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COUNTRY *VERSUS* TOWN-LIFE FOR SMALL INCOMES.

By MARY G. DALLINGTON.

A SHORT time back a paper appeared in THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER called "How we live in London on a pound a Week," setting forth the life of a mother and daughter who were residing in the East End of London. I cannot think that it is better to live in a city when in straitened circumstances, as I fear that many would find themselves broken down in health and be far worse off at the end of a few years. As to the selfishness of a country-life that would depend much on the natural disposition of the individual; even there we may find many ways of helping our poorer neighbours, if we are so inclined, and after seven years' experience I feel impelled to

set forth some of the advantages of the other side.

During this time our household expenses (dress only excepted) have never exceeded £70 a year, for which we three have many comforts and even a few luxuries, besides having enough for a friend who is willing to put up with simple fare for a short time for the sake of the pure air and lovely scenery that surrounds us.

"We" are two sisters and a cousin, who had all been "out in the world" since early life. Seven years ago, B. had a small legacy and some good old-fashioned furniture left her by a lady to whom she had been companion for

some years. On one of the rare occasions of our all meeting together, the wild idea, as our friends called it, struck us, "Why should we not join our slender incomes, take a cottage in the country, and make a little home for ourselves?" After being at the beck and call of old ladies and children for so long, surely it would be worth while to do a little more menial work for part of the day to be able to call the rest our own.

The great difficulty was to find a small house in a good neighbourhood, but by advertising our want, we at last heard of a suitable one in a village in the south of England, within a mile of a small country town, and a little over



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"DOWN BY THE RIVER."

that to the railway station; rent, £12 a year, landlord paying rates and taxes. For this we have a sitting-room, light and airy, measuring thirteen feet by thirteen feet six inches, looking over a tiny lawn and flower border across the main road to a large orchard, whose wealth of blossoms in the spring and fruit in autumn is pleasanter to our eyes than bricks and mortar, where the birds sing all day in nesting-time, coming to our window to be fed in the cold weather.

The kitchen measures about the same; over these are two bedrooms with fireplaces and good windows, and one, large but not lofty, in the roof; we have, besides, a light cellar under the front room, scullery and wood-house, while behind is a large garden, part of which is wired off for fowls, in the rest we grow, with a little help in rough digging, a great part of our vegetables, besides strawberries, raspberries, currants, gooseberries, and rhubarb. Fruit being plentiful in our district, we often have apples and other kinds given us, or can buy them very cheaply.

C. has a morning engagement in the town, so is excused from much domestic work, taking her share of gardening and needlework in the latter part of the day. We have a homely neighbour who is willing, for a small sum, to do all the actual scrubbing required; the kitchen, a boarded one, is covered with linoleum supplemented by a few mats, so is easily kept clean, especially as all our cooking is done with oil-stoves, which saves labour and keeps the room nicer.

The heavy part of the washing is put out, but we wash many small things at home with sunlight soap, the irons being heated on a small oil stove, which we also use to boil the kettle or saucepan when the larger one (with two burners and an oven) is not wanted.

Washing, by-the-bye, is not mentioned in the paper I alluded to, nor is any allowance made for it.

I do not give recipes for cheap dishes, as so much has been already written on the subject; anyone with common sense and one of the little manuals sold at the cooking classes now held in every small town or village, could easily select what would suit her own household, remembering that where meat is to be economised, it must be with such vegetables as peas, beans or lentils, the cabbage tribe

affording little nutriment, although valuable for its anti-scorbutic properties. With us nothing is wasted, all scraps, vegetable-parings, etc., going towards a warm breakfast for the fowls.

I do not think it possible to apportion out the income exactly, as one's needs vary from time to time, but the following fixed rules may help others.

Always pay ready money for everything.

Let there be no waste whatever.

Buy nothing that can be done without.

On this rule or what I call "The art of doing without," I could write at some length, when I think of the money I see spent by people who plead poverty at every turn, on useless things, either for dress or the house, because they are cheap, pretty, or the fashion; things that nine times out of ten are thrown aside in a few days. Then as to fancy work, unless we get an order from a friend and so make a little towards our personal expenses, we never do it, the materials cost too much and the time devoted to it can be much better employed; when we really have no work for the house or ourselves, we can generally find something with which to make a garment to give away.

I have deducted the small allowance we take for dress; it is such a tiny one that I know many would think it impossible to manage with, but except perhaps boots, clothes last fresh twice as long in the country as in town, and we are fortunate in having well-to-do friends, who remember us when turning out their wardrobes, besides an occasional present of gloves, and we do all our own dressmaking and millinery, in this way saving much, as we use up for linings, etc., odds and ends that a professional dressmaker would despise.

We have plenty of books and papers lent us, and sometimes subscribe to the railway bookstall for the winter months, this is one of our luxuries.

In these days of influenza the doctor cannot always be dispensed with, but then he does not charge for visits to a £12 cottage at the same rate as he would to an £80 house, and yet has time to stop for a chat.

Ours being a well-organised parish, there are many ways in which an energetic woman can help, and we seldom find time hang heavy on our hands.

Winter of course is the dullest part of the year, but even then there is the weekly glee-meeting, an occasional concert or social evening, where all the native talent is brought into requisition, the vicarage working-party, or a course of lectures (technical education) on cookery, nursing, dressmaking or gardening.

There is a general friendliness in the country and time to think of others, that contrasts favourably with the hurry of city life; quaint old-world customs and superstitions linger long, that would delight a folk-lore student; even the dress of the older inhabitants differs much from that worn by our poorer neighbours in large towns. Old men in smock frocks and red neck-handkerchiefs touch their hats and wish you a "Good-night, ma'am," as you come home in the gloaming, while from villages more remote than ours, middle-aged women, on shopping bent, or bringing their eggs and butter to market, come dressed in the old-fashioned short linsey or full print skirt, shawl folded cornerwise, and large black bonnet, cotton sun-bonnets being worn while at work.

I cannot help thinking that our lovely sunsets would compensate many for the loss of the much vaunted "electric lights," and a brisk walk over the breezy common, or a stroll through the lanes in search of primroses or blackberries, for any of the sights to be seen "down by the river."

It is sometimes possible to meet with cottages at as low a rent as ours, with a field or two attached, where anyone, so inclined, could try poultry farming on a small scale, but these are invariably farther from a station, so as ours is a healthy, weather-tight little dwelling, we feel we might "go farther" and perhaps "fare worse."

Let not my readers be deterred from living in the country by the idea that life there is monotonous; plenty to do is the best cure for ennui, and the constant changes that Dame Nature is carrying on around us are a never-failing source of pleasure, in fact to quote the verse engraven on a jug that was sent us as a Christmas present:—

"Straight is the line of duty,
Curved is the line of beauty,
Follow the straight line thou shalt see,
The curved line ever follow thee."

HALF-A-DOZEN SISTERS.

By EVELYN EVERETT-GREEN, Author of "Greyfriars," "Next Door Neighbours," "Barbara's Brothers," etc.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WEDDING BELLS.



JUST the way of the world, my dear—one marriage makes many," said Mr. Wilberforce with a smile and a sigh to his wife, when it became known that Freda and Arnold had plighted their troth.

"I am sure I am very pleased about it," said the mother with tears in her eyes. "Arnold is a man one can give one's daughter to without a doubt or a fear. But I suppose it always seems sudden to a mother. I have looked on Freda as little more than a child still, in spite of her growing independence.

She is the youngest of my trio of girls. If it had been Norah I suppose it would have come as less of a surprise!"

"I doubt it, my dear," smiled Mr. Wilberforce. "I think one always receives the news with surprise, even though one may have thought oneself prepared—as I did in Guinivere's case." He paused awhile and then gave a quick half impatient sigh, adding with a touch of anxious misgiving in his voice, "I wish I were as certain of her happiness and welfare as you are of Freda's. It is a very brilliant match—far more brilliant than anything I could have anticipated for a daughter of mine. I am not blind to that aspect of the case. Yet all the same I sometimes wish she had married more into our own sphere. It is a risk to take such a plunge as she

will have to do. And I feel as though it were giving up a daughter more than is usually the case when she is married."

"It all seems so hurried too," said Mrs. Wilberforce. "In my young days engagements sometimes lasted for three and four years—and nobody thought much of it. This is to be less than three months. I do not like quite such a rush. There seems no time for thought."

"The fashion of the day, my dear," said Mr. Wilberforce. "Young people are always in a hurry now to grasp at their happiness. They have to take it in great draughts, not in leisurely sips. Whether they enjoy their pleasures as we used to do, by grasping at them in such haste, I do not know—I have my doubts. But in this case I think the