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Our Travels in France

By Josephine Arnquist
State Leader
Girls' Club Work

This summer a fairy story came true to three Iowa people, when Katherine Bolebaugh and Beulah Rogers of Eddyville, two Iowa club girls, were sent to France early in June, along with the Iowa State leader. In order to spread the gospel of food preservation, of rural organization in France, and especially in the devastated region, the American Committee for Devastated France planned a contest for farm girls who were members of the National Boys and Girls' Clubs of America. This contest was to consist of three public demonstrations of canning, first, fruits; second, vegetables; third, meats; and the winners were to demonstrate in France. So thus it was that two Iowa girls, along with two Colorado girls and the two state leaders, early in May, arrived in New York and set sail on the S.S. Sussex.

In the United States there are 110,000,000 people crowded into the states of Iowa, which holds only 2,400,000 people, and you have a good idea of the crowded condition of that country. People, people, everywhere. I say that one has never seen a crowd until they see a French one—they are more than crowds, they are mobs.

The second impression we had was one of age. It seems as if France must have existed always. As we stood gazing at our first drive in the country a thing that seemed strange was that there were no farm homes, and we would ride long distances without seeing a house. We wondered where the men and women lived who tilled the fields, and where the stock was kept. After the sun went down we found out. They hitched their horses to their two-wheeled carts and started home to the village. A French farmer seldom rides. He puts as heavy a load as possible in his cart and walks beside his horse. Very few teams of horses are seen and the few are driven tandem. The horses are large, powerful ones which are all well cared for. The roads over which these horses travel are wonderful. Most of the country roads of France are paved with macadam. They are lined on each side by shade trees, so make beautiful driveways.

The smooth crushed stone paving usually stops at the village and cobble-stones take its place, and very rough cobble-stones at that. Our good old substantial American shoes got many a scuffing as we trudged over the stones. It is a very common thing to see people walking in the middle of the street instead of on the narrow sidewalks.

Of course we were especially interested in the appearance of the homes of France as we entered the first village, and were a little puzzled at the village and cobble-stones that met our gaze. Each side of the street was lined with stone walls which every so often had an interesting looking gate. Our curiosity was aroused immediately—what was back of the stone wall? Were the houses like ours? The first gate left ajar gave us a glimpse of a real French home. French homes mean gardens always, no matter how humble, no matter how pretentious. This is one thing America may well pattern after.

Very early, the French found out by living close together that it was much cheaper to have certain foods baked in bakeries than for each housewife to make these things at home. All bread and most of the pastry of France before the war was made in large bakeries and was a very superior product.

Another custom different from ours is the use of a community wash house. Each woman packs her laundry into her wheel-barrow, and takes her box, with one end out, which is filled with straw to protect her knees, and scrub brush, soap and short-handled wooden paddle. This building, known as the "lavoir," is maintained by the city. It consists of a roof built over a river stream. The women bend down and wash their clothes in this stream. Here, you see, they get all the news and gossip of the neighborhood. It is surprising how clean the clothes really get. At first it seemed strange not to have any starch put in our demonstration uniforms, but we soon got used to that.

There are several advantages in living together in the villages as we saw it. First, mail was delivered right at the door in a very short time after it arrived by train; second, people knew each other well; third, news could be given to each other on short notice. One of the girls lost her notebook while we were in Sur- gers, a small town, and Madame De-Vouge, who had our party in charge, notified the town crier, who called the people all together by means of a little handbell. When he had a big crowd around him he told about Beulah's notebook. This was the way the opening of school is announced, or news that fresh fish is in the market. The whole village loves to swarm out at any pretext.

The fruit trees interested us, they are so very small and heavily pruned. We saw apple and pear trees not as tall as we are. There are two things to remem-
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larger in fruit raising in France; first, lack of space; second, limited amount of sunshine. The fruit trees are taught to grow up against the ever-present stone wall. The tree is out of the way, will get the benefit of sunshine on both sides. Then, too, vegetables may be planted under it.

We had always heard that the French people are good cooks and we can agree with this. They have an abundance of vegetables in their diet, peas being most commonly used. They pick their string beans while the bean is the most prominent. Labor does not mean as much there as here. There are so many people to do this. Time is taken in picking and cooking and very little water used in the cooking of their vegetables. Their meat consists chiefly of pork, veal and rabbit. Their pork is much pinker and more delicate in flavor and more tender than ours.

Rabbit forms a good share of the people’s food. It is very cheap food. Most of the rabbits of France are fed from grass in the fields and are caught alive. They are a good source of protein in the diet.

Canning by means of one-burner charcoal stoves which needed bellows to keep them going was a new experience for American girls. Fuel is a big problem in France.

The American Committee for Devastated France has done much to help build up this section. They have maintained their own farms, living in the ruins of former happy homes, trying to begin again. They have organized farmer groups where buying could be done cooperatively. They have loaned money with little or no interest. They have conducted classes for the children. They have conducted libraries. All of these things are being turned over to the local people as soon as they can handle it.

We gave our demonstrations under the auspices of this committee. Demonstrations in cold pack canning, dress form work and home millinery were given. All work was given thru an Interpreter, Madame DeVouge, who two years ago was sent to America to study extension work from the state colleges. Colorado would stand on one side of the interpreter and Iowa on the other. Madame DeVouge would tell what Colorado was doing, what Iowa was doing. The people were intensely interested, first, in what real American farm girls looked like, and second, in the work. Alcho canning originally began in France. It took America to discover a real practical, workable method adapted to the home. As Madeleine Aydat, the French woman sent to America last summer to study farm women’s and girls’ extension work, said, “France can discover things, but it requires America to adapt them. You are a most practical nation.”

The French farmer walks from place to place or uses his one horse or rides his bicycle. Bicycles are very common in France and very practical, the distances being short and the roads good. Automobiles are not nearly so common among French farmers as among American farmers. The first car we saw as our boat steamed into the French port at Havre was a Ford car! There are many Fords left over from the war sold by our government to French people. One of the first questions asked us after people knew we were Americans was, “Is Henry Ford going to be your next president?” The second was, “Do you really like water to drink?” and the third, “How do you plan to get by the customs officers in New York?”

The farmer of France has a public school provided for his children. Compulsory education is in force. The public school takes care of the child up to twelve years of age. All education after that must be paid for by the individual unless a scholarship is won. Many scholarships are given by the state and may be competed for by anyone.

The schools are more formal than ours. There is a more distinct line drawn between teacher and pupil. Here again age is considered, he of ten gray hairs is considered the one who needs the courage, and only a courageous people would dare attempt bringing back most of the land fought over steadily for four years. The French have the courage. The love of home is very strong in this race of people and largely because this has been the home of their people for generations they feel it must be rebuilt.

Those who have been over the battlefields realize the amount of work necessary to reclaim this land. The government first sends a small crew of highly paid experts over the land to pick up, explode and destroy all explosive. This is very dangerous work as innocent looking ground may contain powder enough to blow up the whole crew. Then a larger crew goes over the land and removes all large pieces of artillery, wagons and dead trees. A third party goes thru and removes barbed wire, and such a task as this is. The wire is raked together in large piles; then by means of presses gotten into bundles about a yard square. These are then piled up.

Now a fourth crew rakes the land and...
put on their wraps and go outdoors for "play." Swings, see-saws, wagons, velocipedes, kiddie cars, slides and pile utensils are quickly requisitioned and the happy morning continues.

About eleven-thirty the children go in, take off their wraps and each one carefully washes his face and hands and combs his hair. He now joins the story circle or if he prefers looks at picture books and then the children troop off to their little beds for a ten minute rest before dinner.

Some of the older ones are granted the special privilege of coming down early to set the tables for dinner. When this task is finished a messenger gladly goes upon to announce that "dinner is ready." A teacher or student takes her place at the head of each table and with rare exceptions the children choose their own places. Grace is said or sung, waiters are chosen and thirty hungry children are soon eating a dinner which has been planned and prepared by those who have made a special study of the nutrition of children. The following menu is typical:

- Cream of pea soup
- Baked potato
- Stewed tomatoes
- Lettuce sandwiches, milk
- (whole wheat bread)
- Stewed apricots

The week's menus are typed in advance and a copy sent to each home. In many instances the mothers request the assistance of the nutrition expert in planning home meals for the children. At intervals, typical breakfast and supper menus are sent to all the homes.

After dinner the children take a two hour nap, upon awakening have their lunch of milk, then play out doors until it is time to go home.

This brief outline gives a very inadequate picture of the Merrill-Palmer activities. To fully appreciate what the school means to children, students and mothers, one must not only see the activities but also participate in them.

The Merrill-Palmer Nursery school has been in existence less than two years. Even in this brief period an intense interest has been aroused among those who are vitally concerned with problems of childhood. Psychologists, pediatricians, nutrition specialists, educators, social workers, nurses and mothers are among those who have come individually and in groups to try to find out what it is all about. Can it be that all are interested because each group sees here an attempt to combine the efforts of all in a careful, scientific study of the whole child? What the ultimate outcome of this new venture in education may not be, not even the most sanguine are yet ready to predict.

Specific Helps on Everyday Teaching Problems

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The Committee on Home Economics Education reporting for the American Home Economics association, suggests these aims:

1. The preparation of the individual to apply to personal habits of living and to homemaking, the fundamental principles of the natural sciences, art, psychology, sociology and economics.

2. To equip the students with facts, processes and attitudes which will render their lives more effective.

3. To improve the health and living habits thru both incidental and direct instruction in food and clothing.

The school curriculum itself may have a broader plan. But the effective curriculum may well include the aims of the home economics courses supplementing the general health work. In a recent survey made in the Ames high school, we found the following conditions: Out of 382 students, 56 (or 14 per cent) were underweight, 121 (or 32 per cent) were overweight and 205 (or 53 per cent) were underweight.

The home economics teachers might well take an inventory of the school. Other courses may be found an opportunity, a chance for real service with an abundance of opportunity in the courses now offered, with a vital contact relation in the lives of the students. The home economics teacher must recognize and analyze the need of the community which she serves. She must develop an attitude of mind which is flexible and open. She should use the wealth of material which is essential to the life of her students.

The old statement said that "students go cut and teach as they were taught, not as they were taught to teach." The modern educator would change it, "students go cut to teach as they were taught to teach, even as they themselves were taught. Applying this to our health ideal we might say, "students go out to live as they are taught to live, even as the teachers themselves lived."

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turrets and of long standing. These homes are handed down from generation to generation. One French woman of great wealth was very interested in extension work for farm people; in fact, she became president of the farm women's clubs in the community near Dieppe. She invited us to her home. This was the first glimpse of a very lonely, typically French, mansion. All around the grounds was a high stone wall covered on top with broken bottles which meant woe to
him who attempted to trespass. At the gate the bell rang a bell and the gatekeeper admitted us. He lives in a little house right near the gate as the keeper of old did. A few modern devices have been installed here for the gatekeeper, and the mansion was approached by means of an electric bell, so the butler was ready to receive us at the mansion. The rooms were large and the reception hall was filled with stuffed wild boar's heads. Madame De La Board surprised us by telling us that she herself had killed all of the boars, when she was a girl, right on their own estate. She said that the hunting of wild boars was a very favorite and common sport and that boars are still killed in France, but not so commonly. Old spears, guns and tapestry dating back to the 16th century hung on the walls.

Even in those lovely homes we did not find the kitchens modern. Water was carried in and out. The stoves were very small, the floors of tile were hard to stand on and the kitchens gloomy, usually being in the basement. The food had to be carried a long way to the dining room, often up a flight or two of stairs where no dumb waiters were used.

The gardens were marvelous and so extensive, the gardens are well kept up, and flowers and vegetables of all kinds are grown. How proud of their gardens they are, and well they should be. A little stream went thru this estate and on one side, in black the soldier's name and company, and on the back a strip of metal containing the same information. Very courteous army officers are in charge.

The delegation returned better Americans than those who had a summer in war torn Europe. They wish that every wobbly American could be compelled to spend a summer in Europe for then he must return with a greater loyalty and appreciation for this country of the big middle class, this country of opportunity. Even the bit hard by low prices the American farmers' lot is far, far, happier and brighter than that of the majority of French farmers. The girl and boy of America must be led to know that he has more liberties, more opportunity for expression in this country than in any country of the world. And he must be taught not to abuse this privilege.

One very fine thing about French people is their loyalty for France. They love France. They show their appreciation for their great men and women by the erection of lovely cathedrals or perfect monuments, no matter how poor the village. One thing America needs is a little more loyalty for America. Our appreciation of service is told in terms of memorial hospitals, endowed institutions of learning and playgrounds for our poor.

We enjoyed immensely the lovely hospitality of France, but we were glad to return to the country where the only aristocracy is the aristocracy of service.

The Power of Music

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... argument for an audience to follow—nothing but plain or subtle harmonies, a true emotional feast, whereas, if they were at a lecture it would be an intellectual treat.

It is because of the fact that music is emotional that it has such power for good or evil, and it is because of this same fact that music becomes the most potent of all the arts in the shaping of human destinies. Many there are, per-