

I have just come back from a ride of some 2000 miles across country. In the course of it I passed through a long string of the most prosperous towns north of the Ohio and east of the Mississippi. I had my eyes open for sights of progress, of thrift and of shortcomings. As I recall the impressions of the journey the strongest seems to me to be the crying need there is in this country of destroying or utilizing tin cans! There is not a town, as near as I can make out, between here and the Mississippi which one can enter by rail except through a continuous procession of discarded cans with all the accompanying rubbish. In Meadville, Pennsylvania, one of the prettiest towns in America I have always thought, the embankment of an aristocratic street visible from the railway known as the Terrace is strewn at intervals of every thirty or forty feet with piles of debris from back-yards, and through it glistening thousands of tin cans.

What I want to ask is what the women's clubs are doing? I know that practically every one of these towns has a thoroughly organized, fully representative body of women, many of them with considerable leisure and money. They are interested and are active in all kinds of work. They spend days and days, getting up papers on all kinds of subjects. They run their heels off getting up bazaars, receptions, balls, and dramatic performances, and yet evidently no one is thinking about the disgraceful disfigurement of the approaches to the town. I used innocently to suppose that it was just such things as this that women's clubs were for. What has become of the old Village Improvement Society? My notion was that when the general woman's club came along it took in the Village Improvement Society. Has it smothered it? or what is the matter?

It is a grave matter, this looking after our towns and making them attractive places to live in, and it is the business of women. I don't know where they can begin better than on the tin cans. It is not my business to suggest what can be done with them; only that they be gotten out of the way. In one town I was in on this trip, they told me that once a year the children of the schools gave up a day to clean up the town. They were divided into brigades, each of which had a district. They scoured the streets and the back-yards, and the out of way places, and collected every particle of rubbish, and then they topped the day off with a glorious bonfire, the indestructible material being carried off to some remote district to be dumped. This is good as far as it goes. But what is one day's work for a town of 10,000 people, each opening and throwing into the back-yard an average of say two tin cans a day for three hundred and sixty-five days of a year.. Children are natural scavengers. I had good proof of this on my journey. In one town the maple seeds were falling. The state in which I was has few maple trees; it wanted these seeds to use. So the Agricultural Department had offered two cents a quart, or something like that, for maple seeds, and it seemed to me every child in the community was crawling around on his hands and knees collecting them. Some of the youngsters told me they had made a dollar or more. I am convinced that if children could be properly engaged in this business, in a year the discreditable approaches to our towns would be entirely cleaned up. The matter could be easily managed by the Woman's Club at an expense not greater than that of one of the yearly elaborate receptions by which they gratify themselves. If there are any towns in which women are looking adequately after this obvious business of theirs, I should like to know of it.