

## A SUCCESSFUL RURAL COOPERATIVE LAUNDRY.

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THE present organization of the rural community, when considered in relation to the farm woman, is far from satisfactory. The necessity of relieving the farm woman of some of her burdens and of shortening her hours of labor is too apparent to need demonstration. The remedy for this situation is not a simple one, nor is there a single solution for the problem, but Chatfield, Minn., has realized the importance of woman's place upon the farm and is making a long stride toward solving the problem by the successful operation of its rural cooperative laundry.

About 12 years ago the butter maker of the local cooperative creamery equipped a discarded churn for the washing of his laundry. The secretary of the company saw this equipment and conceived the idea of operating a rural laundry in conjunction with the creamery. Fortunately the stockholders of the creamery company, acting on the advice of the board of directors, were annually passing their dividends for renewals and improvements. In the spring of 1912, when public opinion began to crystallize in favor of the laundry, a meeting of the board of directors was called and it was decided to use \$2,000 of these deferred dividends for the purpose of building an addition to the creamery, to be used as a laundry, provided that a corporation could be organized to whom the building could be rented. The presence of this surplus, \$2,000, in the treasury, a prosperous and well-managed creamery, a strong and active farmers' club, combined with a favorable public sentiment in both country and town, made it possible for the secretary and his few coworkers to realize their dreams.

### FARMERS' CLUB AIDS MOVEMENT.

A meeting of the Farmers' Club was called April 5, 1912, to discuss the subject of cooperation. It was at this meeting that the cooperative laundry idea first took definite form. To bring it before the public and enlist the good will of both town and country folk on so new and untried a venture, the

club invited the entire community to a well-planned basket picnic to be held June 5. Amusements and lunch preceded a program which was largely devoted to an explanation of the laundry project. A vote was taken, the women voting as well as the men, to determine the sentiment of the community on the establishment of such a laundry, and the vote was so overwhelmingly in favor of the proposition that the Farmers' Club promptly called a meeting to promote the enterprise. The appointment of a committee to study other laundries, the perfecting of an organization, the securing of purchasers of stock, incorporation, and the erection and equipment of the plant followed in such rapid succession that the laundry was open for inspection November 30 and began operations December 2, a record of which any community might well be proud.

The organization of the laundry corporation is unique in that, although a separate corporation, the laundry and the creamery have the same officers. The object of this arrangement is to prevent friction between the officers of the two corporations, and, by making it a separate organization, to enlist the support and patronage of the town people, who are not stockholders in the creamery company, but who hold about 30 per cent of the capital stock of the laundry company. The creamery company owns the building, which it rents to the laundry company at \$10 per month, a rental equivalent to 6 per cent on the investment, and supplies it with power and heat at the rate of about \$15 per month.

The company is organized under the cooperative laws of the State and has been capitalized at \$5,000. Shares sold for \$5 each, but each of the 224 stockholders has but one vote, regardless of the number of shares he holds. Desiring to make the enterprise as purely cooperative as possible, the company, after paying 6 per cent dividends on all stock, refunds a portion of the remainder of the surplus in the form of a 10 per cent rebate to the patrons in proportion to the amount of business done with the laundry.

#### BUILDING AND EQUIPMENT.

The building (Pl. XXV, fig. 1) which is an addition to the creamery, is a well-built structure, 30 by 70 feet, costing about \$2,000. Between and joining the two buildings are

the boiler, engine, and coal rooms. This arrangement is convenient for the operators of both plants, reduces overhead expenses, prevents contamination of cream and butter from the laundry, and is economical of heat and power. A portion of the second story has been finished off for a lunch and rest room for the employees.

The equipment is of the most modern type. It consists of the following: 1 one-apartment wooden washer, 2 three-apartment wooden washers, 1 extractor, a soap cooker, a starch cooker, 1 five-roll mangle, 2 compartment dry rooms, a machine for ironing white shirts and collars, 1 dip wheel starcher, 1 neck-band ironer, 1 collar shaper, hand irons, ironing boards, trucks, baskets, and a standard scale. (Pl. XXV, figs. 2 and 3.)

The washers are of very simple internal construction. Rounded strips of wood extend the entire length of the interior. These projecting strips carry the clothes toward the top of the washer, where by their own weight they fall back into the suds below, an operation which insures cleanliness with the least possible amount of wear. Instead of boiling the clothes, each washing is subjected to steam under pressure. This is one of the very best methods of destroying disease germs, and for this reason, if for no other, the steam laundry should be a favorite with all who wish sanitary washing.

The extractor or "wringer" is another saver of clothes. The clothes, instead of being passed between two rubber rollers, are put into a large kettle-shaped, perforated copper bowl which rotates at a speed of 1,600 revolutions per minute, and thus throws out the water by centrifugal force. From the extractor the flat work goes to the mangle to be ironed and all other clothes go to the dry room. Only the purest of soap without any chemicals whatever is used in the process of washing.

This equipment, which cost about \$3,000, is similar to that used in good city laundries and is sufficient to turn out \$400 worth of work per week.

#### CHARGES.

The charges based on weight are 5 cents per pound, which includes the ironing of all flat work, underwear, and stock-

ings. An extra charge, based on the time required by an expert hand-ironer, is made for the ironing of all articles which can not be ironed in the mangle. About one-half of the patrons have this ironing done at the laundry. The average cost per week for the family washing has been \$1.05. Patronage is about equally divided between city and country.

#### MANAGEMENT.

The laundry usually employs about 8 persons: a superintendent who receives \$25 per week, a forelady who receives 20 cents per hour, and 6 girls who receive 15 cents per hour. The employees of the laundry are directly responsible to the manager, who is the secretary of the laundry company and of the creamery board of directors. The work, however, is in the direct charge of the superintendent, an experienced laundryman.

The farmers bring their laundry when they bring their cream and get it on the following trip. The collecting and delivering of laundry within the city limits is done by a local drayman. In lieu thereof, the farmers get a 10 per cent rebate based on the actual amount of patronage. All city laundry is delivered C. O. D., while the creamery patrons have their laundry bills deducted from their monthly cream checks.

#### LAUNDRY IS A SUCCESS.

That the Chatfield Cooperative Laundry has proven to be a business success is evident from the following extracts from the company's financial statements:

##### *Financial statement.*

	First month, December, 1912.	Jan. 1, 1913, to Jan. 1, 1914.	Jan. 1, 1914, to Jan. 1, 1915.
Total receipts .....	\$337.95	\$5,065.05	\$5,856.02
Wages.....	262.23	3,845.54	4,589.88
Dividend.....	12.00	150.00	150.00
Rebate.....	33.80	506.50	585.60
Running expenses.....	29.92	563.01	530.54

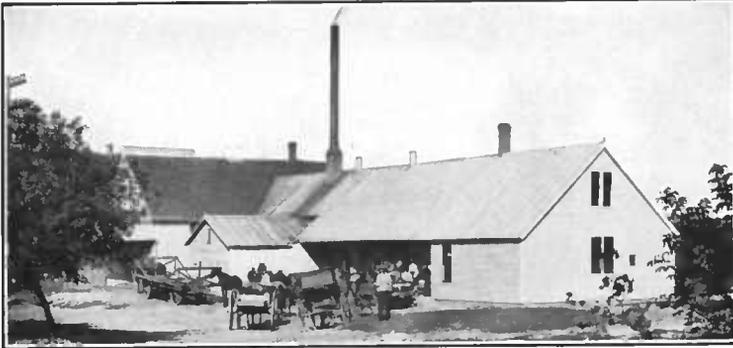


FIG. 1.—A BUSY DAY AT THE LAUNDRY.

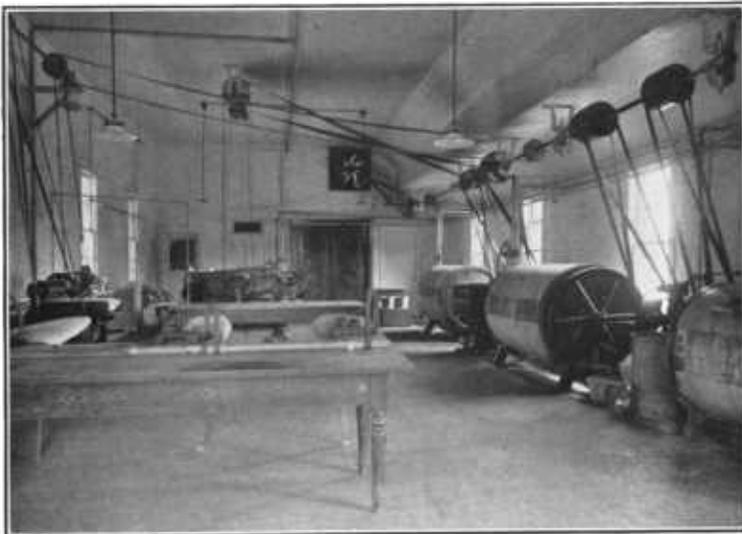


FIG. 2.—GENERAL VIEW OF THE INTERIOR.



FIG. 3.—THE MANGLE.

That the laundry is rendering good service to the community and meeting the expectations of its founders is indicated by the following extracts from statements by patrons and stockholders:

The Chatfield Laundry continues to be an entire success and I have no hesitancy in recommending it to other similar communities. The laundry here has been successful in relieving the hard life of a farmer's wife, and in addition has been not only self-sustaining but a profitable institution. The stockholders get their little dividend checks every year, and besides that the patrons get their 10 per cent rebate from the regular laundry prices which they pay. The unique feature of the thing is of course its connection with the creamery, and it was largely on that account that it was a paying institution from the start. Carrying the cream and washings together and using the same steam plant in the building are both cooperative features that work to its advantage. The fact that laundry bills are deducted from cream accounts makes the matter of collections a safe proposition.

The Chatfield Laundry is giving the best satisfaction in every respect. It has the patronage of the entire community. The work is first class in every respect. I think the laundry is the greatest boon that ever came to the housewives of Chatfield and vicinity.

I certainly think it is fine. As I have 10 in the family to wash for, it helps me a great deal. On Monday we send the laundry with the cream man. On Wednesday the clothes come home as fine as silk. It is a great benefit to the farmers' wives.

The Chatfield Laundry is a great success and a wonderful help to the farmers' wives. The clothes come home fresh and clean and a great burden is lifted from the home work.

The cooperative laundry is one of the greatest helps to the farmers' wives. The work is done very satisfactorily at a small cost. With washing and ironing done away from home, the mother has more time to devote to the many other duties.

After a trial of nearly three years I am well satisfied. It has lightened the work in the home to such an extent that one can manage the work without keeping help, which is very scarce and high priced, when it would be impossible to do so if the washing was included with our other duties. I do not think the clothes wear out any faster than when laundered at home. The thinnest of little dresses and waists I send come back all right, and no matter how soiled the men's work shirts, overalls, and such like are, they come home clean.

I have patronized the laundry for three years and find the work as satisfactory as it can be done away from home. The clothes come home clean and the flat ironing is excellently done. I send my bed quilts, comforts, lace and scrim curtains, and they are just like new after they are washed at the laundry and look much better than when done at home.

In the conservation of mothers on the farm, rural cooperative laundries rank first, in my opinion. Having had 25 years' experience as a farmer's wife, I can say that I have taken more comfort the past 3 years than ever before because of having dispensed with the washing and ironing. This change gives me two days of recreation that I can call my own every week and also gives me more time in which to accomplish the household duties. I have never had cause for complaint, as all articles come back in good condition and I see no reason why the work is not as satisfactory as that done at home, if not better, as it leaves no backache or tired muscles in its wake. I am sorry all women can not see the advantages such an enterprise has in the community and all patronize it. Some send part of their clothes, and others none, cherishing the foolish idea that they are economizing. Strength and health, two priceless gifts which go a long way toward making home happy, are sometimes sacrificed. The men on farms have sane ideas about the laundry as a labor saver, and are proud of the fact that by milking a few extra cows to compensate for the extra outlay, they are doing their share to help lighten the housework. The rural laundry, like other good things, is jostled in its infancy, but is too good to drop, and will continue to prosper as well as the creameries and cheese factories of this time. When this comes to pass there will be no need for sympathy for the poor farmer's wife, and instead of pity, she will become the envy of her city sisters.

I don't know how I could get along without the laundry, and am sure that all the patrons of it would feel the same. I can not say too much in its praise.