

Day After Day - May 1937

Dorothy Day

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Summary: Describes the agrarian life at the Easton, Pennsylvania, farm—plans for the barns, a newborn lamb, and the promise of goats. Tells of stopping in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on her way West. (DDLW #321).

Bob Cutler, who is studying for the diplomatic service down at Georgetown, came in at lunch time today and took Dan Irwin and me out to lunch in a tiny Chinese restaurant down the street. He knows some Chinese, and ordered a lunch such as the Chinese have. You ask for “dem somm” and get a fascinating collection of dishes; that day it was meat dumplings with a hot sauce. The tea we asked for was “gook fan” and they brought bowls of flowers on which we poured boiling water and then let them steep. They served rock sugar instead of the granulated. I enjoyed the lunch immensely, especially since it cost only about twenty cents apiece.

Down on the Farm

The lower farm for the women we are dedicating to St. Joseph because we know he will take good care of all the women and children who are to use it. I spent a few days down there before I set out on a trip West, and already Beatrice, Ruth, Helen Brennan and Kate Smith had the rooms cleaned and whitewashed and the woodwork painted. The big kitchen is a delightful living room and Frank Mammano supplied the curtains, linen colored with big flowered borders, and some tables and chairs from his little apartment off the Bowery. He has come down to stay at the upper farm for a while—the summer, we hope.

We loved to go out and contemplate the two big barns. Already in our imagination, we have made them into chapels, dormitories, libraries, class rooms and a dance hall. The dance hall struck us this morning at breakfast when we were feeling very gay, what with the warm sunlight and the robins hopping boldly about the kitchen doorstep. The girls were talking of square dances, and we decided to have some this summer and invite the neighbors. It will be a good way of getting acquainted. (The strikers at the General Motors plants out in Flint all came from the South in the past, and go in for square dances, they told me.) It is lots of fun, with young and old participating. I can see Mr. O’Connell (a descendant of Daniel O’Connell), who is repairing the floor of the living room at this moment as well as the little colored children from Harlem and the young Irish boys from the Lower West Side, joining in the festivities.

Sheep

Out on one of the farms right now there are two sheep, and a baby lamb a few weeks old. I had thought the calf was the most delightful thing I had ever seen, but this baby lamb, with a puff of fur on its forehead and smiling countenance, is the sweetest thing to hold I have ever touched. Except a baby, of course. Luke caught it yesterday morning for me and held on to it for a minute while the mother bleated, and the lamb let out a little yip, but they didn't seem to be objecting much. The lamb is about as big as a baby's pillow right now and would make a good one. You immediately want to put your face against her.

Out in the fields the dandelions are coming up and since Frank brought down some olive oil, I shall gather a good mess of them for dinner. That is also one of the greatest pleasures life has to offer—digging the first greens in April.

Interesting Visitor

Father Bogacki from Filmore, New York, was in to see us this morning. He was telling us some interesting facts about his fellow Poles. One-fifth of the Catholics in the United States are Poles. They have at least three Catholic dailies in their own language. They have a social center in Buffalo.

He himself is a most interesting man. He has a small parish of about forty families in a farming district (not Poles). At the church they recite prime and compline daily and sing it on Sunday. He issues a mimeographed leaflet for his parishioners. He has time to do farming and gardening. and has eight hives in tiers, from which he got last year 2,000 pounds of honey which was used by his housekeeper in preserving instead of butter. He has a brooder, 150 chickens, four goats and three pigs.

It was the goats I was most interested in. He told us you could feed nine goats for the cost of the seed of one cow. Also that they gave from three to six quarts of milk daily.

Most exciting of all, he is going to give us a mother goat and two kids, and I can't make up my mind whether to write and ask him to send them right on, or whether to drop by and call for them myself on my return from a Western speaking trip. I should like to take them right back home in the bus with me, as they do in Mexico. Many a time I have rested my feet on the soft wool of sheep, lying on the floor of the bus, their feet tied to keep them from getting up and leaping out. I'll have to take them in the baggage car, however; but even so, what fun.

I am the only one with this enthusiasm for goats. And at that I may get over it, but I doubt it.

Journey

For a month now I am going to be away, so I'll not be answering any letters and the mail will pile up in my drawer. I'm telling this so our readers will understand. Already I have

finished the first lap of my trip and am in Chicago now as I write. Yesterday I was driving through the celery fields and grape farms of Michigan, comparing the farms to ours.

I am always very stricken at being torn from the work in New York, when I set out on these trips, but the enthusiasm of the students at Grand Rapids made me forget it. Four schools were present at the meeting yesterday: Catholic Junior College, Mt. Mercy Academy, Catholic Central High School and Marywood Academy. Father Bukowsky, the dean of the junior college, was the one who invited me. The students are taking three thousand copies of the paper for distribution on May Day. Some of them were interested in the interracial problem and plan to distribute much literature in the Negro section and have study clubs themselves on the issue. Some are interested in the Pax Group and others in the labor, and still others in the farm. We'll be having a tent colony of visitors this summer, I must warn Jim.

In the next issue there will be a more complete account of the trip.