WESTERN MARYAND FARMERS.

Some of Mrs. Evelyn HarrisObservations in That Section.

In Carroll, County, Kentucky, just three years ago, the whole tenor of the Local Farmer's Union meeting, was "What shall we do in face of this ruinous price for our tobacco?" That was the main crop, it had taken a whole year to produce it, and get it to the market, and now, with a crop of over 400,000,000 pounds, the Tobacco Trust was only paying what they thought they could afford to pay, and get away with it.

R. M. Barker, one of the Farmer Union Members, proposed a plan, which nearly took away their breath: He proposed that they pool their crop of all Burley tobacco in the entire district, comprising Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio and Virginia. He proposed that they sign up members for FIVE years, and put a penalty on them if they failed to "deliver the goods." This took nerve, because there had never been either state or Federal law to protect them. Inside of a year they had 65,000 members, and last year, 770,000 members, and consequently, are controlling 80% of all of the Burley tobacco grown. The price in 1921 for 400,000,000 lbs. grown in 1920 was less than the 120,000,000 sold in 1922, as the association would not sell until the price was right.

The fellows growing the Dark tobacco, immediately became interested and they also asked the help of Mr. Shapiro, who immediately fixed them all right with the law, and helped frame new laws, which were passed in all the States but Indiana, solely thro' the efforts of the Legislative Committees of the Farmers' Union. Indiana does not have a very strong State Organization yet, and that possibly might account for part of the failure to pass these laws in that State.

Thro' the Kentucky law, Indianna and Kentucky now plan for a big Cream Pool, members signing up for 500 cows for each Station, and a five year contract. This will make the price stable, eliminate much of the unnecessary over head expense, and will guarantee a pure and wholesome article to the consumer.

Virginia has the Peanut Pool, and the members are beginning to realize something out of a crop, which for many years brought them in debt. Missouri is practically selling every article, in a co-operative way. The Farmer's Equity, the Farmer's Union, and the Missouri Farmer's Association are working in complete harmony, and are gradually bringing order out of chaos. Kansas, with her $400,000,000 worth of business, in a year, due to the efforts of the Farmer's Union, is working right with these other self help organizations. The farmers are shipping live stock to THEIR OWN COMPANIES, and are getting Patronage Dividends each year, besides getting a much higher price for hogs and cattle. If there is only one form in the market to buy, the price will be very low, but if as is frequently the case, the farmers themselves hold 65% of the stock, the prices soon go up, and one cent a pound on several carloads of hogs soon turns in a nice profit.

The spirit of co-operation, seems to me, to be better developed in these States, than in our own. Perhaps we had better markets, or perhaps we have not yet seen the needs of the farm folks. Missouri is planning to open up retail houses for the sale of the finished milk products, in the large cities IN THEIR OWN STATE. That ought to help all. Not much freight to pay, for either producer or consumer. For what is the use of shipping some cream over here in the East then shipping back the butter?

In each of the States I have mentioned, there are Real leaders, who are Producers of the State in which they were born, and are working hard for the good of the farmers in that state. The farmers rich, and poor, are giving these leaders loyal support, and in return are receiving more for their products. The Farmer's Union Stores, and Filling Stations, are a real boon to the farmers. The Exchanges, in Missouri, are this year using the Standard Oil Co.Products, as they have a better contract than they were able to get from the Havoline people. Twine folks have also made attractive propositions to the Missouri Farms, I tell you now, when 80,000 farmers are buying thro' ONE man, that man can get a good price. When the Board of Directors meets, each month, the salesmen of all the large houses, make it a point to have some thing attractive to offer, and the farmer gets the benefit.

The Missouri men reduced the price of milling flour, from $1.25 per barrel, to 65 cents a bbl. and they got all the bran, middlings and shorts thrown in free. When the farmers started doing that, all of the other mills did so.

The Bricklayers Union sets the hours of labor, the price per hour and the NUMBER OF BRICKS TO BE LAID. As it happens, the latter is just about half of what a man can really do, but if more bricks were laid per man, per day, some fellows would be out of work, and would then work cheaper. But the same bricklayer, in more than one way, is urging the farmer to make his hens LAY MORE, so the price of eggs will come down. Why not tell the hens to lay less, or keep less chickens, to make the price of eggs go higher? The fellow who makes money on eggs, never has to clean a dropping board, or fuss with a setting hen. He buys his eggs AFTER HE HAS GOTTEN THE PRICE DOWN VERY LOW, then holds them in a cold storage for a few months, and without even getting his hands dirty he sells them for twice what they cost him, and then some. Missouri farmers own their own cold storage plants. Have them capitalized for $160,000, ten of them scattered through the state. They market the fancy chickens, which they condition for market and get the extra profit for the wife of the WHO HAD EARNED IT. If the wife of the bricklayer was making the living for the family, as most of the farmer's wives are doing, the bricklayer could work for less.

After visiting around the different states, and just watching the various forms of work which the farmers' wives are doing, I am about convinced that the only way now for a farmer to get ahead is TO HAVE TWO WIVES. He may have to get a law passed before this would be legal, but there have been many others passed which don't do him a bit of good. I find, in many cases, that the farmer's wife and children, by careful living, by hard work with poultry and milk, are making the living, and the farmer is able to take what HE makes, and buy his fertilizer, seed, labor and pay taxes. If his wife could only do a little more, he might be able to get more, and, remember, the farmer's wife has to put up with everything the farmer has to put up with: bad years, bugs, droughts, hail, cyclones, poor yields, low prices, etc., in fact, everything that HE has to put up with, AND THEN HAS TO PUT UP WITH THE FARMER HIMSELF.

I found farmers growing tomatoes for $8 a ton and some growing them for $16 a ton, all this year. Why not combine the tri-states with Indiana and Virginia, and make a UNIFORM price? That would be fair to the canner and the consumer and the farmer. It would stabilize the price. The canner in Indiana pays the same for cans, cases and labor as the canner in Maryland pays; why not the same for the raw stock If tobacco can be sold in five states through a pool, why not tomatoes? No one farmer wants to work against the interests of any other farmer, and no canner wants to cut the throat of any other canner. The fellow selling futures in tomatoes ALWAYS FIGURES ON THE LOWEST PRICE HE IS ABLE TO PURCHASE TOMATOES FOR and the man who is trying to help the farmer is then compelled to sell his finished product on the same basis of cost.

I found Virginia with practically all rural schools closed in the county in which I was visiting, due to lack of funds. I also found in all of the states visited the folks purchasing school books for their own children. THEY WERE SURPRISED WHEN I TOLD THEM THAT WENT OUT OF STYLE IN MARYLAND AT THE SAME TIME BUSTLES AND HOOP SKIRTS WENT OUT. I found the folks just as hospitable, and kind, and entertaining as could be. The best was none too good for the "lady speaker." In one place they were afraid to advertise that a woman would speak, fearing no one would come out. I have been invited back there i nthe near future, when admission at door will be "ONE WOMAN."

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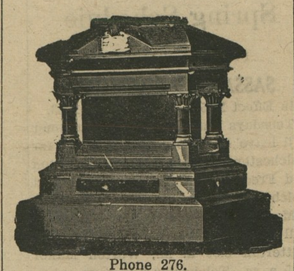
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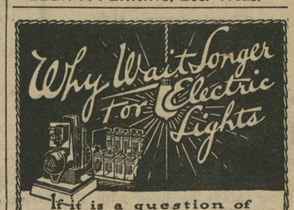
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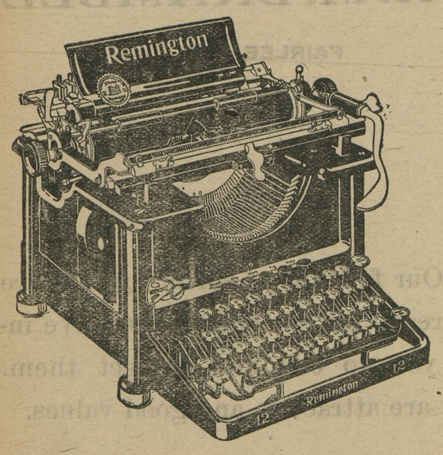
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