ROM the dawn of all history of which we have knowledge; from the days when men, just emerging from savagery, first began to see that the privations and burdens of life were lessened by the exchange of game, booty or the clothing and rude household utensils made by their women, the market place has been the heart of all communal life. It is a part of the very warp and woof of human existence, as old as the home itself, and no more to be displaced than the home is to be superseded or outgrown.

We all know the glamor of romance which hovers about this picturesque center of life among the ancients. We read in old histories of the market place in Jerusalem or in Smyrna or Damascus and before the eyes of the mind rises the haze of desert dust hanging about the caravans jostling into the great gate. We hear the shrill cries of street hawkers, smell the fragrance of glowing piles of tropic fruits, see the flash of jewels and the shimmer of rare stuffs in the tiny shadowy booths of the merchants and feel a twinge of curiosity at the passing of carefully guarded litters, from which the veiled women of the palace peer curiously at the free women of the people and look on for a space at the stirring life in which they have no part.

We read on long-buried tablets of stone of the market place in Babylon, where the good king Hammurabi sat and dispensed justice four thousand years before Moses was born. Plato makes us feel the stir of turbulent democratic life in the market place at Athens, where the ceaseless chaffering of buyer and seller was overborne by the voices of the greatest orators of all time, and where all business was suspended to vote on some weighty affair of state or to mark the fatal oyster shell that sent some fallen leader into exile. The market place of Rome, glittering with rich spoils and alive with the people of all nations, resounds again for us with the shouts of demagogues, the cries of the people for bread and game and the tramp of marching legions and we see there heaped up the food of a people and the spoils of a world.

And through the storm-tossed centuries of the Middle Ages the market place was the center of the slowly developing civic life. It was pitted against the castle in the long war between sturdy burgher and robber baron,—a war in which the men of the market place won because after all the life-blood of the nation is trade.

So it has been always. In the countries of Europe the sway of the market place is still unshaken. It has been shorn of all its political
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significance and most of its oldtime gorgeousness, but so long as it serves as a meeting-place for those who produce the food of the people and those who must buy, the market place will still be vital in the life of the nation.

So inevitable is this that at last we are beginning to realize it even in this country. We have been young and crude enough here to feel that one of the strongest evidences of our wealth and importance was the power to withdraw from all the wholesome common things of life and to touch nothing that did not come to us at second hand. This feeling of ours, fostered by unexampled prosperity, grew until the sharp pinch of swelling prices upon shrinking incomes made itself felt even through our fatuous self-complacency, and we suddenly awakened to the fact that the second hand had become the third, fourth, fifth and sixth hands. We had turned our backs on the market place and we were paying the price.

The world-wide rise in the cost of living has become a discouraging commonplace. We know now that it is simply the inevitable result of world-wide conditions, and that the only thing to be done is to adjust ourselves to them. Volumes have been written to show causes and suggest remedies; experiments without number have been tried, but in spite of this prices have gone right on climbing. They have climbed highest in America, because here we have yet to learn the first principle of true economy, which is to simplify things and so order them that the greatest return may be had for a given expenditure. We have gone crazy on organization, system, efficiency and what not, but so far have only succeeded in piling elaboration upon elaboration; spending a fortune to install a system of saving on a large scale, instead of reducing expenditure at the source.

In so far as the higher cost of living is the result of world conditions, we can no more interfere with it than we could sweep back a tidal wave. It is a phase of the mighty march of evolution. It is the next step forward from the era which introduced labor-saving machinery into every branch of industry and thereby readjusted man’s whole relation to life, and we must accept it as such.

The world has been made over in the last half century. Nations have shifted, national and racial barriers have broken down, the immense and perfect organization of industry has gathered the strength of the land into the city, and the swiftness and facility of transportation has reorganized every branch of trade. We are facing entirely new and bewildering conditions in every walk of life.

But most significant of them all has been the removal of all industry and manufacture from the home. Production has become
wholly commercialized. Money has become the sole medium of exchange; the one thing needed and desired to put us in command of fate. What is the use of raising things or making them, we argue, when it can all be done by some huge commercial concern which can do it so much more cheaply and easily, and which places everything on the counter or brings it to our door? The only thing left to make is money, because it is necessary continually to spend money.

The change has been even more psychological than economic. It has confused and weakened all our ideals. This condition is not peculiar to this country, but our recent emergence from primitive conditions and our natural tendency to go to extremes has made it more evident here than anywhere else in the world, and most evident of all in the women.

When the hands of our active, energetic women were emptied of their natural tasks and industries; when the interest of the administrative and creative work formerly carried on in the homes was swept out of their lives, what could be more natural than that they should grow ever more restless, idle and extravagant? The pleasure was all gone out of housewifery because there was nothing about it really worth doing. With everything ready made and the little work that was left reduced to a minimum by ingenious labor-saving devices, what was more inevitable than that women should occupy themselves so wholly with other things that even the ordering of home affairs became a secondary matter.

We all know the great industrial movement that has swept the woman of slender means out of the home into business life. For the wealthier woman who had no need to earn money there were endless interests and occupations before which the claims of the home sank more and more out of sight. If there were servants everything was left to them; if not, it was easier to board or do light housekeeping in an apartment and go out to meals.

When a whole nation of women come to regard this as the ideal life it is bound to have a pretty serious effect upon economic conditions. Fortunately the effect in this case was so serious that it followed the normal course of all exaggerations; it brought about the reaction.

For this reason the high cost of living so far as we are concerned has been a blessing, even though pretty thoroughly disguised. It got bad enough to set the women to thinking, and as the women have the spending of about ninety per cent. of the money in circulation in the United States, it meant something to have them take hold of the situation and decide to remedy it by the simple method of returning
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to their old task of looking well to the ways of their household and doing it better than they ever did it before. In other words, they did exactly what women have done since the beginning of time,—took hold of existing conditions and made the best of them.

It was agreed by all the experts inquiring into the causes for the high cost of living, that the situation could be greatly relieved by simplifying the distribution of food products and establishing such direct communication between producer and consumer that it would be possible for the farmer to sell his produce directly to the people who would use it. That being the case, the women spent no time in theorizing. They saw no reason to wait until plans for elaborate and costly systems of city markets were perfected and methods of distribution revolutionized. Instead, they took their market baskets and went to market. Where there were no markets they clamored for them. They went to the farmers and induced them to clamor too. And as farmers and housewives represented the producer and the consumer of the great bulk of food supplies, it followed that when these two forces got together something was bound to happen.

What did happen was the restoration of the old-fashioned market place where farmers can drive in with their wagons full of produce and the women can go down in the morning with their market baskets and buy what they like. Both farmers and housewives argue that with the whole string of commission men, jobbers, wholesale and retail merchants, small grocers and peddlers eliminated from the transaction of buying and selling farm produce, the necessary result would be that the farmer would get a good deal more for what he had to sell and at the same time the housewife would pay a good deal less.

The movement to restore the old market places and to establish new ones started about two years ago. The situation had grown so acute in New York that the women of the newly formed Housewives League took counsel as to what they might do to reduce the exorbitant price that was being paid for all kinds of food supplies. The only immediate solution seemed to be the transfer of their trade from the small up-town grocery and butcher shop to some public market which was supplied directly by the large jobbers who buy directly from the producers themselves and where the prices were stable and as low as they could be found anywhere in the city.

The women appointed a committee to investigate and report upon the markets of New York City. The report was brief and to the point. It said in effect: "We have found only two public markets in all the city at which the housewife can buy at retail, and only one of these, Old Washington Market, is of any practical use."
POTTERY MARKET IN MEXICO: IN DISHES AND VESSELS SUCH AS THESE, SELLING FROM THREE OR FOUR CENTS TO AS HIGH AS TWENTY-FIVE CENTS APiece, PRACTICALLY ALL THE COOKING OF MEXICO, BOTH NATIVE AND FOREIGN, IS DONE.
THE FAMOUS SAN JUAN MARKET, MEXICO CITY, ONE OF SEVERAL GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED MARKETS WHICH HAVE DONE AWAY WITH THE MIDDLEMAN AND REDUCED THE COST OF LIVING TO WHAT SEEMS A MINIMUM IN THE CAPITAL OF THE SOUTHERN REPUBLIC.
A FAMOUS PUBLIC MARKET IN NICE, FRANCE, WITH ITS BEAUTIFUL ARCHITECTURAL BACKGROUND.
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In their search for a market the committee of women found that since eighteen fifty-four no new markets had been established in New York and five had been abandoned. The methods of distributing food supplies, while absurdly cumbersome, expensive and oppressive, had succeeded in centering all business in the hands of the commission men and jobbers who sold in turn to the long line of other commission men, wholesale and retail dealers, peddlers, hucksters and push-cart men.

At least there was one market left and the women determined to celebrate the discovery of that. A Market Day was appointed and two thousand housewives took their baskets and went down to the old market to buy their supplies and to demonstrate to the municipal authorities that they would patronize other markets if they had them.

The fame of the matter spread far and wide. People read in the newspapers of New York Market Day and with one consent women all over the country began to look for markets in their own towns. It was found that, with a few exceptions in the South and West, the situation in New York was duplicated everywhere.

Chicago had no market at all; in Cleveland, Buffalo and Detroit there were old markets, but these were obsolete, filthy dirty and given over to the hucksters and the poorest class of trade. In Milwaukee there was a farmers’ market, but nobody knew about it and it was not patronized. Pittsburg had a very old market house, situated in a crowded neighborhood and most unsanitary. Bad as it was, the farmers had been elbowed out of it by the middlemen to such a degree that those who insisted upon selling their own produce had been put upon an upper floor in another building where no one could find them.

The result of all this interest in public retail markets was a widespread determination to have them. The women kept at it persistently. The farmers joined in and, within a very short time, city officials and public-spirited business men were interesting themselves in bringing about so simple and successful a reform. It is hard to say which city or which part of the country led the movement, because markets seemed to spring up simultaneously everywhere. Oppressive marketing ordinances were revised, because when they came to be examined it was found that in many cases they seemed to have been drafted for the express purpose of keeping the farmer’s wagon out of the city. What with stall rent, licenses and burdensome restrictions of all kinds, it was hardly worth while for farmers to take a trip to town with a lot of produce only to have things so manipulated by the middlemen whose interest it was to keep
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them out that more than half the time they either sold out to dealers for any price they could get, or drove home again with full wagons and dumped their wares out to the pigs.

New Orleans had some of the most oppressive and obsolete of these marketing ordinances. The women investigated, then got to work, and the city officials acted at once on the report made by the Housewives League Committee of the City Federation of Women's Clubs. The women asked that markets be allowed to keep open all day; that vegetable vendors be allowed to sell all day long and in any part of the city, and that farmers might take their wagons to the old French market and sell directly to the consumers. The result was immediate and farmers and housewives were well satisfied with what they had gained. They did not stop with this, however, and plans are now on foot for the construction of two or three wholesale and retail model markets on a plan which will simplify and systematize the distribution of food supplies in New Orleans.

In Toledo, after a hot summer’s campaign, the women have succeeded in getting a public retail market. On the day of opening the place was thronged with people at half past six in the morning, and the produce of the farmers disappeared as if by magic. Within an hour there was practically nothing left to buy and yet the people kept on coming until ten o'clock, only to be turned away with empty baskets. In Los Angeles the women succeeded in getting three retail markets established. The farmers were notified of the opening day and promised to come in full force. But the commission men and jobbers took a hand. Before daylight they were either at the farms or meeting the loaded wagons outside the city, turning them back when they could with threats of boycott or jeers at the project, and when they could not, buying the produce outright and transferring it to their own wagons. The women were there in thousands with their baskets, but very few farmers arrived. When the trouble was discovered the women took action. They called in the aid of their husbands and brothers and next day they sent motor trucks out to the farms to bring in the fruit and vegetables they wanted. They drove the speculators and peddlers out of the markets, where they could, and where they could not, they turned their backs on them and went home with empty baskets rather than buy of them. The result was that the farmers took courage and the street markets became an established institution in Los Angeles.

The same story could be told of many other cities. In Charleston the Old Slave Market, where master and mistress, attended by their slaves, went years ago to look after the marketing for the family, has been revived. It had been abandoned and was to be destroyed, but
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the Civic Club saved it because of its picturesque associations and the housewives turned it to practical use. In Buffalo the women could not get a public retail market such as they wanted, so they themselves established a selling depot where butter and eggs bought at wholesale were sold at reasonable prices. In Kansas City the same problem was met by the same action, a depot of supplies run by the women themselves with the aid of the farmers.

Perhaps the most successful of all these public markets is that opened in Orange, New Jersey. In this case it is a city market established on the main street, in an area as large as a city block. The whole thing was designed and organized by Mr. John McCarthy, Superintendent of Weights and Measures. He saw to it that the area was set aside by the city. He marked off the aisles and allotted the space. Then he notified the farmers around the Oranges that they could sell their produce direct to the housewives if they would comply with certain easy regulations. No rent was charged; each farmer might have the free use of a stall or space in the market to back his loaded wagon into and in which to display and sell his goods. The only conditions were that he should keep his own stall clean and should offer for sale nothing but what he had grown upon his own farm. Then all the housewives of the group of towns known as The Oranges were notified that they could purchase direct from the farmers on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

Almost immediately eighty-eight farmers in the immediate vicinity obtained licenses to sell their produce in the city market. The housewives came regularly, about two thousand of them on each Tuesday and Thursday and between three and four thousand on Saturday. It was worth their while, for they were able to purchase fresh, clean farm produce for twenty-five per cent. less than it cost before the market was established. The farmers had much better returns than they ever received from the middlemen and their sales satisfied them thoroughly.

So rapidly did the business of the new city market grow that one hundred and thirty of the local merchants of Orange signed a petition to the City Council to abolish it. But as thirteen hundred housewives and farmers sent in a counter petition to have it continued, the market is still flourishing and is visited weekly by men and women from other cities and towns that want markets of their own.

The interest in the subject is pretty conclusively shown by the fact that New Rochelle, Mount Vernon, Yonkers and other suburbs of New York City have sent representatives to observe the methods which have succeeded so well. Committees from Boston and Phila-
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delphia have come on the same errand, and Oak Park and Evanston, suburbs of Chicago, have written for details. All that has been wanted apparently is a sound working model; the vitality of the whole market place idea will do the rest.

There have been scores of these markets started in cities, villages and towns all over the United States. Some of them have been successful; others have dwindled into nothing. But it is noteworthy that when they have dwindled it was because they were exploited for personal gain or sandbagged by dealers whose business they threatened. The idea of the Orange market seems to have solved the problem of the high cost of living, at least so far as farm produce is concerned. The women of Orange are certain that it has. This fact established, it is easy to prophesy what the women of other communities, fighting so hard for their market places and for a way to lower the cost of the food they buy, will do now. As for the farmer, he may be skeptical of the efficiency of the New Office of Markets established by the Department of Agriculture, and he may look skeptical upon the plans now rife in nearly all our large cities for establishing elaborate systems of terminal markets with wholesale and retail branches, but the old-fashioned market place, where he can drive in with his wagon and sell what he raises to the people who want the food, comes pretty close to being a solution of the problem which has made him send his sons and daughters to the city and wonder where he could find a purchaser for the old farm.