man’s wife”⁵⁹ (February, 1920)

In answer to Mrs. Jean McWilliam’s letter, I would like to give my experience as a working man’s wife, with two children, the same as the family she quotes. While I grant living and everything else cost more than before the war, I cannot agree with her that a man earning \$130 a month should find it difficult to make ends meet. If he has the misfortune to have a wife who would spend money as the one she quotes, I am not surprised. I think it is a woman’s duty to learn economy, and I feel sure there would be many happier homes if a woman studied her expense accounts more and pleasures less.

If this lady visited the Calgary Public Market on Saturday morning she would find she could buy meat, butter, eggs, milk and vegetables for her week’s supply much less than prices quoted. Then, why not bake her own bread? I see “bread and flour

⁵⁹ From A WORKING MAN’S WIFE. (1920, February 28). BUYS AT THE PUBLIC MARKET. *The Calgary Herald*, p. 8.

\$3.50,” a 98 lb. bag of flour (less than two weeks of her cost) lasts me two months for bread, cake and pastry. More wholesome than bakers’ bread. Jam, too, can be made at home from 15c to 20c [a] lb. I buy all my groceries, etc., in as large quantities as possible, put down plenty of fruit in summer (in water if sugar is unobtainable), eggs I preserve when they are cheap, and [I] am using today eggs put down last July. If the man is not a cripple, why not have a vacant lot and grow their own vegetables, and save \$2.00 a week? We have our own potatoes from [our] lot and have enough to last.

Women, use your thinking powers and quit grumbling at the cost, and remember all the agitation for higher wages will only send up the price of everything again. Let’s play the game. I consider every woman should study food values and economy, then there would be less complaining on our streets. I can keep my four in [the] family well fed, on less than \$50.00 a month for food, and have never reached \$100 a month yet with rent, light, heat, water, insurance and clothing.

Of course, it takes thought, and any woman who does not intend to be a home maker should refrain from getting married. If there is a home in Calgary where the man earns \$100 a month, and the children are not well fed and clothed, I am afraid it points to incompetence rather than high cost of living.

[A WORKING MAN’S WIFE]

“Worked out cleverly”⁶⁰ (February, 1920)

Kindly allow me space in your column re Mrs. McWilliam’s letter. As regards her menu for a man, his wife and two children, it would be quite impossible to work anything out more cleverly, with the exception of the shaving soap, which might be purchased for five cents instead of ten cents.

The writer of another letter signs herself, “Yours for More Thrift.” She explains the cause of malnutrition in schools as being caused by mothers being too lazy to cook meals. The writer may not be a mother. If she were placed in some of these homes and worked under these conditions, struggling for the very existence of herself and her little ones, would it ever occur to her that she would lose courage? Had some of these mothers had the education of – shall I call them our more fortunate settlers? – they would have had someone to take charge of their children. Regarding the father of these children, I fail to see that if a man wants to smoke, why he shouldn’t do it.

Another letter in answer to Mrs. McWilliam’s letter comes to my notice. The writer signs herself “A Careful Housekeeper.” She works her menu out at \$11.27, while Mrs. McWilliam’s estimate for the same number of people is \$20.56. This writer evidently means to exist, not live. I am afraid she will find herself like the man who cut things down so fine that he fed his horse on straw, but it died!

In conclusion, I should like to say I have not given an estimate of my menu, as it would be useless to try to improve upon the estimate given by Mrs. McWilliam.

⁶⁰ From YOURS FOR BETTER CONDITIONS. (1920, February 28). WORKED OUT CLEVERLY. *The Calgary Herald*, p. 8.

“My family of six children and a wife”⁶¹ (February, 1920)

I have read with a great deal of interest the letters recently published in your columns regarding the high cost of living, and as per your request, I will submit to you my weekly expense sheet which is a fair average for my family of six children and wife.

Rent, including heat and water	\$ 7.50
Gas	\$ 0.60
Light	\$ 0.45
Seven quarts milk	\$ 1.12
Bread, flour, biscuits and yeast	\$ 2.25
Tea, coffee and cocoa	\$ 1.05
Butter, oleo and lard	\$ 1.40
One dozen eggs	\$ 0.70
Meat	\$ 2.05
Syrup, jam and fruits	\$ 2.05
Sugar	\$ 0.70
Vegetables	\$ 1.10
Tobacco	\$ 0.50
Medicine	\$ 1.05
Soap, washing powder and toilet articles	\$ 0.60
Car fare	\$ 0.60
Cereals	\$ 0.35
Macaroni, cheese, catsup, pickles, extracts, etc.	\$ 1.20
Insurance, lodge dues, etc.	\$ 1.80
Stationery	\$ 0.25
Herald	\$ 0.15
Total	\$ 27.47

Or \$119.04 per month. I would be pleased to receive suggestions from anyone through the medium of your paper.

[A READER]

⁶¹ From A READER. (1920, February 28). HERE'S ANOTHER WEEKLY LIST. *The Calgary Herald*, p. 8.

“Food is not the whole problem”⁶² (February, 1920)

We are a family of four, but I think it rather absurd to attempt to compare household expenses, as “one man’s meat is another man’s poison,” and then again, you can never judge the other fellow’s appetite by your own – as any hotel cook would tell you.

However, it does seem that we \$125 per folks (I take, I think, the ordinary wage) would have to live on oatmeal, stews, and the everlasting apple in order to make those stubborn ends meet. Any housewife will tell you that food is not the whole problem; no week passes without some household stock needing replenishing, such as sheets, towels, saucepans, dishes and what-not, and oh, the children’s shoes! If our frugal housewife should be prevailed upon by the nifty advertisements and, going mad for a minute, purchase a new spring suit, a nobby lid and a pair of Oxfords, what would become of our \$125 per – and no charges for dead storage?

Those who own their house and lot (those who don’t – never will – by the way) and those who have no children, are naturally a little better placed. The latter have much more time to spend bargaining and trotting from one store to another to save three cents – in fact, this sometimes becomes the whole aim of their existence, and their constant boast.

Also, it is hard for our hard-working man and his more than hard-working wife to observe others living on fried chicken, ice cream, Florida strawberries and grapefruit, porterhouse steaks, tenderloin and oyster stews, etc., etc., *ad infinitum*. Still, we do not want them to become of the sleek, luxury-loving, well-fed, well-drunk class of which you and I have a good knowledge.

Nevertheless, our man and his wife are entitled to a cover for depreciation and a small profit on capital invested (using “capital” in the broad sense).

[G. B.]

“Fails to see the fun”⁶³ (February, 1920)

Will you give me space in your paper to answer [the] letter of [the] person who says he has lots of fun in beating [the] high cost of living and signs himself, “Yours for More Thrift”? He gives his total living expenses for two persons, which he says includes everything, as \$335 for six months, which is barely \$56 per month.

Now, I have been puzzling and juggling with items and figures till my head went round, and I cannot yet get my figures anywhere near as low as that. I would feel obliged if this party could give me some figures. Below I am giving items which are absolutely essential to living, and if Mr. More Thrift would give me allowance for each of these items so that the total does not exceed \$56 for the month, he will not

⁶² From G.B. (1920, February 28). HE LIKES THEM BOTH. *The Calgary Herald*, p. 8.

⁶³ From FAIL TO SEE THE FUN. (1920, February 28). HE FAILS TO SEE THE FUN. *The Calgary Herald*, p. 8.

only enlighten me, but thousands of others who would like to know. It might bring more sunshine into their lives and stop the nasty wrinkles in their foreheads:

Rent, fuel, light, water, car fare, insurance, association dues, subscriptions to paper and magazines, amusements, clothing, shoes, postage stamps, stationery, butcher, grocer, milkman, doctor, dentist.

[FAIL TO SEE THE FUN]

“Plus the extra work for the mother”⁶⁴ (February, 1920)

Your correspondent who signs herself “Yours For More Thrift” may not appreciate the fact that two children cost quite as much as one adult per week, plus the extra work for the mother. What two people can live on is just what suits themselves best, and in many cases where one fails to make a living, the other will help. But the mother with children, if they are to be properly fed, clothed and trained, must of necessity stay at home. Her duty is to do her best with the wage she has to handle, whether it is sufficient to live on or only enough to keep body and soul together, and invariably she does it. “Economize” is an unnecessary word to many of us. The war taught us to do this.

Many homes were kept on \$55 for wife and two children in 1916 and 1917, with an increase of only \$8.00 for 1918. This was the full amount paid out to the dependents of the men who were making Canada safe for those who stayed at home, and are we still to economize, and above all in food? There is no credit due to the housewife who keeps a stinted table in order to save money, and the savings often go in some other way. Don't cut down in necessary food, give the best you can afford to buy and give them enough to keep them healthy. No other way pays so well as this, and as children are the greatest asset of the state, is it not the duty of the state to protect them when the home fails?

[A CITIZEN OF NO MEAN CITY]

“How to live, not exist”⁶⁵ (February, 1920)

I have just read Careful Housewife's weekly bulletin; it reminds me of the reply the late Andrew Carnegie gave the delegation of workers who were after an increase in wages, “to make their porridge thinner.” Careful Housewife's porridge must be very thin at 15 cents per week, and one dozen of packed eggs. One egg per day for husband and five eggs left are the children's share – some nourishment for growing children! No wonder there is malnutrition in our schools. [...]

If mothers think they are doing their duty by starving the constitutions of their children, we will need lots of institutions for rickets, as the kind of citizen on that

⁶⁴ From A CITIZEN OF NO MEAN CITY. (1920, February 28). SAYS MRS. McWILLIAM'S LIST IS RIGHT. *The Calgary Herald*, p. 8.

⁶⁵ From FOR THE CHILDREN. (1920, February 28). HOW TO LIVE, NOT EXIST. *The Calgary Herald*, p. 20.

budget won't stand the test. We are here to reap the benefits of our toil, and it is no credit to any woman to save money at the expense of her children. I am raising six children, and I defy Careful Housewife to feed herself and husband and two children on the sum mentioned. They exist, they don't live; and I think Jean McWilliam is really very conservative in her estimates, as a man must labor and must eat until the days of existence are over. We are here to live.

[FOR THE CHILDREN]

“I defy any woman to live on less”⁶⁶ (February, 1920)

It is with amusement that I discover a tirade against my too modest weekly budget. I did not suggest a bare existence, as we all know what that means. I suggested a fair living; only, a mistake was made in the bread, as it should have been \$1.50 instead of \$2.50. But, nevertheless, the extra dollar could be used to advantage in barley, peas and beans, some very important food producing articles.

Now, I defy any woman to live on less than I suggested. She may exist, but our institutions today tell the tale of this miserable existence – tuberculosis, rickets, mental deficiency, malnutrition, all point back to mothers scraping and saving on a bare existence. And Canada is not in any way lucky by having such [a] class of citizens as those who would, by their idea of thrift, starve the body of the coming generation. The child's constitution can be guarded and built years before it is born, and when I look at the faces of the women who, to make ends meet, have to miss the necessities, I realize the time is not far distant when it will be the “survival of the fittest”.

We have a duty to perform as parents; man works at manual labor, woman works just as hard, laying the foundation of a healthy nation. That cannot be done through cutting out the necessities of life. I hope I have made myself clear. My idea was not to find out just how many people were existing. Just to show employers of labor how much it would take to give the “real” working man a chance in this world, and why he is discontented. [...]

The body of a working man must be fed, the body of a growing child must be fed, and the body of the human producer must be fed even more to produce a healthy infant. Now, there is no argument to these facts, starve either one and the result is, after a limited period, nature exacts her punishment. My motto is, “Live in the sunshine of life and enjoy the fruits thereof.” There is food in abundance for he who produces it. Then let us have it, as the “worker” is not getting the product of his toil. Hence the discontent.

[JEAN McWILLIAM]

⁶⁶ From McWilliam, J. (1920, February 28). A MISTAKE OF ONE DOLLAR. *The Calgary Herald*, p. 20. Written by Jean McWilliam McDonald (1877 – 1969), then living at 313 Fifteenth avenue east, Calgary.

“A student of housekeeping”⁶⁷ (February, 1920)

In answer to your request for household budgets, I beg to submit the following. I cannot quite agree with Mrs. McWilliam’s food schedule. We do not use 52 pounds of suet in a year, nor its equivalent, neither do we use \$30.20 worth of lard. And as for flour, \$1.00 worth would do us for nearly two weeks if we did not buy an ounce of bread.

This is my monthly budget, for a family of two adults and three children, the youngest of whom is eight years old. Total income, \$190.

Food - Groceries, meat, milk	\$ 45.00
Household - Fuel, light, water, laundry and cleaning articles, repairs, cooking utensils, bed linen, table linens, etc.	\$ 15.00
Upkeep - Taxes, Insurance, interest	\$ 8.00
Life insurance	\$ 5.00
Investment - Home	\$ 65.00
Education and health	\$ 14.00
Social - Carfare, amusements, stamps, stationery, dues	\$ 4.00
Clothing	\$ 15.00
Church	\$ 19.00

Food – This item is probably high. I am sure I can save at least \$5 on it were I at home. But I am a business woman, and out of the house much of the time. Hence we find it necessary to use tinned fish, tomatoes, bacon (at 45 cents, not 60 cents), etc., when it would be better and much cheaper to have fruit puddings, made dishes, rice or tapioca preparations, etc. Also we use more electricity than would ordinarily be deemed necessary, for the same reason. Nevertheless, I agree with the boss when he asserts that we have the “kibosh” on the high cost of living. There is ample room for a good living within the \$100 a month wage – providing the housekeeper stays at home and manages.

I shop once a month, buying in quantity to replenish my stock. My pantry is always full. My business each shopping day is simply to ascertain which boxes or tins are getting low, and re-order. I buy cereals, cornmeal, rolled oats, wheatlets, oatmeal, in 20 or 24 pound bags, flour in 100 pound bags (I bake the bread), beans, lentils, limas, in 5 or 10 pound lots, salt and sugar in 10 pound bags, macaroni in 10 pound boxes, soda biscuits in five pound boxes (\$1.00), raisins in 5, 10 or 25 pound boxes (when they are not over 25 cents per pound). I buy \$10 worth of milk (75 quarts) each month, and our bacon is bought in the piece – a month’s supply. A 5 pound cut of cheese lasts a month (\$1.75). Our meat is bought in as large a piece as the weather will permit. Other things are bought in small quantities and used sparingly. We use

⁶⁷ From A STUDENT OF HOUSEKEEPING. (1920, February 28). FROM A STUDENT OF HOUSEKEEPING. *The Calgary Herald*, p. 20.

1 pound of tea, 1 pound of coffee and ½ pound of cocoa each month. My aim is to never be without anything, but to use expensive things very sparingly. Just because I have a nice shelfful of jelly powders, soup powders, junket tablets, salad dressing, sauces, etc., is no reason why I [should] use these things when they are not needed. There comes a reckoning, and quickly. The children make their own candies and pop corn, which I buy in 1 pound packets. It is fun for them, and more economical for me. We buy one bushel of potatoes each month. I do not peel them. If I did, I should need another half bushel and a \$1.00 bottle of hypophosphates to replace the salt lost.

I make our own marmalade, can our own fruits, and manage the jam in some such way as the following: Last month I had a 75 cent box of apples sent with my order, which I cooked in three lots. The first lot consisted of quartered apples boiled in a thick syrup and canned. Lot No. 2 was a cranberry and apple sauce, which pleased the children better than pure cranberry, and lot No. 3 was made into a thick jam, using a couple of cans of choice fruit. Dried fruits can sometimes be used advantageously, but this year they are too dear. For fresh fruit we use a box of good apples each month, and oranges only when especially needed.

Household – The total amount is expended in fuel, utilities, laundry and cleaning supplies, during the cost months. In the warm, light months we get our repairs, and replenish our household stocks as listed. There is usually a balance which can be turned into the clothing department.

Education and Health – This is rather an unusual grouping, but it works out alright. When the children are sick, and in need of [a] doctor, drugs, delicate foods, tonics, etc., they cannot take music lessons, and under the same conditions, my husband cannot keep up his special course. Dental bills come as much as possible in the holiday months when lessons are suspended.

Clothing – This is the hardest nut to crack, simply because there are so many temptations. We simply do not buy \$40 hats, \$70 tailored suits and \$15 boots; to quote your correspondent, “no, it isn’t done that way.” Needless to say, we avoid bargain sales, which are a delusion and a snare, and buy always and only necessities. We find the amount specified ample for all our clothing needs, though not always for our desires.

This budget was worked out when we were living on \$100 a month. It has been modified by our investment in a home; and, of course, my wages allow us more liberty in spending.

[A STUDENT OF HOUSEKEEPING]

“False economy”⁶⁸ (March, 1920)

Will you kindly permit me to write a few lines? I think Mrs. McWilliam’s menu has been a carefully thought out one, as it is very conservative. I understand Mrs. McWilliam is an experienced and good thrifty housekeeper. I do not think all families

⁶⁸ From ECONOMY. (1920, March 6). FALSE ECONOMY TO SKIMP FOOD. *The Calgary Herald*, p. 29.

eat alike, as some families I know do not eat butter, for instance. I have four children, husband and myself, and we eat four pounds of the best table butter a week, and I consider all kiddies need it. I have two large children and two younger ones.

Again, children starting teen ages, eat more of everything than little ones generally, and all ought to have good nourishing food they require. I do not think one can tell so much in every instance by a child's looks as by its health, how it is fed, as I have to that are quite fat, and the other two are not so fat on the same diet, but all are healthy.

Again, I do not think that a mother who has kiddies and does all her own sewing, washing, etc., and all her own work has time to run all over to get the cheapest in town to feed her family.

As for the woman who wrote that mothers were too lazy to provide a nourishing meal for their kiddies, I feel sorry for her ideas; evidently she is not a mother. If the mother has the wherewithal to make a nourishing meal for her kiddies, I do not believe there is a mother who exists who would be lazy in that regard.

But we are getting away from our subject. If the father of the home works, why should he not, all of them, get a living wage, so his wife with her multitude of duties will not have to scurry around town to get the cheapest to live on? Economizing in these days is very essential, and I never waste a crust, but economizing on what we feed our family, is false economy.

[ECONOMY]

“We never had any around our shack”⁶⁹ (March, 1920)

I have had the misfortune of three dry crops, one after another for three years. I was compelled to get out and work owing to the high cost of living, so I took my family and came to Drumheller, where every one goes when he is looking for something to eat. I worked in the Newcastle coal mines all winter and got at the rate of \$130 to \$140 per month. And now the Newcastle has closed down, and I have not got money enough out of my winter's work to pay our fares back to the old dry farm, which is only \$12 for the family. I had three quarters of beef, 90 pounds of butter, 12 dozen eggs and some vegetables from the farm. I have not spent over \$10 of my winter earnings for clothes, rent \$12.00, coal \$4.50 per ton, and the Drumheller grocery men got the rest. I see that Mrs. Workingmans' Wife spoke of cake and pastry that they have, but I don't know just what she means by the names cake and pastry, as we never had any around our shack. Jam, I believe we did have, three five-pound tins, and we had three boxes of apples and three dozen oranges, and that's all the fruit we have had all winter.

[A READER]

⁶⁹ From A READER. (1920, March 6). HE WANTS TO MEET WORKINGMAN'S WIFE. *The Calgary Herald*, p. 29.

Dower Laws for Western Canada

“Women tell of grievous wrongs”⁷⁰ (January, 1909)

Those who are advocating the passing of a dower law, claim that many married women throughout Western Canada are deeply interested in having a dower law passed, so that they cannot be left homeless, after years and years of hard work, with no wage. As the law now stands, a man may dispose of his property without consulting his wife. He may will all his property away from her, or he may at any time leave her without a penny.

Many, many women, who are interested in having the law changed, know that their own position in their home is secure. They know that as long as their husbands have a cent it will be shared with them, but they know there are women suffering because of the lack of a dower law, and both they and their husbands are interested in justice, and wish to see a law that will be just to both husband and wife.

The men and women of the west who are agitating for a dower law, know full well that such a law will not right all the wrongs and end all the differences between husband and wife. But they know that the law as it now stands is not just to women, and what they wish is justice, or as near it as can be obtained.

The man who is willing to do what is just will not be affected by the dower law; and the man who is not willing to do what is right should be made to do it. Many men will no doubt be glad of a dower law, for it will be a protection for their wives, no matter what may happen to them, and will save them the trouble of making over to their wives part of their estate.

What the women of the west want, is a right to say whether their home is to be mortgaged or sold. They wish to be able to claim part of their husband's estate, after his death. These rights a dower law will give them.

They also wish a law that will provide that a husband must support his wife, if for any lawful reason she is separated from him. Alberta has passed an alimony law, that makes a just provision for the wife who, for a lawful reason, is separated from her husband. The other provinces of western Canada have made no provision for a case of this kind, except that the wife may lodge a complaint and go to law, but such procedure costs money, and the deserted woman never has it, so she is practically without recourse. [...]

A typical case is that of a woman who has been in the province for 19 years and who inherited \$1,000 from her father. Most of this money was put into her husband's farm property, part of it in cattle and horses. Her husband died about a year ago, and just before his death, at the request of a member for the constituency in which he resided and another man to whom he was indebted, signed a will⁷¹ prepared by them

⁷⁰ From WOMEN TELL OF GRIEVOUS WRONGS. (1909, January 9). *The Regina Leader-Post*, p. 2.

⁷¹ “Under the present law the husband, who dies inestate, leaves one-third to the widow. Should he make a will, however, there is nothing in the law to prevent his leaving his widow without anything at all and changing his property over to others.” WOMEN ASK RIGHTS OF PROPERTY DOWER. (1909, January 9). *The Saskatoon Daily Phoenix*, p. 1.

giving them practically full control over his property, with the result that they grabbed nearly everything and left the widow in real want. She writes: "I have always worked hard; my husband was easy going, getting into debt. He couldn't read their hand-writing nor understand what he was signing."

Another woman writes: "I am one that has been deeply wronged through there being no protection for women. It is not quite a year since my husband traded off our homestead against my wishes to an unscrupulous man, and now he has taken everything from us, and now starvation is upon us. I have three young children. Oh God! How I wish there was some law whereby I could demand my home back."

"Is this fair and just?"⁷² (January, 1909)

A wife should be lawfully provided for in case a husband deserts her. If the law in this respect is not strong enough, or needs its scope enlarged, let us have it done. It would be well to make a law to bring a deserter back and imprison him. This would deter most who might think of deserting. At the same time, it must be remembered that a man has no remedy, and there can be none for him, in case he is deserted. He must submit and suffer. I know no case of a farmer deserting a wife, but several of wives deserting – mostly to go back to the States because they refuse to live in this country.

I understand that this proposed law is solely aimed at farmers. Is this fair and just? Is his class the only class that do not do fair and generously by their women folks? Does not the townsman's wife, the tradesman's wife, doctor's wife, mechanic's wife do his housework, cook, etc.? Many of them help the husband in his business. Why single the farmer out as if he is a bad lot?

I see many of the letters the women write to found this claim upon. Many have not a good word to say for farmers, and say that they themselves earn half the money that is made on the farm. Many claim they do field work, chores and work like hired men.

I see very little evidence of this. Most wives look well, dress well, ride around, spend freely at the stores, have the egg and butter money, etc. I have heard men say that came from districts where the dower law was in force, that it puts a man too much under the control of his wife.

The law as it is has worked well. It is the law of England. Had such a law been in force there, I would not be here. I had a small property, my wife was much opposed to our coming, and she would undoubtedly refuse her consent to my selling it three years ago when I bought the adjoining quarter. Now, it is well known a man can hardly live on a single quarter section with a family of children and have fallow land, too. It nipped us tight for a time. Now payments are made easily, yet she strongly opposed the purchase at the time. Today it is worth twice what I paid for it.

⁷² From REASONABLE. (1909, January 23). Dower Law for Women. *The Saskatoon Daily Phoenix*, p. 6.

He is a very mean man, who, when he can use his property no more, will die and cut his wife off without anything. Farmers will be quite willing to have a law made that such a will shall be null and void, and that if there be children, she should have one third, as is the law now when a man dies without a will. But law should not interfere with a man who is doing right and is providing as he knows best for his family. I tried to give my wife in England a deed making over the best part of my property to her. I consulted a lawyer first; he said I could not sell anything, nor incur a debt, sign a note, dispose of any stock, buy land or sell, or get a mortgage without her presence or her written consent. This will be the position of farmers under a dower law. It will affect a man's standing and financial condition considerably, and his credit. Read what a woman writer who has charge of the woman's page writes:

“There is no doubt that a dower law often occasions delay and bother when a wife has to go to town to sign the papers in regard to a transfer or sale of some real estate. Then, too, women are often very ignorant regarding law, and it is an all day task to explain anything to them; and many when they get a notion will not give it up, no matter how unreasonable it is, and no matter how much you explain. Many men know this and hesitate to place themselves in a position where they must do so much explaining and have such doubtful results.”

Sir, I contend that most farmers are fairly fixed before they think of asking a woman to share their home, and that while some many help in chores, it is far from true that a wife makes half he owns. What about the work the hired men do? Many farmers' sons, as in my own case, work on the land for father, for little or no wages, and is it right that the mother take half and the boys get between them a fraction of what is left? If we are not careful in attempting to right an injustice, we will create others. Farmers should talk this matter (a very important one indeed) over at their meetings, and soon.

“Henry may do as he likes”⁷³ (March, 1909)

Though Mrs. Henry Smith may have done the big end of the day's work in making Mr. Henry Smith's farm a fine property, Mrs. Henry Smith may be turned off the farm after her husband's death should he in a fit of rage have bequeathed it, say to a dog's home or a society for the propagation of propriety among the Papuans. At least this is the case in British Columbia, where Mrs. Henry Smith might easily be better off if her husband died without leaving any will at all. In other countries, notably some of the States, a man may not dispose of all his property as he pleases in his last will and testament, but in this province, where the law on the subject seems to be very much of “a hass,” he may vent small spite on his nearest who ought also to be his dearest.

⁷³ From Bull, A. E. (1909, March 18). HENRY MAY DO AS HE LIKES. *The Vancouver World*, p. 11. Summarizes a talk by Alfred Edwin Bull (1868 – 1947).

This, and more to the same purpose, as well as much that bears directly on the position of the married woman in respect to property was learned by members of the Women's University Club on Saturday evening last when Mr. A. E. Bull, the well known lawyer, addressed them on the legal status of women in this province.

Beginning with the enactment which refuses to give legal recognition to the claims that a woman may put forth for a share in the property which she, herself, has perhaps had the chief share in rendering valuable, Mr. Bull said that in the case of conjoint ownership of property arising, either tacitly or otherwise, out of the relationship of husband and wife, unless legally entitled to dispose of by deed of gift or will, [the husband may dispose of] such property as he might see fit, despite the unwillingness or protest of his wife.

Should a woman's husband die inestate, if there were no children to be provided for, she would be entitled to one-half absolutely, both of his real and of his personal estate; in the event of there being living issue, only one-third of his personal estate would pass absolutely to her, but she would retain a one-third interest for life in his estate. In both cases, the widow was furthermore entitled to her dower, which if need be, comes out of her late husband's lands.

A married woman could hold her own property in her own name absolutely and could sell, dispose of or bequeath the same by gift or deed of will, absolutely without interference on the part of her husband. Should she die inestate, her husband would fall heir to precisely the same proportions according as there are or are not children living, as his wife would to his, had he died instead. Twenty or thirty years ago, a married woman could not dispose of her own property without her husband's consent.

A married woman whose husband was living, was legally entitled to be nourished and supported by him. Should he refuse to do so, she, provided lawful excuse could be furnished, was empowered to pledge his credit for such sum as might be required to procure the necessities of life. Should she, however, have withdrawn from her husband for some cause not coming under the recognized category of legal excuses – which includes repeated assault or similar acts of cruelty, or refusal or neglect to furnish adequate support and sustenance – her husband was not held responsible for such debts as she might contract in his name. What was frequently termed the “poor woman's divorce” provided that any married woman, if deserted by her husband, might summon him before a magistrate and two justices of the peace, who, if satisfied that the husband being able wholly or in part to maintain his wife or his wife and family, had wilfully refused or neglected to do so and had deserted his wife, might order the husband to pay weekly a sum not exceeding \$20 according to his means. The same order for support would likewise be granted in the case of a woman living apart from her husband because of repeated assaults or other acts of cruelty, or refusal or neglect without sufficient cause, to supply her with board or other necessaries of life when able to do so.

Should her health become endangered or be likely to become permanently injured through inadequate support, her husband was held criminally responsible, if it could be proved that she was in need and that her husband was able to supply her wants, granted that neglect ensued upon desertion without lawful excuse. In such a

case should the need for medical attendance arise, the cost of same must be defrayed by the husband.

A married woman having a decree for alimony or living apart from her husband because of cruelty or other cause justifying her in leaving him and rendering him liable for support, or whose husband was e.g. a lunatic or prisoner, or whose husband from habitual drunkenness, profligacy or other cause, might neglect or refuse to provide for her support and that of his family, or who had been deserted or abandoned by her husband, might obtain an order of protection entitling her to the earnings of her minor children free from the debts of her husband.

Passing on to discuss the franchise, Mr. Bull said women had no vote in provincial or Dominion elections. Under the municipal elections act, applying to all municipalities which had no special charter, all women, married or single, who owned property or were tenants, or were in business and paying a trade license had a vote in their municipal elections. In Vancouver, which had its own special charter, unmarried women had votes who owned property, or were tenants, etc., but married women, it is said, had such confidence in their husbands that they allowed them to vote on their property.

It might be noted that in the matter of divorce, Canadian law recognized the legality of divorces only when such had been granted by a court having competent jurisdiction over the husband. This jurisdiction depended upon the domicile or permanent residence of the latter. For instance, should a man domiciled in Canada, proceed to the United States with the intention of remaining at the point selected only for a period of time such as would permit of his being granted a divorce in the United States, such a divorce would not be recognized in Canada as valid, in as much as the man in question was not domiciled in the country or district over which the court granting the divorce exercised jurisdiction. The legal validity of a divorce therefore depended solely on the question of whether it had been granted by the court which had competent jurisdiction over the husband and, incidentally, over the wife.

“Western women and the dower”⁷⁴ (March, 1909)

Western women are agitating for a dower law. [...] The law at present allows both husband and wife to hold property absolutely independently of the other, but as in the majority of cases the property is all in her husband's name, it appears reasonable that the wife should want to have a little say in the disposal of the product of her labor. It is said that the dower clause was left out of the deeds to the western land, because in the early days there were not enough white women to supply the early settlers with wives, and they contented themselves with s-----s; not wishing the land to revert to the Indians, they decided to keep it in their own hands. [...]

Many women agreed to sell their home in the east and come west, quite unaware that there was no dower law in the four western provinces of Manitoba,

⁷⁴ From Beynon, L. K. (1909, March 22). WESTERN WOMEN AND THE DOWER. *The Edmonton Journal*, p. 3. Written by Lillian K. Beynon Thomas (1876 – 1961).

Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. Some have regretted doing so, for there are men who do not appear to take the clause "with all my worldly goods I thee endow," very seriously. In fact, they regard it as a mere form, and proceed to follow their own judgment, salving any conscientious scruples they may have with the thought that "women don't know anything about business, anyway."

But the western women are quite willing to agree that the men should do the business. The great majority of both men and women had never thought of a dower law until they discovered that some women and children were being unjustly treated, and then they began to take notice, and enquire as to the best way to remedy the existing state of affairs. All fully realize that a dower law will never bring harmony into a home where there is dissension, but they do think that it will prevent women who have spent the best years of their life working to gain a home, from being turned out penniless or being compelled to work far beyond their strength.

There are three chief causes of dissension in western homes, i.e., intoxicating liquor, greed for land, and strange women. Men have been known to mortgage or sell their homestead for drink after their wife and children had worked hard amid great privations to get a home. The wife could not prevent the sale, and was thus left at the mercy of the world. The greed for land makes men buy land, always being land poor, and depriving their wives and families of the necessities of life for the sake of getting more land, because it is for sale at a bargain, and someone else is looking for it. In a great many of such homes both husband and wife die before they have reaped any of the benefits of their labor, and their children often go through life stunted bodily and mentally, and blaming their parents for their handicap.

The population of the west is shifting, and women of doubtful character often find their way west, anxious to get some of the gold said to be plentiful. They have no scruples, and the rights of a wife and mother is no concern of theirs. If they can fascinate the man, get his money and take him away with them, they will do so; and in a number of cases they succeed. The wife and children are left. Of course she could enter a case for non-support, but with the husband across the line, and the money in the other woman's name, the wife, who is penniless, has not much chance of justice.

The dower law has, of course, its opponents. The greatest objection that the legislators have to it, is that it will necessitate some change in the title of land. Westerners are all proud of the Torrence title, and they do not like to touch it. [...] Another objection that has had considerable weight in the past, but which is not so important now, is that in the early days in many cases the husband came west prospecting, and left his wife and family in the east. In such cases he would have been greatly handicapped in his dealings had he had to send all papers east for his wife's signature whenever he was transferring a piece of real estate. There would doubtless still be some trouble in this matter, and a little delay, but in the majority of cases now both husband and wife are making their home in the west, and such an objection would not be valid.

“Widow’s Rights and Woman’s Dower”⁷⁵ (April, 1909)

These two questions, “Widow’s Rights” and “Woman’s Dower” seem to me are being confounded, for although they are identical, or nearly so, as to rights, they are vastly different as to principle. I for one cannot understand why a man should give one half of his all, before or just at marriage; what has a bride done to earn half up to that time? Who should provide a dower, if there is one, the father to his daughter or a man to his bride to be? I can fancy myself giving figures, deeds, etc., to my intended for perusal and verification, before I would be eligible. Are these expectant misses prepared to give a receipt, whereby they acknowledge the receipt, etc., for which they pledge themselves to become the lawful wife, etc.? Oh, no! Not for mine.

Except, perhaps in leap year, the girls have the right to accept or refuse, which should be sufficient protection in that line, but they should be protected immediately after marriage by what I believe is known as “Widow’s Rights,” which safeguards her during her husband’s life and gives her one-third at his death in spite of anything but her free and willing signature. The dower law, as I understand it, would, I believe, be a fruitful source for the downfall of many young girls, as was the introduction of Japanese and Chinese into domestic service by the women of the Pacific coast, for few men believe in letting a woman know too much of their business, especially before marriage, and as they would be prevented by law to marry until they did, we would soon have a pretty “Howdy do.”

“A serious drawback to this fair province”⁷⁶ (April, 1909)

Since coming to British Columbia I have been very much surprised to find there is no dower law for the women, and I think this is a serious drawback to this fair province, and I am anxious to draw the attention of the women here to the law as it stands now. Do they know that their husbands can sell, will, or give away everything he may own, and his wife has no say in the matter, although she may have helped him for years and years to make all they own? I can certainly say for myself, I would never have left Ontario (where the dower law prevails) and come out here had I known what I do now: and I am more surprised that the women seem to take no interest in it, although I know of several hard cases in consequence. I hope the women will stir themselves and try and get a bill passed to have the dower law here the same as it is in other places.

Surely the women of the West are as worthy as women are in other places, and the law as it stands now is a disgrace. I have seen a sad case lately which has roused me more than usual. A man and his wife living near me had a nice farm, and the wife and children did most of the work while the man hung around the tavern and spent the money as fast as they made it. Some one persuaded him to sell the farm, and he

⁷⁵ From MICHIGANDER. (1909, April 10). WOMAN’S EMPIRE. *The Winnipeg Tribune*, p. 15.

⁷⁶ From DOWER CHAMPION. (1909, April 23). DOWER LAW FOR WOMEN. *The Vancouver Daily World*, p. 6.

did this unknown to his wife and family. The poor wife and children had to turn out of what was really their own home. They could do nothing but submit because the law says the husband owns everything.

I have been hoping some person would take this up and agitate to get a dower law, so that a man could not sell or mortgage his property without the wife's consent and signature.

I heard a man say the other day that the women of British Columbia were too sleepy to bother their heads about the dower law, but I trust they will wake up and do their best to get the law altered. Trusting you will help in this cause by printing this, I am

DOWER CHAMPION

“We have neither”⁷⁷ (May, 1909)

We had the dower law in Ontario, [...] and I never heard a complaint, but because the men have the advantage here, mention the dower law and you would think a monster of the deep was going to rise and devour them all. Talk about “giving a beggar a horse, etc., etc.” If I am any judge, the beggar in this case belongs to the masculine gender. Now a word to Michigander, who thinks he has got to show up his deeds and figures, etc., before he can take unto himself a wife. I wonder what law book you got that out of. The dower law has been explained time and again during the last winter for the benefit of those who did not understand, but you seem to have missed it. You can call the dower law, widow's rights, if you like, but here we have neither, unless the husband is a good man and wants to do what is right.

If a man and his wife do not agree (the way the law is now), he can sell out, no matter what the business is, put the money in his pocket and let his wife and family look after themselves. Or he can tell his wife, “There is the door, you have no claim here, get out.” Or he can make a will and leave the property to whom he likes and she can't get a cent. Now, if we had a dower, the wife would have no more control of the property than she has now, but if he got tired of her and was going to leave her or turn her out, he would then have to give her whatever share the law allowed, and at his death, as he can't take the property with him, he might as well leave a portion to the wife as any one.

In case of his wanting to sell or mortgage, the wife has to sign the papers. But I would like to see the men protected from the fortune seekers. If a woman marries a well-to-do man, whether single, or a widower, with or without children, and it turns out it was for his money, and she makes things unhappy for the man or the family, the law should allow the husband to leave her just as little or as much as he likes. I have no use for that kind of a woman, and the sooner she is caught, the better.

There is always something to be thankful for, and I for one am thankful for the part of the country I live in. I don't know whether all of Manitoba is alike or not, but here you never hear a word about the dower. Michigander, or any other man, do you

⁷⁷ From PATIENCE. (1909, May 22). BECKY'S PAGE. *The Winnipeg Tribune*, p. 19.

know why? When this part was first settled, the people came in with very little means and all, women and men, worked hard, and as soon as they got a good footing and needed more land, they bought another quarter section and deeded it to the wife, and she did not have to nag for or ask to have a law made to compel them to do their duty. In some cases they bought town property and deeded it to the wife, and I know some women who have money invested in Winnipeg lots, and also were able to take a share in the Grain Grower's association. In some homes, when the check comes from the creamery each month it is handed to the wife. Besides, I don't know of a man, if he is able, but carries a life insurance in favor of his wife from one thousand up. Our men recognize the fact that their wives are women, human beings, not horses, contented with feed and stable for all the work they do; also that we are the mothers of their children and have had to bear this extra amount of care and trouble, work and worry that men know nothing about. In reading Michigander's letter I was reminded of what I heard one man say about another young fellow. He said, "That fellow don't know enough to know he is born."

"Just indignation"⁷⁸ (January, 1910)

Again I come burning with the just indignation which every thinking man and woman must feel at the injustice rendered women by the Canadian laws. If anyone cares to deny this, let them, I beg, study the newspapers of Canada and they, if not I, will convince anyone with perhaps the exception of men and women of Mrs. Humphrey Ward's type who, quoting Mrs. Snodden "are of undeveloped brain power," and shall we add heart power? Such women as Mrs. Ward need not the dower, need not the suffrage; she is more than able to support herself. So why should the cry of the suffering women of Canada – of the world – appeal to her, or those [...] so far removed from the stern realities of life that it seems impossible for them to realize that all lives are not so free from care as is theirs. But it will be well for them to remember that they will be called on to answer for every word or deed which has added to the oppression of women, and that when the time comes the cry of the helpless will be heard.

For centuries Man has promised to love, honor and protect Woman. Has he fulfilled the commandment "husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it"? Has he honored her? Has he protected her? Listen; in Ontario "income taxes are levied on married men with \$1,200 and unmarried with \$900 – widows with \$200 are taxed." In Belleville, Ont., a girl of fourteen was abducted, and kept in a man's room for two days. Think of it; a girl's life ruined and the sentence is two and a half years. Again in the neighborhood of Hamilton, Ont., for indecent assault on a three-year-old child, a man was sentenced to six months or a \$50 fine. The judge, in speaking of the sentence, said he would make it light on account of his having a hitherto good reputation. In the next column a man was sentenced to six months without the option of a fine for stealing tobacco.

⁷⁸ From A WOMAN. (1910, January 22). BECKY'S PAGE. *The Winnipeg Tribune*, p. 19.

In Manitoba, about a year ago in a company of men and women, the dower law was discussed, some in favor, some against. "Well," said one man, "I believe something should be done. A few days ago while driving I stopped at a house for dinner; the man, who was going to be absent for a few days, said to his wife that she would have to water the stock." "I don't think I can water them," said the woman; at this the man flew into a terrible passion, swearing that if she did not do it, when he returned he would sell the farm, pocket the money and she and the kids simply look after themselves. When I went out I found that the watering place was a well dug without curbing, eight or ten feet deep, this being left uncovered, naturally drifted full of snow, which must be dug out, then the woman was expected to go down a ladder, break the ice and carry water up to the stock. A thing she was physically unable to do." He went on to say that some of his listeners might think that he was overdrawing the picture, but if it were not for the shame he felt, to think that man could be so low, he could tell tale after tale of as hard a character as this, which he had encountered in his travels through Canada.

I know a case in Alberta where a man boasted to a friend a short time before he was married, that as soon as he could prove up his homestead he would sell and go to the States, and she could go where she pleased; all he wanted was a housekeeper for a while. He kept his word: two years after he left her with two little children to support.

This past summer an American lady came to Canada to visit her sons. She was much taken with the country and with the desire to be near her boys was very anxious to come here to live – until she heard the laws regarding women. "Why," she exclaimed, "I feel that I would be committing a crime to bring my girls here and allow them to run the risk of marrying in Canada, for I do not want my daughters to be the unhappy victims which the Canadian laws have made so many women, and by staying in the States, I can keep a good many women from coming here." Her son was to be married in a short time, and in speaking of it she said, she thought the girl was very foolish to marry him unless he would go back to the States to live. And many is the American I have heard speak in the same way.

Oh Canada! How long must thy fair name bear this blot of shame? How long until the electors of Canada will rise up in their strength, and when asked for their vote give it to the men only who will do all in their power to change the laws regarding women? [...] When discussing this subject with a business man, he said, "As soon as this country becomes domesticated, or in other words becomes settled so as to divide the land into small portions, or ordinary farms, then, and not till then, will the laws deal fairly with woman, for at the present time they are made for the men who are speculating in land." If this be the reason, the thought comes to me, would this be sufficient cause for such laws being made? Yes, hard headed business men in the courts of man would decide most favourably in this, for money rules the world; but in the courts of God, how then? I pondered, and then, as if in answer came the words of the Christ, "For what shall it profit a man though he gain the whole world and lose his own soul."

A WOMAN.

“It stands a disgrace to the land”⁷⁹ (February, 1910)

Dear Miss Laurie,

I sincerely hope you will spare me a corner in your column to air a certain grievance which I have to complain about as to the law for married women in, I believe, the whole of the northwest provinces. I refer to the law which gives a man the power to sell, or give away his farm or other real property and leave nothing to the wife or children. No matter how good and kind a wife she may be, and still is, she is no other than a slave when she can be treated like this. I often wonder how many of the women who write to your column really understand the law in this matter, and my object now in writing is to open the eyes of those who do not know, and to beg of them to wake up and air their views and never rest until the law is altered in their favor. How many women coming in from Ontario would expect to find the law so different? I would say, let all the women stay east of Manitoba if they wish for fair play.

I will now state my own case. I lived with my husband in Ontario for over thirty years, and we got together lots of property, and the law there gave me one-third of all of it, and nothing could be sold or mortgaged without my consent or signature. Some years ago we decided to sell out and move west, which we did. After coming out here we bought lots and took up a homestead from the government, neither of us knowing but the laws were the same as Ontario. Now, just imagine my consternation when I found I did not own a cent, and that my husband has power to sell or will the whole of it to any other person, or persons, and leave me without a cent.

But it is not of myself I wish to write, but to state what I have seen done since I have been here. A man and his wife came here several years ago and took up a homestead in the bush far away from any settlers. Both worked hard to get a clearing, and a family began to grow up, and all went well with them. Soon the boys were able to help, but by this time the country round was getting settled up and pretty soon a town sprung up pretty close to their home, and first and foremost a saloon opened there, which the husband began to visit and pretty soon to spend the most of his time at, leaving the wife and boys to do all the work on the farm while he loafed and spent all they made. Still they worked early and late, and cleared more land and planted an orchard, and raised stock.

Their next neighbor, seeing what a nice farm it was, wished to get it for his son and took the meanest way to get it. He took, or rather pretended to take, great interest in the drunken husband, and would lure him to spend the evenings and treat him to oyster suppers with lots of drink, and when too drunk to go home would put him in the best bedroom. Pretty soon the poor drunk thought he had the best friend in the world. Finally the friend asked him to sell the farm, and promised him a good figure for it, and being partly drunk he promised to sell. So they went to a lawyer and an agreement was made and part of the money paid before the wife heard anything about it.

⁷⁹ From AN OLD WOMAN. (1910, February 15). A Dower Law Needed. *The Manitoba Free Press*, p. 9.

She would not believe a word of it at first because she thought, as I did, that he could not sell without her signing off, but to her cost she found it too true, and not only the farm, but the stock, live and dead, and even the furniture was included in the sale. This poor woman found she could do nothing but take her children and walk out, which she did, and they are now scattered all over, while the husband still hangs around the hotel spending the money as he gets it by instalments, but the poor wife got nothing.

Now, the next case I have in view is nearly quite as bad. A friend of mine in Manitoba took up a homestead there, and for a year or two all went well. A hired girl came to live with them and the husband was infatuated with her and then began to ill-treat his wife and family. The older ones pretty soon left home and started out for themselves; things went from bad to worse, the wife could get nothing but abuse while the hired girl could get all the money spent on her. Finally the man sold everything, and cleared out with the girl, leaving the wife who had helped to make the home without a cent. Her children had to send money to buy her some decent clothes to go away in.

Now this is the law of this land, and I hope the women will rise and protest against it, as it stands a disgrace to the land. Why should not women have the same law here as in Ontario? I am sorry I have taken up so much space, but trust you will excuse AN OLD WOMAN.

“It is the bad ones it will trouble”⁸⁰ (February, 1910)

I don't see how the dower law would irritate a good husband. It is the bad ones it will trouble. It seems to me when a man takes a wife he gets a very cheap servant (but then has she not the honor of bearing his children?). How many of us are better? Take myself, for instance – I have worked on the land and in the garden with my husband, and for what? To enable him to get a lien on his homestead for a pleasure trip to the old country, leaving me destitute. Oh, I forgot a few nice promises of what I would get in the shape of money, and a baby coming. It takes two to make a quarrel. So it does, but it does not take two to make a man a drunkard. Neither does a wife always know it; a good wife does not care to make enquiries in regard to her husband's actions. Now, my dear man got through his money, came home again, his farm, implements, etc., seized. When he had nothing, of course, he wanted his dear wife to share it. The end of the story need not trouble you. Let me say, I never let him come home to an untidy house, or an ill-cooked meal and untidy wife.

Now, if I had had my share, I would have prevented him getting the lien and we would have had a home. I have two little ones to provide for. One mile from me a husband has sold all out because he cannot agree with his wife, and they have ten children, and talks of leaving her entirely. I do not claim equality for women; a man should be the head of his household. There would be no need for dower laws if men did as they are commanded, to “love their wives as their own bodies,” there would be

⁸⁰ From PRUDIE. (1910, February 21). Her Case Hopeless. *The Manitoba Free Press*, p. 9.

more submitting than on the woman's part. [...] I trust we will get the dower law passed, not that it will benefit me. My case is hopeless.

“A move backward”⁸¹ (November, 1910)

At the session of the legislature which opens to-day an attempt is to be made to put on the statutes an enactment providing for dower right. The application is backed by the Local Council of Women and is alleged to have the support of women throughout the entire province.

If the right to dower becomes law, there will have been enacted at one stroke a statute which will nullify a great deal of the advantage gained by the Torrens system of registration and transfer now in force in Alberta.

According to the system now in vogue, a property holder, if he wishes to make a transfer, has merely to sign the same, and the purchaser has no other anxiety than to see that the property transferred is in the name of the party making the sale. The government guarantees the title, and no title, once granted, can cost the holder a dollar if upset.

With the dowry enactment, there would enter another factor which would entirely change the system.

Purchasers of property would have to know, in the first place, whether the vendor was ever married, and, were the vendor a married man, his wife a resident of Europe or Asia, and property transferred without her consent, there is an obvious opening for endless litigation, even after the owner of the property may have died.

As the land law stands now it is the simplest and most exact in the world. It is possible to meet a property holder in the street and effect a transfer without hesitation or ceremony. Any enactment which proposes to change this system is a move backward.

If, as the application for a dowry law seems to imply, there are women in the country who have not the confidence that their husbands will do them justice, the obvious course for such women to pursue is to require a bill of sale for the share of the property which they consider rightfully theirs. Whether they get it or not makes little difference. When a husband and wife come to the state where they quarrel about what is his and what is hers, the marriage bond which made them one has certainly ceased to have force – and a separation and settlement is the proper legal course.

“Justice and gross injustice”⁸² (March, 1911)

Having read in the Daily Telegram of Feb. 21st an account of a deputation of women who waited on our premier asking a dower law for the married women of this province, I, although bred and born a Conservative, must admit that I was surprised

⁸¹ From THE DOWRY LAW. (1910, November 10). *The Edmonton Journal*, p. 2.

⁸² From A SUBSCRIBER. (1911, March 1). THE DOWERY QUESTION. *The Winnipeg Tribune*, p. 2.

at the unjust, unstatesmanlike reasons⁸³ given by Mr. Roblin why a dower law could not be enacted. Does he consider a few wealthy foreign investors of more consequence and in greater need of protection than the married women of our province, or does he consider it right, in order to facilitate the transfer of property, to deprive women of just rights enjoyed by many of them, and their mothers before them for centuries in the other provinces from whence they came to this province, in many cases having signed off their claims there, expecting justice when settled here? Would it not be just as fair and reasonable for our esteemed premier to pass a law in order to facilitate the transfer of property empowering me or anyone else to sell our neighbor's property, being empowered to give a legal title to the same, and pocket the proceeds? I fail to see why the ladies of the deputation should thank Mr. Roblin for his courtesy or anything else, except it would be his display of incapacity to judge between right and wrong, fair play and justice and gross injustice.

“An official of the Anti-Dower Law Association”⁸⁴ (March, 1911)

Sir, - Some women's societies seem active just now to get a dower law in the western provinces. This question would vitally affect every owner of real estate in cities and towns, and especially every farmer, at whom it seems specially aimed. It will affect his credit and financial standing, and complicate his affairs.

I write this as an official of the Anti-Dower Law Association. We are not at all opposed to the reasonable demands of women, but only extreme demands which ignore the rights of children and the husbands. The law is now, that a woman's own property is secured to her as against the husband, and he cannot touch it nor the income arising from it; also if he dies the law gives the wife and children all his property. But besides having full power over their own property, the women want also a veto power over the husband's property, too, that where a husband and wife cannot agree as to a loan or sale of any part of a farm, the wife's will and judgment shall prevail over the husband's, for she must sign his paper to permit him, thus making her master of him and his. No demand could be more one-sided or unjust. We could give many cases where a wife has forced a man to remain on his old farm when he could better himself by a change, also cases where a wife has deserted husband and children, but turns up on the man's death and takes away her portion under a dower law.

A dower law is likely to bring more evils and injustice than now exist. Only in occasional cases does a wife bring any property to the marriage, and then it is her own. Except in rare cases the man provides the farm, real estate, the home, its furnishings, horses, stock, machinery and the living. He undertakes to do this for worse or better. The cases are very exceptional where a man is so mean as to prevent

⁸³ “The proposed dower law act for Manitoba was also discussed, the opinion of the members being that it would cause confusion in the real estate market.” TOWN PLANNING IS HIGHLY APPROVED. *The* (1911, February 23). *The Winnipeg Tribune*, p. 7.

⁸⁴ From Hordern, W. (1911, March 16). A DOWER LAW. *The Regina Leader-Post*, p. 9. Written by William Hordern (1853 – 1928).

by will his wife being provided for. It is unnatural, and happily so rare that one scarcely knows of such a case, then it is trumpeted far and wide. Why should a man leave such an injustice and stigma on his name when entering eternity? We hold several letters that appeared in a Winnipeg paper, in which women say they took petitions round for a dower law, but found the wives very indifferent or opposed to signing them. They trust the men, and not in vain.

If a man deserts he can be compelled to maintain his wife; if a wife deserts the man can do nothing, and has no remedy. Imprisonment should be the punishment for men deserting. Every wife should have by law half the home invested in her name on her marriage, whether she bring anything or nothing, as in Quebec. Also, if a wife is cut out of the will or is ungenerously provided for, the law should set the will aside and the property be divided as though the man died inestate.

Where there are no children it matters little what property descend to a wife by law. But it is not a fair division as between wife and children, that a woman get half or one-third of all real and also personal estate. In many cases sons have done more than the wife to make the farm. It would matter little what real estate the wife got besides personal estate, if the law said the real estate part must descend to the man's own children on her death or remarriage, so that the maintenance of the children may be assured, and they have that start in life that every father would desire. But the women claim the right to will away their dower as they please. A man should be well able to maintain the widow when he marries her, and most widows do remarry, especially if young. Indeed, under a dower law a woman may take a large part of two and even three men's properties, and from the men's children absolutely.

A dower law can cut a small farm or quarter section into two parts, and make it no good to either wife or children. And why should 9 good, true men be brought under a hard and fast law for one bad man who will be bad and defy the law and his wife in any case?

If a man leaves his wife a whole income of his property, or a generous provision by money, personal estate, shares, etc., no law ought to say she must also have real estate too – where there are children this ought to satisfy reasonable women, and mothers should be willing to know their children's future is assured as the father is, and should not demand too much for self. A dower law interferes with a man's inherent rights and responsibility to provide as he knows best for all his family, especially any infirm. Yours truly,

W. HORDERN.

“Are the women not as worthy here?”⁸⁵ (February, 1912)

After reading in your paper the other day how the dower for married women had been turned down in the House⁸⁶, I must say I was filled with indignation, and I

⁸⁵ From Wadsworth, A. (1912, February 16). THE DOWER LAW. *The Vancouver Daily World*, p. 19. Written by Anne Cats Wadsworth (1834 – 1920).

⁸⁶ “Mr. Brewster inquired whether it was the intention of the law officer of the crown to reintroduce the Dower Act which he had brought into the House last session, but which had passed the legislature

was certainly astonished at the statement made by Mr. Bowser that it is not needed. I would like to ask him why it is not needed in B. C. as much as it is in Ontario. Are the women not as worthy here as elsewhere? It looks like it. When they made the laws for women there were no white women in the province.

Surely there are enough white women here now to demand better treatment.

As the law now stands a married woman gives up her home, her people, and her name, and goes with her husband, and she helps him to build up a home, and she works hard to help pay for the same, only to find after years of toil and self sacrifice that her husband is sole owner and that she does not own by law one cent, and that her husband can sell the home, or mortgage it, or will it to anyone he pleases, and the wife gets nothing. Can anyone say this is fair?

Well may a married woman say her lord and master, but what is she but his slave? Shame on such a law, and shame on the men who made such laws. And still greater shame on those who will not alter it. And yet the men are always wanting more women to come to this province. They say they are specially needed in the north land; but I would advise them strongly to keep away from the north and the south and the west of B. C. until a fairer government has made better laws for them. They tell us a man can make a will and leave his wife everything. Yes, we know that, and we know, too, that he can make a will and leave it all to another woman, or to whomsoever he pleases. The wife can claim nothing by law; she does not even own her clothes except what she has on. She does now own even her children. But I believe the law allows her to keep her wedding presents. What wonderful consideration.

I am afraid there are a lot of married women in British Columbia who have no idea of the law as it stands against them here, or they would surely all be dower champions.

“There is no right of dower in Saskatchewan”⁸⁷ (June, 1912)

There is no right of dower in Saskatchewan, consequently a married woman cannot prevent her husband from transferring his land or other real property.

The Married Woman’s Property Act of Saskatchewan provides that:

“Every married woman, whether married before or after the passing of this Act, shall be capable of acquiring, holding or disposing of by will or otherwise and without her husband’s consent any real and personal property, and whether acquired before or after the passing of this Act; and she shall in respect of same b under no

just too late to obtain his honor’s consent. Mr. Bowser replied that it was not his intention to do so. When the matter was before the House last session much opposition had developed from some of the ablest members of the House and opinion did not seem to favor the measure. He had thought, therefore, that it might be better to wait until there was another legislature. The Dower Act was a measure which would work very radical changes in the disposition of family estates, and it did not appear to him wise to bring it forward under present circumstances.” BOWSER GETS TRAPPED BY OPPOSITION. (1912, January 26). *The Vancouver Daily World*, p. 10.

⁸⁷ From Thomson, L. (1912, June 22). Property Rights of Married Women and Widows in Saskatchewan. *The Regina Leader*, p. 10. Written by Levi Thomson (1855 – 1938), then M.P. for Qu’Appelle. From a paper read at the Wolseley Homemakers’ Club on June 13, 1912.

disabilities whatsoever heretofore existing by reason of her marriage; and she may in all respects deal with real and personal property as if she were unmarried.

“All the wages and personal earnings of a married woman, whether married before or after the passing of this Act and any acquisitions therefrom and all proceeds or profits from any occupation or trade which she carries on separately from her husband, or deprived from the exercise of any literary, artistic or scientific skill and all investments of such wages, earnings, money or property as well as all property real or personal held and enjoyed by a married woman on the third day of April, 1907, or which shall thereafter be acquired by her shall be free from the debts or disposition of her husband and shall be held and enjoyed by her and disposed of without her husband’s consent as fully and freely as if she were unmarried.”

This act also gives a married woman the same power to sue and be sued, to enter into contract, to convey property and to have property conveyed to her as though she were unmarried. An exception is made in the act to conveyances to her from her husband for the purpose of defeating creditors. She has also the right to act separately as an executrix of will or an administratrix of property.

The right is also given her under the following circumstances to apply to a Judge of the District Court for an order of Protection enabling her to have and enjoy all earnings of her infant children and any acquisition therefrom (so far as the husband would have been entitled to the enjoyment of such earnings if such order had not been made) free from the debts or obligations of her husband and from his control or disposition.

The conditions under which she may make this application are the following:

1. Where she has obtained a decree of alimony or decree of like nature.
2. Where she lives apart from her husband having been obliged to leave him by reasons of cruelty or other sufficient cause which by law would justify her in leaving him and rendering him liable for her support.
3. Where the husband is a lunatic.
4. Where the husband is undergoing a sentence of imprisonment.
5. Where the husband from drunkenness or other cause neglects or refuses to provide for the support of wife and family.
6. Where the husband has never been in Saskatchewan during married life.
7. Where the wife is deserted or abandoned by her husband.

An Act was passed during the Session of Saskatchewan Parliament in the year 1911 called The Deserted Wife’s Maintenance Act. This Act provides that:

A married woman shall be deemed to have been deserted within the meaning of this act when she is living apart from her husband because of his acts of cruelty or his refusal or neglect without sufficient cause to supply food and other necessaries when able to do so.

A married woman deserted by her husband may summon him before the court, which, if satisfied that the husband being able wholly or in part to maintain his wife and family has willfully refused or neglected so to do and has deserted his wife, may order that the husband shall pay to his wife such weekly sum not exceeding \$10.00

with or without costs as the court may consider proper having regard to his means and to any means the wife may have for her support and the support of the family.

This Act also provides that in case of non-payment of the sum ordered and costs within 21 days after the date of order or such less time as the order provides or whenever the payment so ordered is in arrears the wife may have her husband summoned to appear before the Judge, and if the husband does not attend or show sufficient reason for non-attendance or satisfy the court that he is unable to pay the sum ordered, the Court may enforce the order by distress of his goods and in default of distress by imprisonment.

The foregoing covers the main points of the property rights of married women of Saskatchewan. The Legislature would appear to consider it hopeless to protect her in every case, and apparently considers that she is taking her own chances when she gets married, and must abide by the consequences.

The Legislature, however, appears to have been able to give more complete protection to the widow, and I doubt if there is any other country where the widow is more completely protected than in Saskatchewan. Where the husband dies inestate leaving [a] widow and child or children, the widow receives one-third of all his property, real or personal, and where he dies inestate leaving [a] widow and no children, the widow takes all his property to the exclusion of all his other relatives. By an amendment of 1911 it is provided that:

The widow of a man who dies leaving a will by the terms of which his said widow would, in the opinion of the judge before whom the application is made, receive less than if he had died inestate leaving a widow and children, may apply to the supreme court for relief.

This application, however, must be made within six months of the death of the husband, otherwise it will not be considered.

“Asking for equal rights, not special privileges”⁸⁸ (April, 1913)

Women the world over are asking for equal rights, not special privileges. The usual form of dower provides that no matter who owned the property before marriage, it becomes the property of both, equally, after marriage. The man can say glibly enough “With all my worldly goods I thee endow,” but directly women talk of framing a law to enable them to have one-half or one-third interest in said worldly goods, he balks. If a man is afraid he is endowing a woman with too much in giving her a joint interest in his property, let him dispose of it where he will before marriage. Few women would object to starting upon an equal footing, and after marriage the average woman works quite as hard as the average man, and certainly puts in more hours, only in the case of the man the law requires that he receives remuneration for his services in the form of coin of the realm, while in the case of a woman she cannot legally claim any money unless she works as a wage earner outside her husband’s

⁸⁸ From Muir, A. (1913, April 21). Casual Comment on Women’s Activities and Interests. *The Province*, p. 20. Written by Ada Harrison Muir (1874 – 1961).

home. [...] Consider that when rates of wages are under advisement with the intention of fixing a minimum scale, the minimum wage for a woman is the lowest upon which she can live decently herself, while the minimum wage for a man is the lowest upon which he can raise a family.

A man living not far from the city hall regularly hands over to his wife one-third of his wages, upon which she is expected to feed all the family and clothe herself and the children. With the remaining two-thirds the man clothes and amuses himself, for he works eight hours a day (she usually works eighteen), and so needs some recreation. Should the man invest any of the two-thirds, any reasonable being would give the wife a joint interest in that investment, since it is by her economy that he is enabled to keep so much.

This couple, and many thousands like them, commenced married life equally, each possessing a certain amount of wearing apparel, healthy bodies, and willing hearts, and by their joint economy they have purchased the home in which they reside, but the law says in effect that home belongs wholly and solely to the man, and he may at any time dispose of it as he sees fit.

All right minded people consider that that property belongs equally to the wife, and since there are numerous cases on record of where men have disposed of the product of their joint effort, leaving the wife and family penniless, they ask that a law be framed to prevent such occurrences in the future.

“I greatly doubt the wisdom of this law”⁸⁹ (April, 1915)

Sir – I have seen by a speech of Mr. Motherwell’s there is some likelihood of the Saskatchewan Government introducing a dower law at the next session of the legislature. I am a supporter of the Government, but I greatly doubt the wisdom of this law. The Government made a wise provision of law two years or so ago preventing a man from willing his property from his wife – the wife must have at least one-third or the will is null and void. Now, one of the chief reasons women have been agitating for a dower law is to meet isolated cases where men have been so mean as to will money from the wife. This is the first and important point why a dower law is far less necessary than formerly.

The Scott Government is about to enact another beneficent law – practically prohibition of the liquor traffic. This is a second and great reason which will make a dower law unnecessary, for drink has turned more farmers out of their farms than any other cause.

The third important measure making a dower law needless will be a law proposed on the evidence of the machine enquiry commission. If the Government make it hard for a machine company to sell a farmer out who has been crowded with more credit than he could handle wisely, there again is about the last big cause that puts a farmer out of business.

⁸⁹ From SASKATCHEWAN FARMER. (1915, April 26). OPPOSES A DOWER LAW. *The Regina Leader-Post*, p. 4.

If the Government were to enact that a wife's consent is necessary before the husband could run into heavy debt for a threshing outfit, or automobile, or any item of say \$500, such a law would make a dower law unnecessary entirely.

A dower law is unjust and one-sided. Where husband and wife begin with nothing together and homestead, such a law is alright. But from all I know in 19 cases out of 20, the husband brings the farm, the house, the furniture, and the lady walks in. I have married twice and the lady in both cases brought not one dollar. And this is how it goes on the prairie. But a dower law gives the wife the last say, a veto power over her husband's will if she differs from his view. She may have brought nothing with her, she may be, as is usually the case, inexperienced, have no practical knowledge of farming, of business principles, of law, but a dower law gives the wife more power over the husband's land than the husband himself, it makes her the last and supreme judge, she becomes as the House of Lords to him.

The law, moreover, now gives a wife full and complete control over property of her own she possesses on her marriage – no husband can interfere, she can do as she likes with it and will it as she likes, away from hubby if she chooses. Now, what is sauce for the gander ought to be sauce for the goose, too – the same law is only just to both parties.

It is humiliating for a husband to be under his wife, and there are bossy, cranky and unreasonable women as well as men. A man needs a loan to develop his farm, but his wife may say she shall not have it. I heard of a case where a man and wife in Ontario agreed to sell their farm and the husband had bargained and paid an instalment on another farm better than his own. The lady changed her mind, would not leave the old farm, and he lost his deposit. There ought to be a simple court where both parties could go and a justice decide where husband and wife cannot agree. In another case a wife abandoned husband and children, the man died and she turned up and got her "rights!" (?) under the dower law.

A dower law should apply equally as much to town and city property as to farm property, to all property alike. A man in his farm dealings studies not for himself alone, but for his wife, and also his children. He does this, too, in casting his vote, but the ladies don't seem to think so, so they ask for laws against their husbands. A good man does not need a dower law to make him do right to his wife, and a bad man will get round such a law by trickery, cajolery or brutality, and force his wife's consent to his will.

It is hoped the Government may think twice and thrice before giving us this one-sided law, that give the wife the chief power and control and which, owing to present legislation, is practically unneeded now.

Yours truly,

SASKATCHEWAN FARMER.

“More bungled legislation”⁹⁰ (June, 1915)

“More bungled legislation.” That is the conclusion of the members of the legal profession who attempted to register transfers of homesteads in the land titles office this morning, for they were confronted by the interpretation of the local registrar of land titles of some of the legislation put into effect by the Saskatchewan legislature at the session which has just been concluded.

According to an amendment to the homestead act, which is along the line of advanced dower legislation, no transfer of any homestead property may be registered with a land titles department unless the wife of the man designing to effect the transfer appears with him and satisfies either the registrar or a judge of the district court that she is agreeable that the transfer should be completed.

If the land is not a homestead, or if the man wishing to make the transfer is not married, he has simply to take an affidavit to this effect and the transfer is effected.

LEGISLATIVE RETROACTIVE

What local lawyers most object to, although they object to the law itself as restricting transfers to a great extent, is the fact that the local officials of the land titles department have interpreted this act as retroactive, and that it applies to all deals which have gone through for some time past and which are now coming up for registration.

Thus it is that deals which have gone through are now held up because the consent of the wife has not been obtained.

In many cases the wife is out of the country, and it appears that she will have to be brought back to Saskatoon in order to appear before the proper officials and give her consent to the transfer of the homestead in which she has a dower-right.

One case in point, H. L. Jordan, city solicitor, attempted to register a transfer on behalf of the city this morning and found he could not, owing to the fact that he did not have the consent of the wife. The wife in this case is residing at Three Rivers, Quebec, and according to the interpretation of the act, she will have to be brought back here in order to give her consent to this transfer.

SECTION OF ACT

The section of the act which is causing all the trouble is as follows:

“No transfer, agreement of sale, or other instrument intended to transfer or convey any interest in a homestead shall be effectual for such purpose and no mortgage of incumbrance intended to charge any homestead with the payment of a sum of money shall be valid unless the same is signed by the owner and his wife, if he has a wife, and she appears before a district court judge, registrar, or such other officer as may be appointed for that purpose by the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council and, upon being examined separate and apart from her husband, acknowledge that she understands her rights in the homestead and signs the same of her own free will and consent and without any compulsion on the part of the husband.”

⁹⁰ From ACT THROWS BUSINESS ALL OUT OF ORDER. (1915, June 28). *The Saskatoon Daily Star*, p. 3.

“More in sorrow than in anger”⁹¹ (August, 1915)

Breathing with optimism for the west, but shaking his head over the actions of the provincial government, more in sorrow than in anger, Mr. L. Goldman, managing director and vice-president of the North American Life Company of Toronto, is a visitor in the city today. [...]

“I am so satisfied with the situation here,” [he said,] “that when I came to Saskatchewan, I came prepared to lend an additional half million in this province this year, when the dower law, recently passed by the provincial government, was drawn to my attention. Now I have cancelled these loans. The government should be by the people, of the people and for the people. The day has gone by when the administrative and legislative assemblies can operate for the benefit of big corporations, but that law as at present constituted, does not give the man who lends money sufficient protection. He has no guarantee that his loan will be paid back to him.”

“A lawyer’s view”⁹² (July, 1915)

I have discussed this act with several other lawyers and have found them all to be in hearty accord with the general principle upon which the act is founded. The act is so worded, however, that it will undoubtedly cause litigation and loss to parties who, I am convinced, were not intended to be affected by the act at all.

For example, many homesteads are now subject to mortgages given for money lent in good faith prior to the passing of the act. If such a mortgage is not paid, the remedy of the lender is to bring the property to sale, and a transfer is given to the purchaser. But the act provides that no transfer of a homestead shall be effectual unless it is signed by the owner and his wife. The result will be that instead of following the less expensive Land Titles Act procedure to bring about a mortgage sale, the mortgage companies will be compelled to bring action in court for foreclosure, and the homesteader will lose the opportunity of having the property put up for sale, and of receiving the surplus, if any. [...]

There are also some objections to the act from the point of view of the husband and wife. Because wives have suffered injustice in the past is no reason why the husband should be subjected to injustice now. Yet this act does certainly work a hardship on the husband in respect that there is no appeal from the decision, or lack of decision, of the wife. In matters pertaining to homesteads the wife is henceforth jury, judge and court of appeal. She may live apart from her husband, or may be insane, or a helpless invalid, or simply contrary – it does not matter what the reason may be – but if a married man cannot get his wife’s consent in writing, he cannot in

⁹¹ From NOT SAFE TO LOAN MONEY IN PROVINCE. (1915, August 25). *The Saskatoon Daily Star*, p. 7.

⁹² From SOLICITOR. (1915, July 3). A LAWYER’S VIEW OF ACT. *The Saskatoon Daily Star*, p. 12.

any way deal with his homestead. This is surely unjust. The courts should have been empowered to dispense with the wife's consent where a proper case is made out.

“This act robs men entirely”⁹³ (July, 1915)

I cordially agree with the ideas expressed by “Solicitor.” To do some justice to women, this act robs men entirely of their property rights. [...] If the law had demanded that before a man incurred debt for a threshing outfit, an auto or any debt of \$500 his wife must consent, [it] would have done more good than this altogether one-sided dower law. The assumption is that a wife makes half the farm, indeed much more than half, for this dower law gives her full power to override the wish of her husband; she has the last say, a veto power over his will, and she may thwart him and be as the house of lords to him.

All this is as absurd as it is unjust. In the great majority of cases the man finds the home, the furniture and does the full homestead duties before he gets a wife. For some years he works hard, gets horses and machinery and then asks the lady to walk in. She usually brings no capital and is generally without farm experience, knows little of business or law. But at once the dower law makes her the master of the farm, and the man must henceforth ask her permission as to what he may do. In looking after her own self-interest she may tie him up tight. She may be cranky, prejudiced, self-opinionated, but the law says she is to have her way as against the husband having his, in dealing with his property (formerly his).

I have heard of much injustice from the Ontario dower law and could give some bad cases but space forbids. A wife deserts her home, becomes insane or a permanent invalid and cannot make a journey to sign her husband's paper giving consent. I know such cases now near me.

If a man can show good reasons why he may want a loan or to sell, if it be for a good prospect, etc., some court ought to over-ride an ignorant or obstinate woman. This new act takes a man's rights away over his own property and gives them to his wife. Surely “the law is an ass.” Some provisions for contingencies should at least have been made, for all women are not angels nor wise, nor reasonable where the law gives them property rights. A woman has now a veto power over her husband's property, but he has none whatever over any property she may possess; she may dispose of it exactly as she wishes and the husband has no power or control. But all this now is reversed for the husband. One-sided altogether, is it not? The government is unjust, yet I voted them in. And I have three sons with proved up homesteads likely to marry soon – may get a boss wife.

⁹³ From HOMESTEADER. (1915, July 9). THE NEW DOWER LAW. *The Saskatoon Daily Star*, p. 11.

“She ruled his property and him, too”⁹⁴ (July, 1915)

Not two miles from me is a homesteader whose wife has deserted him and is living far off in adultery with a man who formerly worked around here. A few miles further is another deserted homesteader – [his] wife is on the streets at Saskatoon. Already those men are suffering injustice from the wife, but the law now says these men must get the consent of their so-called wives (?) before they can do anything with the homestead. [...]

Another case – typical – how dower law works, from Ontario: A farmer planned to buy another and better farm; his wife consented. Later she changed her mind, and would not sign his papers. He lost his deposit money he had paid and his wife’s action forced him to stick where he was – she ruled his property and him, too.

“Why not have included all married women”?⁹⁵ (February, 1916)

Sir, - To my great surprise I learned the other day through one of the legal profession that the Dower Law only protected a few of the married women of the province. I do not grudge the few the protection that law gives them. They certainly deserve it; but why not have included all married women in that Act? Have not all married women a right to such protection? Does not the wife of a farmer who has to pay for purchasing his land, suffer just as hard as the wife of a homesteader? I think so.

In the first place most of the homesteads are proved up by unmarried men; most of those men have certainly got a good foundation started for a home before they marry. I wonder how many men stop to consider when they marry a woman; they take possession of her body and soul, yes, her life even. They deprive her of the opportunity to earn her own living, or of making provision for her old age. They do not deprive her of hard work though, in helping them to get a home (in many cases). But what does a man offer in return? It sometimes happens that after a woman has slaved hard and suffered for the want of a great many comforts in order to save every cent till they get a start, the man has grown tired of his wife. He wants a change. The result is he either brutally turns his wife out or he makes life so unpleasant she is glad to leave him. Then he is at liberty to have any woman he fancies under the name of housekeeper, and the law allows him to. His fellow men treat him to a certain amount of respect.

Our social life is all wrong as far as marriage is concerned under present conditions. Men stand on the winning side and women lose all that makes life worth living. A woman is both homeless and childless when the law is put into operation. But why? Simply because she has been unfortunate enough to marry a man without a conscience. I am thankful to say such men are not common, but it is the wives of

⁹⁴ From HOMESTEADER. (1915, July 29). OUR DOWER LAW. *The Saskatoon Daily Star*, p. 15.

⁹⁵ From A LOVER OF FAIR PLAY. (1916, February 9). THE DOWER LAW. *The Saskatoon Daily Star*, p. 15.

such men who need protection. The wives of good, reasonable men have no reason to care what the laws are. They know they will be protected anyway.

To return to my subject: Another class of woman that should have protection is the married woman to be met with constantly all over the country who is endeavoring under great hardships to earn a living for herself, and often two or three little children. She is never kept a day longer than possible anywhere because the farmer and his wife are anxious to get those little children out of their house. Sometimes her worthless husband accompanies her round from place to place. Through no fault of her own that woman is homeless; those little children are homeless. Whose fault is it? Oftentimes it is because the man is responsible for such a state of affairs. He has recklessly mortgaged his home for something he could have done without. I protest against such a state of affairs. No woman should be made to suffer (as some do) simply because they married a man (who at the marriage service took an oath to love, honor and protect). Most of us would be satisfied if we got protection, even. Before concluding I should like to say I think every married woman should be the possessor of the home. It is the least a man can give the woman he has deprived of the opportunity to make one for herself.

I hope these few lines will start the right sort of people thinking. If so we may begin to hope for justice to brighten the lives of a great many married women.

“Three important provisions”⁹⁶ (February, 1918)

The bill “respecting the Dower of Married Women,” now before the Manitoba Legislature⁹⁷, [...] makes three important provisions. Until now a married woman has had no protection by law in regard to her right in the family home. It has been quite within the power of the husband to sell, or mortgage, that property, without her knowledge or consent. The bill [...] is designed to protect the right of the wife (in the vast majority of cases, the home-maker, in the truest sense of the word) in that regard. The bill provides that no such disposal of the homestead can be made by the husband, without the consent in writing of the wife; and the declaration of consent (which must state that the signing was done by her own free will) must be endorsed on, or attached to, the instrument to be filed in the registry office. This provision gives the wife complete protection in regard to the home.

The bill provides further that on the death of the husband, whether a will is left or not, the widow has a life interest in the homestead. This secures the widow against the possibility of finding that the home has been bequeathed to somebody else.

⁹⁶ From THE DOWER LAW. (1918, February 25). *The Manitoba Free Press*, p. 9.

⁹⁷ “Without comment or applause and with not a woman present to either cheer or condemn, the Manitoba legislature Tuesday evening placed on the statutes the Women’s Minimum Wage act and the Dower Law. [...] The Dower act, which on introduction, was received with such thunderous applause, was passed in silence.” Minimum Wage and Dower Bills Are Passed by House. (1918, March 6). *The Winnipeg Tribune*, p. 6.

The home (“homestead” is the term used in the bill) is defined as consisting, in rural districts, of not more than 160 acres (a quarter-section), with the residence and buildings thereon; and, in towns and cities, as the residence, together with the land on which it stands, not exceeding four city lots. The suggestion is to be made in committee, it is understood, that both these definitions be enlarged⁹⁸ – the former to cover 320 acres (a half-section), and the latter to cover six lots. [...]

The final clause of the bill provides that in case the married woman owns the homestead, her husband shall have the same right therein as the bill secures to a married woman whose husband owns the homestead – and it is also provided that he shall have the same interest in her estate.

⁹⁸ “The farm women of Manitoba are to have a life interest in their husband’s holdings to the extent of 320 acres, and the city women to the extent of the home site, including up to six lots. [...] Moreover, after the act is passed and proclaimed, no husband can will away his property without leaving at least one-third of his whole estate to his wife.” WOMEN TO SHARE ESTATE. (1918, March 6). *The Montreal Gazette*, p. 3.