THREE GENERATIONS IN THE LITTLE BROWN HOUSE

THE FARMER'S WIFE FOR MAY BY GRACE FARRINGTON GRAY IN 1931

It was like a ride through a park,—that half day's trip through Maryland. The train circled through dells and forests, and skirted grassy slopes, with here and there the clustered spires of a tiny town in a sheltered valley.

"The clustered spires of Frederick stand,
Green-walled by the hills of Maryland."

Whittier's lines were floating through my mind when abruptly the train set me down, not "in Frederick town," but in another quaint, picturesque Southern village, older than the nearby city of Baltimore, with an historic Customs House which dates back to Lord Baltimore's time. No big-wigged spirits of the past walk there, however, for the building, prosaically enough, is converted into a "strictly modern, up-to-date" apartment house. Such is American progress. Electric refrigerators, thermostats and other contrivances of "this terrible machinical age" hold sway where once gay-uniformed officers were wont to strut and demand tribute.

But the town, charming as it was, was not my goal, and I was soon bowling over a hard-surfaced highway as smooth as a floor, to the farm of Mrs. W. H. Morris, Master Farm Homemaker. To myself I pictured her, large, forceful, dominating, the image which the word "master" calls up.

My first surprise was the home,—not at all the white-pillared Southern colonial mansion I expected, but a little brown house, trim, upright, brown-shingled, set off by porches and window frames of canary yellow. It drew back shyly behind a primly-cropped and fenced lawn, and snuggled down under giant trees. But written large all over it was "home," for houses like people have auras, and you can sense their nature as far as you can see them. Quite evidently there was a homemaker here. Now to see this "master." The screen door creaked ever so gently open and I faced the shyest, sweetest little wisp of a woman one could find in a week of Sundays, with grey hair parted Madonna-wise on either side of her head and a face so gentle, so intent, so earnest that it called up the image of Jane Addams during the war. About her floated just a touch of wistful sadness which was soon explained. Two years before, she had lost her husband,—Wilbur Morris, the great oak of her life, and she was like one who had been suddenly uprooted.

"I didn't expect to be the one to be left," she said,—"not having had good health.

"Never anything was too much trouble for my husband to do for me," she added. "And he was always good to the children."

It had been a boy and girl romance, the young folks having grown up on nearby farms. Margaret Hendrickson, always a frail, shy girl, was the oldest of a family of six children on a farm of 370 acres. Her mother was a busy woman and a very particular housekeeper, hard to suit. From the time Margaret was twelve years old she was accustomed to get up at four o'clock to see to breakfast and to help with the morning work, and from the time she could toddle she tried to cook and learned to sew. Being ambitious, she went through the rural school and four years of high school in town, and then settled down at home to help her mother, especially with the cooking and sewing.

"I love to sew," she explained. "If I have any gift, I think that must be it."

At twenty-four Wilbur Morris carried her off to their own home.

"He had the house all fixed up comfortably," she said, "and had a cook who stayed with us for eighteen years. To this day, she thinks the children belong to her."

In the course of years, there were five little folks in the little brown house, and Mrs. Morris became what Our Farm Women call "just a mother." Every bit of her slight strength and her great heart was poured into the care of her flock. A baby cry in the night and she was wide awake and across the hall before the second wail. In the torture of earache she hovered over the little sufferer's bed, wringing out hot fomentations, crooning mother comfort and mother songs, and talking of the compassion of the Gentle One who "carries the lambs in his bosom—like Father." Through the measles and other sieges of childhood, Mother was right there to tuck in little flying arms and to read Bible stories and fairy stories and adventure stories.

When school days came, she smoothed out knotted foreheads with help over the hard places in lessons. She packed lunch boxes with gorgeous sandwiches, frosted cake, raisin cookies, apples and everything dear to the heart (and more especially to the tummy) of childhood. She visited school and straightened out diplomatic situations with Dear Teacher, and best of all she came on Fridays and special program days to sit with flushed face and brimming eyes while one of her chicks spoke his "piece," sang his song, or said his little say. When the youngster rose, choked as to throat, swimming as to head, with heart like a burst flywheel, there was Mother looking encouragement at him, and he was himself again.

All the red-letter days were celebrated. February 14, with home-made valentines done with colored crayons, the choicest always for Dear Teacher; Easter with colored eggs, some of them blown and painted; birthdays with a grand cake with candles; Christmas with a wonderful festooned tree; frequent parties with games and cup cakes, white-frosted and covered with little colored candies.

And always Mother was at home, stitching, stitching away on a new dress or shirt or other wearable, or just darning stockings or making something good for dinner,—always ready to bind up a cut finger, or mend a kite, or find the invariably missing necessity, or smooth out spats in the making.

It was not all play. Each child had his chores, and all fitted into their niches like necessary parts of one machine, And over it all, and in it all, and through it all was Father,—loving, kindly, comfortable Father. And so—the children throve.

"And heaven's rich instincts in them grew
As effortless as woodland nooks
Send violets up, and paint them blue."

"I never worked outside," Mrs. Morris said. "My husband didn't want me to, and it was not done by the women of Kent County until just the last few years. Besides, I was busy enough with the house and the children and neighboring."

"Neighboring" has been a large part of Mrs. Morris' profession,—the natural overflow of mothering. Wherever there was sickness, or death, there was Mrs. Morris, quiet, self-effacing, skillful as a nurse, and fitting in like one of the family.

Church life and community life have been other phases of her home-making profession. She has been president of the Women's Bible Class, and president and vice-president of the Ladies' Aid and the Community Club.

Meantime her children were growing up,—as the best of children will. The two older girls married happily, and the son settled in business in a nearby city. Then suddenly Death, deaf to pleading, stalked through the little brown house.

"I don't know how I've gone on," Mrs. Morris said. "Except that the Lord has helped me."

Two children were left at home—Wilbur, Jr., then 18 years of age and a born farmer, and Sarah Frances, 15, still in high school. Sheltered as she had always been, Mrs. Morris had now to take hold of everything and run the farm.

"I help outside," she told me, "when Wilbur is sick or away,—do anything that is needed."

The farm consists of eighty acres, diversified, with a small herd of registered Ayrshires, and a flock of 200 White Plymouth Rocks. Marketing is comparatively simple, the milk being shipped to Philadelphia and the eggs sold to a hatchery.

The flock is Mrs. Morris' own particular care, and her success as a poultry lady is proved by the fact that the one and only time she has exhibited she took first prize on everything. She has also taken prizes on her bread and canned fruits and vegetables. Her native good sense and long experience have been supplemented by a four-year short course at the state agricultural college. Next year, she will receive her certificate and be "a real college woman."

"I'm doing my best to keep up with my children," she explained.

The children in their turn are doing their best "to keep up with Mother." Wilbur is an All-Star member of the 4-H Club, has for some years held office in the calf, pig and poultry divisions, and now is the calf club's president. He was on a demonstration team at College Park last summer and his team came in first. At various times he has won trips to Camp Vail, to the National Stock Show at Detroit, and to the Madison Square Garden Poultry Show at Atlantic City. In church work he is also active, as vice-president of the Christian Endeavor, and the County Sunday School Association.

Sarah Frances was graduated from high school last spring, with the honor of winning the Mathematics Medal for four years. She has been in the Girls' Club since she was ten years old, has been presiding officer several years, and is now president of the County Federation of Girls. Last summer she was on a College Park demonstration team which came in first on cotton school dresses in the style show. She has the record of making a dress complete in one evening, and took first prize on a charming creation—nothing less that she was wearing the day I was there. Her goal is to become a Home Economics specialist or dietitian.

At family reunions the little brown house shelters three generations, as there are two lovely little grandchildren—seven-year-old Margaret Ann, named for Grandma, daughter of Mrs. Lillian Morris Richardson, of Baltimore, and two-year-old Jeanne, daughter of Mrs. Eunice Morris Cornell, of Washington, D. C.

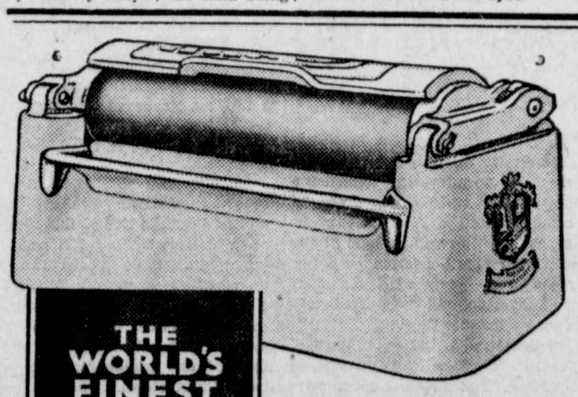
Mrs. Cornell was visiting her mother there when I was there. So was Baby Jeanne,—looking like an little apple blossom.

"Mother never let us go around with holes or patches," said Mrs. Cornell, "and I try to do as well by my daughter."

"Why, I don't feel that I am a success," said Mrs. Morris in parting, "—unless taking care of my children is success."

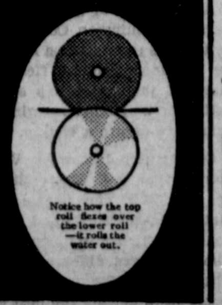
What greater? She is an immortal painter, laying on rich colors in living souls, instead of on dead canvas. Mothering, neighboring, giving the cup of cold water,—

"She doeth little kindnesses,
Which most leave undone or despise,
For naught that sets one heart at ease,
And giveth happiness or peace,
Is low esteemed in her eyes."



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All taxes unpaid Jan. 1st. of each year become deliquent and unless they are paid on or before April the first the Treasurer is compelled to take legal action.

We all realize the economical conditions but as there is no provision made to extend the time of payment, we are therefore compelled to perform our duty, by levying on and advertising your property at tax sale.

My term of office expires June 1st, 1931 and our books must be closed on or before that date. We therefore advise every delinquent tax payer to arrange to pay their taxes and save the expense of Levying, and advertising.

CLARENCE NEWSOME,
Treasurer of Kent County.
m7-3t.

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An Announcement

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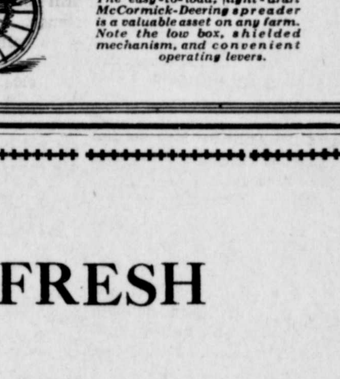
The new McCormick-Deering is NEW—with new Features—new Design—new Conveniences—all this for the purpose of providing you with low-cost, time-saving spreading performance over a long period of years. It is the kind and type of spreader you have always wanted to own—a simple, practical, sturdy machine.

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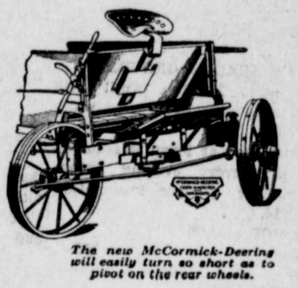
The new McCormick-Deering is so light in draft—due to roller bearings—that only two horses are required. The box is low, making it easy to load; and the spreading it does—well it would be better for you to see this remarkable spreader and then judge for yourself.

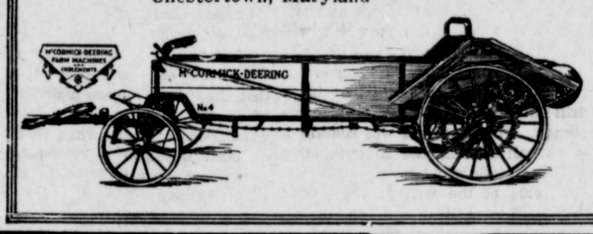
An hour or so spent with us in learning more about this new product may assist you in solving the important problem of increasing soil fertility and crop yields, and doing it easier and in less time than before. Phone us if you cannot call—we can, that's our business.

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Two steel beaters and widespread spiral assure perfect pulverization and uniform spreading.


Here are the roller bearings used in the McCormick-Deering. (A) Rear axle bearing. (B) Upper and lower beater bearing. (C) Widespread shaft bearing.


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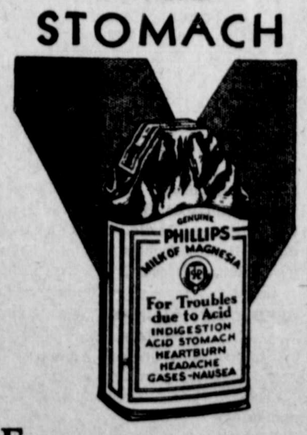
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