



VILLAGE HOMES FOR LADIES.

By H. B. M. BUCHANAN.

PART I.

It is said that England, for every square mile, has a larger population than any other country of this world (China perhaps excepted). If so it must be due to the excessive crowding of the population into large towns and narrow areas, such as London, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, and the pottery and cotton districts. That the population is not sufficiently distributed over the whole country, there can be no question.

An evenly distributed population, into families and groups, cultivating their own land, or if cultivating the land of a landlord, secure in the benefits of their toil, means for such a country health, strength, and contentment.

The greater the number of people that possess property, however small, whether in savings banks, cattle in the field, owning land, or if hiring land then secure in possessing any improvements that the tenant may make, the more stable is that country, and the more secure are its inhabitants against the dislocation and misery of popular discontent, and sudden upsettings of existing customs and manners.

And not only does a number of property holders give security to a country, but it causes a greater interest to be taken in the work that has to be done, and in consequence the work is better done.

No greater thing can be asked of God, and man, than this—for a worker to find pleasure in the work that has to be done. And we may be quite sure that in a country where the workers work for the love of their work, that when the time for defence comes there will be no lack of self-sacrifice, no hesitation to the response of the call—Queen and Country.

In travelling into the country, nothing has struck me more than the absence of population. Here a cottage or two, there a farmhouse, here a collection of cottages, a school, a church, a public-house, and we are in that deadly dull thing—a country village. But of small artistic village homes—small holdings scattered conveniently over the country—where are they to be seen, where to be found. The country seems to be dead and depopulated.

Another fact has struck me, the growing

desire of all the young village people to get into the towns as soon as possible.

London goes on increasing rapidly, miles upon miles of streets, thousands upon thousands of men and women, are added year by year to its area and population. At present there seems no sign of a pause, but rather all signs point to a more rapid increase in the near future.

For statesmen, religious, thinkers, and local authorities, it is a serious problem.

I have also noticed another fact, the large number of ladies, with little or nothing to do, who become submerged in flats, boarding-houses, and hotels in London. As I watch them, lost in London, with little aim in life, of no importance, position, and in many cases, of little or no value to any one, I think how different their lives might be, and how much happier they might be, if, by living in the country, they tried to bring amusement, culture and life into the villages. Here they would be of some use, of some importance, and they would be fulfilling that great commandment, laid on all men and women, who have had the inestimable benefit of birth, culture, and refinement of *noblesse oblige*—the commandment that says, "Give, give, give, that which you have received;" and in thus generously giving they would brighten up the lives of many a cottage home, and convert our villages into abodes of movement and of life.

It is the want of amusement, want of change that is depopulating the villages. Young people must have some change, some brightness, some amusement, and so not getting it in the villages, they seek it in the towns.

It is not a question of wages, for an agricultural labour in regular employment is better off than if he had 26s. and 27s. and lived in a town. As one of my cottagers said to me: "My husband for years was making 30s. per week in Manchester, but, notwithstanding the fact that we have a larger family, we are better off now than then."

Some little time ago I succeeded to an old family property. I had been used to the activity of town thought and action, and in consequence I think that I have attained a certain power of quick generalisation from what I see and hear. I went down to my little

village, and after I had been there twenty-four hours, a friend of mine asked me what I thought of it. I at once said, "What the people want is amusement, movement, more change; they do not want instruction so much, and were I a rich man I would take down a good circus, or a strolling band of musicians."

Every village has now a good schoolroom, and I feel sure that most managers of the schools would gladly allow them to be used for such a purpose.

It was no dream merely of prophets, poets and thinkers, but a great fact that modern science is step by step proving to be true—that we are all bound round by the invisible cords of a vast unity. That for one member of the community to suffer is to affect the whole community, as certainly as the mutilation and impairment of one member of the body affects all the other members of the body. And so the depopulation of the country is a matter of vital importance to the diverse hosts of men and women, who anxiously strive to make a living in the vast city *bee-hives*.

The crowding into the centres of the agricultural population makes competition in the towns more keen, forces wages lower and entails longer hours of work.

So here are the villages crying aloud for helpers, and numbers of ladies who I am sure are anxious to give that help.

How to bring it about is the problem.

I feel sure that ladies with small incomes can live in much greater comfort and refinement in the country than in the towns, and as I have said, by their presence in the country they could help to enliven and refine the lives of the village folk, which would stem the depopulation of the country, and thus indirectly they would assist the workers throughout the country.

In my second article I shall deal with some of the difficulties from the landlord's point of view, and from the lady tenant point of view, and the cost of living in the county of Shropshire, in which my property is situated.

In my third article I shall suggest some method whereby a lady can increase her income in the country, with advantage to herself and the whole community.

(To be continued.)

then have been called void places of the uninhabited earth."

"But more especially did this character of uncultured desolation pervade the extreme borders of the West of England, the country between the Tamar and the sea. * * Long after other parts of England had settled into an improved agriculture and submitted to the discipline of more civilised life, the Cornish were wont to hew their resources out of the bowels of their mother earth, or to haul into their nets the native harvest of the sea. Thus the merchandise and fish, tin and copper became the 'vaunted staple of their land.' These, the rich productions of their native country were, even in remote periods of our history, in perpetual request, and formed, together with the wool of their moorland flocks, the great trade of the Cornish people. From all parts, and especially from that storied city whose merchants were then, as now, princes of the land, men were wont to encounter the perilous journey from the Thames to the Tamar to pursue their traffic with the 'underground folk' as they termed the inhabitants of Cornwall, that rocky land of strangers, as, when literally interpreted, is the exact meaning of its name."

"It was in the year 1463, when Edward IV. occupied the English throne, that a tall and portly merchant in the distinctive apparel of the times rode along the wilds of a Cornish moor. He sat high and firm upon his horse, a bony gelding with a demi-pique saddle. A broad beaver, or, as it was then called, a Flanders hat, shaded a grave and thoughtful countenance, wherein shrewdness and good humour struggled for the mastery, and the latter prevailed, and his full brown beard was forked—a happy omen, as it was always held, of prosperous life. His riding garb displayed that contrast of colours which was then so valued by native taste, insomuch that the phrase 'motley' had in its origin a complimentary and not an invidious sound. Behind him and near rode his servant, a stout and active looking knave armed to the teeth."

It was a fair summer evening, and they had wandered on and on over those trailless moors till the question of safe shelter had become an anxious one. They surmounted a rising knoll, and the merchant halted, struck by the scene beneath him—a wayside cross was shining in the evening light, a gnarled and wind-swept tree gave shelter to a young girl, who leant on her shepherd staff, her little flock of sheep had settled quietly on the slope, and beside her stood a peasant youth, his little flock of goats feeding near him. It seemed an old trysting-place, and the merchant, arrested by the peace and beauty of the scene, stayed his horse and surveyed them a few moments before speaking. At last, raising his voice, for the wind was boisterous,

"Can you tell me," he said, "maiden, some way across this moor to shelter for the night? We need rest and food, and the horses are spent with a long journey."

The girl came forward. "Sir," she said, "this is a very lonely place, and there is no inn nor shelter for many miles."

This was embarrassing, but the merchant was not one accustomed to be thwarted, and stayed looking at the fair innocent face and the graceful form he saw before him, while the youth scowled and drew back, in apparent dislike of any communication with a stranger.

"Well," said the rider, "what are we to do? Our horses are spent; we are both hungry and shelterless in this wild place. Is there absolutely no roof in the neighbourhood which can take us in for a night?"

The girl, with some hesitation, answered, "My father's hut, sir, I can guide you to; but it is a very poor place—not fit for a gentleman like you. I know they will do all they can for you, and there is a shelter where the horses would be safe, but—"

"Say no more!" joyously said the merchant. "A cover for our heads, any food for the beasts and for ourselves! We will be glad and grateful for shelter and safety!"

"It is a *very* poor place, sir," still urged the girl; but all remonstrances were thrown to the winds. The unwilling youth had to gather the flocks together and go off with his own across the moor, while the little maid guided the strangers across the ford and over the moor till they came in sight of a very low-roofed hut sheltering beside a hillock, which they assuredly never would have observed, and where they were welcomed by the father and mother of their guide.

The merchant was a wealthy man, and in his own house in London knew comfort and luxury, and yet, when he looked round the interior of this poor home, felt a thrill of surprise as he marked the extreme cleanliness and order which was there, and still more when, having explained his situation, the true kindness and courtesy with which they made him welcome, and arranged a sleeping-place for himself and his servant, and prepared him a supper—poor and simple indeed, but clean and wholesome—which refreshed and rested the weary travellers.

Within those mud walls, evening came with a feeling of peace and rest. And in the night the merchant lay awake musing on the character of the people among whom he was thrown, and the native modesty and dignity of the girl. The parents were evidently such as might have been expected from what he had seen of their child.

His wife was ailing, and had begged him to find for her some little maid who could help in her housewifery, and also be a personal

attendant to her. Where could he find a better? He had talked with her along the way when she guided them home, and had been surprised at the intelligence and character he found in her; and he knew he could offer her a kind mistress, and a home of comfort and plenty, but would she come? And would her parents spare her? To say nothing of that young scowling lover, who seemed to grudge every word she said to another, and every minute away from him.

The next morning the merchant spoke on the matter. The parents were good judges of character, and they trusted and liked their guest. His man had not been silent as to his master's dignity, the wealth of his home, and the goodness of his mistress; and the letters to dwellers in the same county which were shown to them made them aware of his real position and honourable character—but the girl? Would she willingly give up home, parents, and, perhaps more than all, the dream by the wayside cross, for years, perhaps, ah! for more than years?

She was very young—not fourteen years old. She looked at her parents. They, true father and mother, were thinking only of her, her advancement, the honourable home she was offered, the kind friend they thought, and truly thought, her mistress would be to her, and her master whom they felt they could trust.

She looked at her parents—ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-sheltered from wind and weather, exposed to a thousand ills she bitterly knew. And she was offered means—help to get for them comforts, perhaps luxuries, certainly safety and security from many dangers. She thought of her lover—but she was very young, and life promises so much at thirteen—and then the coming winter, the food, the clothing, the warmth she might cause to glow in that poor wind-blown hut. And then she made up her mind.

There was no hesitation in the frank acceptance of the offer. Bright visions of what she might be able to do for those dear parents, for that dear home, were crowding on her as she packed her very small store of luggage and left the home.

They got a pillion for her, and belted it behind the saddle of the merchant's man; and so, bidding farewell to the wild moors of Cornwall, she travelled to London, "where she would see the place where the King lived, and where, she was told, the houses were stuck as close together as Wike St. Marie church and tower. Ah, truly she would store up every coin and come back with money enow to buy a flock of sheep of her own, which perhaps she and John would tend together as aforetime on the moors!"

Happy child in her love, and trust, and hopefulness of the future!

(To be continued.)

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PART II.

I POINTED out in my first article that the depopulation of the country is a problem that not only affects every one interested in agriculture, but affects likewise, though it may be indirectly, all workers in the towns. And I went on to say that I felt sure that the chief reason for the mad rush of the young village life into the towns was not on account of wage (because wage in the country, with all its accompanying advantage, is for the

average workers as good if not better than that in the towns), but because of the almost entire absence of life, change and amusement in the country villages.

You may say, why cannot the villagers be satisfied with their life as were their forefathers of old? But it should be remembered that, since those old days, conditions have changed—the school, the library, the press, the train, the cheapening of books, has developed the imagination, has all contributed to teach the villagers of a wider, deeper, more

restless life than they have had the experience of, and the young life of the villages very naturally desire to see and share it. And if this wider life is not brought to the villagers, the villagers will go to it at any sacrifice to themselves or others.

It would be just as foolish and as futile to try and bid the earth not march round the sun as to try and check this growing desire for a life more varied and full of interest.

To accept the inevitable and then to try

and make the best of it is the attribute of wise statesmanship, loyal citizenship, and sane living.

The fact therefore has to be faced, that the young villagers want to live, think, and be amused and not to stagnate.

The stage lights, the movements on the boards, the hustling, crowded audience of a music-hall do not, by any means, form desirable entertainment; but it stimulates the thoughts of the villagers, and causes the life to pulse through their veins a little quicker than the muddy lanes, the isolated cottages, and the tumbling into bed night after night, without any change, by the light of a mournful, badly-burning candle. Who can help to satisfy this growing desire in the villagers for a wider life and deeper thought better than unoccupied untrammelled ladies?

Ladies possessing small incomes can live in the country at a less cost than in the towns, and can in addition find no end of useful work to fill up all their spare time, so that there need be no spaces left for feeling dull and bored.

The helping to get up amusements, running clubs and libraries, the forming of social gatherings on terms of perfect equality, interest taken in the work of the school and in the children themselves, all such work will cause the sweetening of many a despairing, soured life, and will, I venture to say, do more to restore bad health than all doctors and medicines can do.

Let me, however, here utter one note of warning. No one can do any real good amongst the villagers who works amongst them in a spirit of condescension or with a feeling of superiority. These simple folk can easily see the real person behind the put-on person, no section of society quicker—just because, I think, all their lives they have been obliged to deal with simple, stern realities.

No one, I say, can do any real good who does not feel the deepest respect for them, who does not feel a conviction that the housemaid who dusts the room and the agricultural labourer who turns over those beautiful straight furrows (provided the work is well and honestly done) is just as important to the life of the great whole and therefore as much to be respected as the politician and student who, from platform and study, endeavour to teach a gospel of wiser, cleaner, and more kindly living. If this spirit, this conviction, is not in you, then do not attempt life in the villages.

Now as to the cost of living. Of course I can only give it for my own part of the country, Shropshire; but from many inquiries, I think the prices are as high there as any other part of the country, because we have a market-town close at hand that taps Manchester, Liverpool, and the thickly-populated Pottery districts.

First, as regards house rent. An artistic and conveniently-planned little house, two sitting-rooms, four bed-rooms, and fairly spacious back premises, with a garden sufficiently large to keep the household supplied with fruit and vegetables, can be erected for £300. A landlord, as rent, would require £18 per annum, 7s. per week, which would give him 4 per cent. per annum for interest and 2 per cent. for repairs, depreciation, etc. The taxes would amount to £1 10s. per annum.

If a lady tenant's income was not sufficient to allow her to keep a servant, a woman from the village could easily be obtained who would gladly give two or three hours each day for the doing of the rough work, and if two or three of these village homes were situated fairly close to each other, one woman could manage them, and her wage and food thus divided would not be a very serious item.

In almost every country village there are a few young and healthy girls who would be only too glad of a kind and thorough training for domestic service, and in exchange for such a training and their food would gladly give their work. And so in this way by living in the country, not only would ladies be of great service to the village girls themselves, but would be the greatest benefactors to the nation by sending forth a number of honest and efficient servants.

As regards food: the best English beef, prime cuts, 8d. per lb., mutton 9d.; English Cheshire cheese 7d. per lb.; best butter varies, according to the time of the year, from 10d. to 1s. 3d. per lb.; milk 2d. per quart—but I had to send my cans for it to one of my tenants who happened to be within a very short distance; young chickens and ducks of a large size 2s. 3d. each or 4s. 6d. per pair; rabbits 1s. each; partridges in the season, when plentiful, 2s. per brace; pheasants, good young birds, 4s. 6d. per brace.

Every efficient housekeeper, who is well up in current market prices, will see at once that these prices are under London prices. Groceries, etc., of course are practically the same everywhere.

Strangely enough what I found it most difficult to obtain was good fruit (this is a complaint in many country places), it was scarce, and when I did obtain it, it was of very inferior quality.

From the few figures given above, it will be seen that a small income will go further in the country than in the towns; also in the country there is not the same temptation to spend a few pence here and a few pence there, that at the time does not appear much, but at the end of the year amounts to a very considerable sum.

I will now state some of the difficulties from the landlord's point of view. There are many landlords who are simply tenants for life; that is, tenants who only receive the income of the property, and have not the power, even if they had the wish, of selling one yard of ground, and in other ways have their hands much tied.

The rent and value of agricultural property during the last twenty years has decreased by at least one-third, in some cases one-half; therefore landlords have to be careful before they embark on any doubtful speculations and a 4 per cent. interest on capital does not leave any margin for an unoccupied tenancy, and the risk of an unoccupied tenancy is a contingency that has to be faced in erecting village homes.

Another great difficulty in many parts of the country is the water-supply. In some cases water can only be obtained by sinking very deep wells, and in other parts it has to be brought from a distance, all of which entails considerable expense.

Also most of the farms are let, and it might upset a good tenant if one of his fields were taken from him for the purpose of erecting these village homes, and in the present precarious state of agriculture, no landlord would care to do this.

Miss Mary Campbell-Smith in the *Queen* newspaper says: "Convert unoccupied cottages into artistic homes." Yes, that is all very well, but where are the unoccupied cottages? In my part of the world an unoccupied cottage is nowhere to be found. What is required in country districts are more cottages, and the reason why they are not built is that, in most cases, a landlord cannot ask more than 1s. or 1s. 6d. per week rent, which does not give 2 per cent. interest on his outlay.

But still, I feel sure that all these difficulties might be overcome if a landlord had some kind of guarantee, that when he had gone to all the expense and trouble of erecting these

village homes, they would be permanently occupied by suitable tenants.

Now let me consider some of the objections from the lady-tenant's point of view, because it is always as well, before taking a serious step in life, to weigh well the pros and cons.

There is no doubt that to stimulate thought, to keep in touch with all the forward movements, to live a broad, free, tolerant life, there is no place like London. There is something infinitely refreshing to come to huge, bustling, selfish London, where few people know you, and fewer still care anything about you. A sense of delicious freedom is there in its perpetual movement and big interests; especially if you come from the narrower, more intolerant, gossipy and more sluggish life of the country, where everybody knows you and your every movement is criticised and commented upon.

But to live always in London, owing to the rapid manner of its life, is to skim the surface of things, brilliantly it may be, but still to skim the surface merely and not go deep down into any subject or to make any subject your own possession.

You are stronger far and more satisfactory, if by pondering you think out one thing for yourself, than to be simply a mechanical machine for the reproduction of a vast number of the thoughts and sayings of others. One ounce of original thought, arising from your own experiences, arising from your own sufferings and joys, your own observations, your own thoughts, your own successes and failures, do more to the building up of immortal character than to know parrot-like the inside of cartloads of books.

The stimulation and activity of London needs the hours of quiet and solitude of the country if your own fruit, and not another's, is to ripen to the harvest. So when, in your village home, you feel the need of stimulation, of fresh thoughts, when you feel yourself becoming narrow, intolerant and miserably gossipy, why not seek for a while refuge in London or one of the other big centres.

The saving in the cost of living in the country will probably allow you a few weeks each year in London; but if you cannot afford the expense of a boarding-house or lodging in London, then surely some London friend would be glad to give you welcome for a few weeks, if, in exchange, you would offer your friend the quiet of your village home, when the strain of London life is paling the cheek and hardening the expression.

I think, in a very short time, the motor-cars will be used in the country; the cars, by connecting cottage with cottage, village with village, town with town, will do a great deal to enliven and make easier country life. These cars will, I believe, run from place to place at stated times, and then the poor old woman, instead of trudging, as she does now, to the nearest market town, burdened with a terrible load, will for a penny or so ride to and fro on a motor-car.

By calling each day at the different farms and by picking up the eggs and butter, and running them into a central depot, these cars will be of immense service to the farmer and the whole community. A prettily-painted motor-car, driven by an artistically-dressed young lady, with its freight of eggs and butter, would be a sight that would enliven the heart of the labourer as he toiled at his dull work in the fields.

The country roads are, I believe, to be taken over by the district authorities, so that a muddy, badly-kept country road will be a relic of the past.

In my last and third article, I shall make some suggestion whereby I think a lady living in a village home can add to her income with advantage to herself and the community at large.

(To be continued.)

If loving hearts were never lonely,
If all they wish might always be,
Accepting what they look for only,
They might be glad, but not in Thee.
Well may Thy own beloved, who see
In all their lot their Father's
pleasure,
Bear loss of all they love, save Thee,
Their living, everlasting treasure.
Well may Thy happy children cease
From restless wishes prone to sin,

And in Thy own exceeding peace
Yield to Thy daily discipline.

We need as much the cross we bear
As air we breathe—as light we see;
It draws us to Thy side in prayer,
It binds us to our strength in
Thee."

These lines came to her as a revelation. She marvelled at the freshness of the thought and appropriateness to her own condition.

"If loving hearts were never lonely
They might be glad, but not in Thee."

And in her heart a new light came and she remembered the words that even her stepmother made her commit to memory: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you." Who could say that the Comforter was not about to enfold her in His Almighty wings?

(To be continued.)

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PART III.



In this article I shall make a few suggestions as to how I think ladies, while living in their village homes, can obtain healthful and interesting outdoor occupations, and at the same time add a little to their incomes. Remember I only throw out suggestions; as to whether my suggestions

are suitable and workable will depend upon experience, and each individual's own inclination and aptitude.

There must be a radical alteration in the method of farming in this country very shortly, of that I am quite sure.

In the face of foreign competition, not very much longer can the farmer act independently of the farmers around him; that was all very well when wheat was certain of producing 40s. per quarter and over, and all other agricultural produce was at like paying prices. To-day farmers must combine in order to supply the markets with the best quality of produce, but principally that the produce may be uniform in quality.

With a view to get the cheeses of my tenants direct into the hands of the large London provision merchants, without the intervention of the factor or middle man, I interviewed a few of the heads of the largest provision merchants. In every case the complaint against the English farmer was the want of uniformity of quality, and in course of conversation in effect, they all said the same, namely, "that they felt sure that the English farmer had nothing to fear from foreign competition, if they produced the best quality and took steps amongst themselves to secure the quality being fairly uniform."

The Danish farmers, from being in a most deplorable condition, are now in a state of comparative prosperity, because they combined amongst themselves to form cooperative societies, in order to secure a uniform quality of bacon; the Danish bacon consequently by being of a uniform quality commands the

confidence of buyers, and therefore fetches a paying price. It is the same with the Danish butter; as one large buyer said to me: "Danish butter, I grant you, is not equal to the best English, but from January to December it is alike, and our experience has taught us that if a consumer gets used to a certain quality of butter, if you introduce a better quality, it will not be liked so well." Normandy and Brittany butter is established in the English markets for the same reason, namely, that it is always of a nearly uniform quality.

The movement amongst farmers towards cooperation in some few districts has already begun, and I am very sure that in the near future it must become universal.

This combination, cooperation or whatever you like to call it, means the formation of large cooperative factories and societies, whose formation and working will require a large body of paid workers. The produce from the farms of a district will have to be collected daily or so many times per week, and this will entail a careful and frugal organisation, it will also entail a heap of correspondence, the keeping of many books and accounts.

Could not a lady-tenant take part in all this, and by doing so add a little to her income.

Workers will have to be paid, and ladies make good clerks and book-keepers, and I have a shrewd suspicion when they had mastered their facts, that they would be very efficient in buying and selling.

But it is in fruit-growing (especially apples), early flower-growing, and in poultry-rearing, that I think a lady-tenant could employ her spare time most pleasantly and profitably.

To my mind there is nothing more deplorable than the present state of the English orchards. It is a sight that makes me sad and savage. Sad at the mournful sight of the poor, deformed, weedy, moss-eaten trees and neglected soil, and savage at the carelessness of the farmer and landlord that has allowed such wicked neglect.

What fruit is more in demand than an apple? What fruit is more wholesome and more varied in flavour than an apple? For years I have eaten an apple or so every day, and so I can speak with authority as to their merits.

At one time I was under the impression that an apple was indigestible to eat before going to bed, but when I was persuaded to try it for myself, I found that it was not only not indigestible, but a good digestive, and of great benefit to the general health.

The public are beginning to find out these virtues of the apple for themselves, and as a consequence the demand for the fruit has been on the increase, and this increasing demand has been met from abroad, to the benefit of foreign growers, and to the lasting disgrace of English agriculturists.

There is no shred of truth in the statement that the best quality of apples cannot be grown in the English climate. The climate and soil are exactly suited to them, but to grow the best qualities (it is only the best qualities that can pay) it requires painstaking care and up-to-date knowledge.

Frosts occur in every climate that grows an apple; most foreign growers think themselves fortunate if they get one good year out of four, which is a smaller proportion of good years than what usually falls to the apple-grower in England. Why should not a lady-tenant begin apple cultivation on a small scale, of course, at first, gradually increasing it as she gathered experience and success.

I have before me an admirable book on fruit-growing by B. Wells, price one shilling. Mr. Wells, for many years at Crawley in Sussex, has been successful as an apple-grower, and in addition to his valuable personal experience, he is evidently enthusiastic in his belief in apples, and that as good, if not a better fruit, can be grown in England, than in any other country of the world. Mr. Wells is also, and rightly so, full of indignation at the stupid neglected condition of the English orchards.

An apple orchard takes twenty years before it reaches its full bearing powers; but the young trees from the first produce a certain quantity of fruit, and if the trees are planted far enough from each other so as to allow strawberries and fruit bushes, black currant for preference, to be planted between each tree, the produce of the whole orchard (provided the best quality is grown) will show a profit almost from the first.

Mr. Wells shows by figures that there is no comparison between the profits of an acre of fruit garden and an ordinary acre of hops, potatoes and other root crops. The cereals are of course quite out of it.

Mr. Wells says, "As to the cost of production of apples, compared with that of other crops, which has been estimated as most profitable, as hops, potatoes, or other root crops, if the comparison is made over a series of twenty years, the profits will be very much in favour of the apples. For six tons of potatoes at 50s. per ton, £15 per acre; while heavy costs are incurred in the production for culture, manure and labour, and that every year for twenty years, without accidents, the amount would be £300; while the value of the crop of apples at Glewstone Court, for the year 1895 amounted to £85 per acre, which was within nine years of planting; there are eleven more years to come in the series of twenty, during which time the vigour of the trees will increase, which gives a prospect of greater crops; this shows there is no comparison, the prospects of the returns being so immensely in favour of the apples and at a much less cost."

The best method of planting an apple orchard is to obtain the qualities suitable to the soil. This information must be gained from some practical gardener in the neighbourhood; and this opinion ought to be checked by an outside expert, who combines practical experience with scientific knowledge.

Above all things, the great essential is good flavour and the power of keeping. A great big apple that looks very beautiful, but is of a texture that will not keep, or whose skin rapidly wrinkles, is, for market purposes, valueless.

Mr. Wells' method is to plant suitable young trees six feet apart, and to plant between them strawberries and black-currant bushes; then, as the apple trees grow older and take up all the spare room between each tree, he gradually removes the strawberries and currant bushes, and he finds that the crop of the united orchard, almost from the beginning, pays all his expenses and rendered a profit. One year he sold from twelve acres of ground £400 worth of strawberries.

The great complaint of buyers against the English apples is not only because of their inferior quality, but of the careless manner in which they are packed. And this utter want of care and neatness in packing is true of the vast bulk of English fruit sent to market.

"Look here, sir," one day said a large greengrocer to me; "can you be surprised that we cannot buy English fruit when they come to us like that?" And he pointed with a finger of scorn at some baskets of English plums. "And can you be surprised we buy foreign fruit in preference when they come in packed like that?" And I was not surprised. "But," he went on to say, "here is an exception. The plums of this English grower are carefully selected and packed; and so sure are we of his fruit, that his brand on the box is sufficient. We do not ask to look inside, and, as a consequence, his plums always fetch a very good price, probably higher than any other plums in the market."

And so it is with apples. If they are to be profitably grown, they must be carefully packed without the slightest bruise, and picked just in the very nick of time, and carefully stowed away in properly-constructed houses; and when sent to the market, only the very best must be selected, and these must be packed in small and convenient packages. I would also suggest that a taking registered brand be placed on each package.

I do not for one moment say that a lady-tenant without any income whatever could make a living out of fruit-growing—she might if she had sufficient capital to make a start and had a good knowledge of the business, but even then I think it doubtful—but what I do say is, that a lady-tenant or, better still, two lady-tenants, taking between them a small village house, could by fruit-growing on the best and most scientific lines add to their income and, at the same time, be engaged in a most healthful and interesting occupation.

Mr. C. Lee Campbell of Glewstone Court, Ross, planted an orchard of apple trees of between eight and nine acres at distances of six, eight and nine feet apart in November 1883. In 1896 he sold eighty-five tons of apples at prices from 8s. to 28s. per cwt. Say the eight-five tons sold at the low average

of 9s. per cwt., this amounts to £765, which is equal to £90 per acre for the whole orchard.

The present system of land tenure in England is against the apple-grower, because, as I said before, it takes some twenty years before an apple orchard reaches its highest development. Unless a tenant can be made secure in a holding, or reap the benefit of the labour and capital expended, no one would undertake the expense and trouble of planting an apple orchard. No tenant would plant an orchard for the sake of a landlord; but I think an equitable arrangement between landlord and tenant might, even in the present state of the law, be reached.

The same difficulty, however, does not arise in rearing poultry, and it does seem a crying shame that we import such a prodigious quantity of poultry and eggs that could so easily be produced in this country. With poultry-rearing, as with all other agricultural produce, it is the best quality only that pays. Badly bred strains that run to skin and bone and carry very little flesh, costs as much to keep as the well-bred plump stock, and fetches a deal less money.

I rarely see in my part of the country a well-bred, carefully-selected strain of cocks and hens. In Surrey and Sussex they do these things better, although the way they artificially cram their poultry is not pleasant to contemplate. I would sooner give 4s. or 4s. 6d. for one large Surrey fowl than pay 5s. for a pair of the ordinary skinny things that mostly hang in poulterers' shops.

The Heathfield district of Sussex is well wooded and hilly, with deep valleys between the hills, and the land is naturally light and sandy. Most of the cottagers in this district keep a few fowls, and the dead poultry despatched from Heathfield to-day represents an annual value of £140,000.

A case is given of a labourer having a wage of 15s. per week, out of which he paid 2s. per week for his cottage and garden. His landlord lent him twenty-four hens, two cocks, and a movable house, and allowed him the free run of his fields. At the end of the year he made a profit of £20, returned the twenty-four hens, and had six pullets left to go on with.

There is no doubt that small glass houses, filled when required with warm moist air, devoted to the rearing of tomatoes and mushrooms, and arranged and worked so as to produce quantity without sacrificing quality, with every inch of room utilised and one crop succeeding another crop without intermission, pays very handsomely.

I have before me authentic figures showing the proceeds of one glass house. It is one hundred feet long and proportionately broad; it is filled with warm moist air; during the summer it is devoted to raising cucumbers and mushrooms.

The cucumber plants are set alongside, and at equal distances from each other in richly manured beds, and, when they begin to fruit, other plants are set between them, so that they may begin to yield when the older plants are ceasing to bear. Mushroom spawn is sown in the beds. Down the middle of the house runs a long narrow table, on which are reared ferns, foliage plants, orchids and other exotics.

The cucumber plants have yielded about three hundred dozen of high quality cucumbers that fetched in the Newcastle market 3s. to 3s. 6d. per dozen. Cucumbers could be grown all the year round; but in October the house is filled with flowers, especially chrysanthemums and tulips that will be ready at Christmas, and then the finest quality blooms will sometimes fetch 6s. per dozen.

The plants are reared in pots in the open air till they are removed in October to the forcing house. The house is reckoned to produce one thousand plants. If each plant should yield 3s. worth of blooms, it would amount to £150.

The rearing of rabbits, if conducted on the best principle, can be made to pay.

To sum up, a lady-tenant, on a small income, can live in a cheaper and more refined manner in the country than if herded in London and the large towns. In the country villages she can be of some use, of some importance, and, if she be to the manner born, a veritable messenger of light, culture, and refinement; and also, if she be fitted and has inclinations that way, she may add to her small income by taking up one or other of the industries I have lightly touched upon.

At times, by exchanging residences with a London friend, if she has the mind, she may add vigour to her brain and breadth to her soul by taking her part in the great surging on-pouring movement of the great capital. Her life then will be filled and rounded with high interests, and the deadly weight of having no definite, interesting useful work will be removed from her shoulders, her heart then will grow full of joy and her step become brighter and quicker, and all things, from the smallest weed growing by the roadside, will become filled with wonder, meaning, and hope.

CONCLUSION.

Since writing these articles I have read an article in the last Christmas Number of the *Land Magazine*, entitled "Women and The Future of Agriculture," by the Countess of Warwick.

In this article the Countess proposes the establishment of an Agricultural College for women, and in connection therewith the establishment, in suitable parts of the country, of Women Agricultural Settlements.

I can only say that I wish all success to her proposals. To make my scheme a success, what is required are women who have a practical knowledge of the industries I have touched upon in these articles, and a college or colleges on the lines the Countess proposes will give the much needed and essential knowledge. And if, in addition, a body of influential ladies were to form a society to find suitable tenants for the landlord when he had erected his Village Homes, and would advance to competent applicants small sums of money as a start, with interest and repayments at easy rates, then I think that in a short time not only would the country feel the benefit of a more even distribution of her population with all that that implies, but the importation of much foreign produce would rapidly diminish, because it would be produced, and produced better, by ladies and others in village homes and small holdings.

