

## Our Foreign Letter.

### THE SETTLEMENT FARM.

Not easily could one plan a pleasanter summer of jolliness and hilarity than the one which fell unexpectedly to my



lot this year. It was a summer on an uncultivated farm, remote and beautiful, where great stretches of daisy fields and old apple orchards, meadow and hilly woodland gave just the right opportunity for the natural gaiety and sportiveness of children to bubble and overflow incessantly. It was the place where our summer vacations for the children from the hot, stuffy skyscrapers and the hideous paved and treeless streets of the huge artificial monstrosity, the city, were spent, and I must tell how we got this farm, for in that there is a suggestion and a lesson that ought to sink into the hearts of many people having possessions over and above their needs. The farm belongs to people whose hearts have not become callous and selfish through riches, as is so often, apparently, the case. Loving the farm, but not living on it, they find happiness in having it used by people who will enjoy it, and so they have lent it to us for two summers for the children's outings. I could not but think many times during the summer, "Oh! why do not many rich people do something like this"? People who have beautiful country places that they hardly ever live in, and spacious homes where they spend perhaps a few weeks. If they would allow a little group of children to be entertained there under the charge of a teacher or club leader or settlement worker, they would give so much happiness with no trouble to themselves and with safety to their things, for the children do not spoil or destroy when they are happily occupied and rightly supervised.

At any rate, that is what these enlightened people did. They gave us the farm; and another good deed that deserves recording is that a young society man gave us enough money to cover all expenses. All the guests came on a self-respecting and dignified basis. They all paid something, and when one of the boys surveyed the table at his first meal he remarked quietly to a neighbour, "I guess we'll get our dollar's worth of stuff."

We had a mixed family almost all the time—three or four mothers with babies, both girls and boys of from eight to twelve years, and a few older girls or one or two older boys. We much liked the varied family, mixed up the way Nature makes them, and especially much liked having the boys and girls together. They always came in charge of two or three club leaders or kindergarten teachers, who were young women of much charm and character, and these leaders guided the children's play, directed the bedmaking and housework in their dormitories, suggested occupations on rainy days, and, in a word, were the big sisters of the flock.

We had many nationalities in our family, and the display of various characteristics and national traits was one thing that gave special and unceasing interest. The little Italians were so typically and picturesquely

Italian, and Tommy and Jack were such delicious specimens of Irish wit and brogue. Jim, the man of all work, was an old North of England man, with a delightful dialect and very bad temper, and we had plenty of little Russian Jews, with all their richly-varied types of beauty and brains.

Miss Wald tells a story which shows one reason why America is an interesting country. The scene was in a large industrial school, and the teacher caused the children of different nations to rise separately, to show how many there were. First the little Syrians got up, and then the Italians, and so on through the list. Finally, the teacher said, "Now the Americans stand up." Two very black and very small little darkies arose solemnly and stood in line! So was it in our country home. Americans were few and far between.

"I pity you with the boys," said a friend, "they are such a handful to manage." No, indeed! It is only in towns where the boys have no outlet for their energies that they are a handful. Here in the country the boys were easier to manage and were less trouble even than the girls. The children were all remarkably obedient, the credit of which I give to the public schools, for few of the mothers have even a glimmering idea of teaching obedience. What a sin for children to be brought up in cities, where all their spontaneous and innocent enterprises break some ordinance! In the country, the wild yells with which they scatter to climb trees or wade in the pool just chime in harmoniously with Nature. One little squad of boys came, poor little lads, who actually had to be told to climb the trees. They had never done such a thing and didn't even know that they could. First wonder and then joy spread over their faces—they were pathetic little souls—when they were told to go climb the trees and gather apples.

It was so funny that all the boys dearly liked the housework. Helping to set the table, put butter on each butter plate and serve bread around, fill the glasses and bring in the milk and food was such a popular diversion that we had to oblige the eager volunteers to take turns. Wiping dishes was another rich treat, and no boys would have neglected putting on the blue gingham aprons for this task, and seldom did they omit parading at the front door while thus attired. The little girls took their turns with good grace, but, poor little things, dish-wiping was no novelty to them. Loudly did the boys trumpet their superiority to the girls in wiping dishes. It was amusing to see at what an early age masculine vanity and arrogance showed themselves, but they had to admit that "one thing the girls do better than the boys—make beds."

Twice a week we had supper in the woods. Everybody went, including the tiny baby that came for the whole summer, when she was only five weeks old, and little Pee Wee, the yellow mongrel puppy. The baby loved the forest trees and the blue distance, and Pee Wee adored the children's games, in which he thought himself the most important person.

Boiled corn on the cob was the prize dainty on these occasions. The children call it "hot corn," being used to seeing it sold on the streets from pails of water boiling over charcoal fires.

"Oh, hot corn! hot corn!" they all cried when they saw the rows of corn growing in the vegetable garden, and early in the morning of picnic days they would come asking, "Shall we pick the hot corn?"

One could spin unceasing yarns if there was time or

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