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**An Smart and Perceptive View of the
Unique Culture of Early Rural America**

TWELVE MILES FROM A LEMON *A High-Spirited Commentary on Life in the Countryside* by **Mary Dodge**

Many myths about the past are prevalent in our day, especially concerning the supposedly servile nature and constrained role of women. Yet, abundant evidence exists that women had a freedom of speech equal to that of men. Indeed, women of the “Victorian” age were by no means so repressed that they could not express themselves in strong, critical terms in widely-read mainstream publications. One example of the female individualist of the 19th century is Mary Dodge, whose book **TWELVE MILES FROM A LEMON**, demonstrates her confident demeanor, using unique prose that is often discriminating and idealistic, but then just as often sympathetic and compassionate.

Dodge’s book is full of outspoken observations, colorful descriptions and interesting commentary on a wide variety of “living in the country” rural matters, made by a woman more accustomed to living in the city. From remarkably unusual perspectives, both mundane and sophisticated topics are portrayed, such as food, travel, weather, roads, home-repair, social meetings, investment and commerce. There is no doubt that detailed facts are intermingled with bold imagination in Dodge’s “memoir”. But was she writing from real life, or is this fiction, or some combination of both? Her reports are issued in a kind of stream of consciousness vein, and in the book’s naturally flowing pages, many different kinds of qualities are encountered: Humor and pathos, fun and earnestness, indignation and charity. The reader will be brought into an intriguing world, recognizable and familiar in some ways, but strange and wonderful in others. Dodge’s style is volatile: she will write about the trifles of life, then boldly grapple with the loftiest issues. She employs an unusually full vocabulary, and often glides into a passage that beautifully describes an idiosyncrasy, either her own or someone else’s.

Mary Dodge, in her books, always used good basic sense, and her works have a great deal of “practical wisdom”. There is no doubt that Dodge was passionate about her views and beliefs, yet this enthusiasm was balanced by realism and prudence; automatically taking sides in a dispute would have been abhorrent. For example, although she believed women should have more legal rights, she did not support women’s suffrage, because she thought many women were too weak, indecisive and unfocussed. Not surprisingly, in her time, as many persons were dismayed as were attracted by the intelligence with which her descriptions abounded, and the fearless manner in which she voiced her views. Yet despite the criticism, Dodge continued to write about many controversial issues. The strong “on-target” commentary could be remarkably appealing to a modern audience, and will engage many different types of readers. Anyone looking

for the profundities that lie behind the trees and hedges and cottages of country life will be gratified by the well-considered idealism found in **TWELVE MILES FROM A LEMON**.

Mary Dodge was born in Hamilton, Massachusetts. She was an instructor in physical science in a Hartford, Connecticut high school, and was subsequently a governess in the family of Dr. Gamaliel Bailey, of Washington, D. C., to whose paper, the "National Era," she became a contributor. Dodge was one of the editors of "Our Young Folks," a magazine for children, published in Boston, and she also wrote for the New York "Tribune" a series of letters on civil service reform. She frequently submitted articles to prominent magazines, under the pen name of "Gail Hamilton," and her published works, written in a witty and aggressive style, consist largely of selections from her contributions. Her books include: "Country Living and Country Thinking" (Boston, 1862); "Gala Days" (1863); "A New Atmosphere" and "Stumbling Blocks" (1864); "Skirmishes and Sketches" (1865); "Woman's Wrongs, a Counterirritant" (1868); "Battle of the Books" (New York, 1870); "Woman's Worth and Worthlessness" (1871); "Child World" (2 vols., Boston, 1872'3), "First Love is Best" (Boston, 1875); "Our Common School System" (1880); "Divine Guidance, Memorial of Allen W. Dodge" (New York, 1881).

Paul Dennis Sporer (editor) is the author of *The Dimensions of Companionship; Liberating Love; The Concept of Family; and Equal but Different*. He has also served as editor on more than 30 culturally and historically significant books, including *Painting Explained*, by Thomas Gullick; *Is Secession Treason?*, by Albert Bledsoe; *The Heart of Aryavarta*, by Lawrence Dundas; *Beauty and Art*; by Aldam Heaton; *The French at Home*, by Albert Rhodes; *From Slave Cabin to Pulpit*, by Peter Randolph; *Newer Ideals of Peace*, by Jane Addams; *Views of Old Europe*, by Bayard Taylor; *Gentle Measures*, by Jacob Abbott; *Parental Influences*, William Bacon; *Finding a Way Out*, by Robert Moton; *The New Birth*, by Austin Phelps; *Tupelo*, by John Hill Aughey; *An Incident of Travel*, Arthur Jerome Eddy; *End of an Era*, by John Sergeant Wise; *The Missionary*, by Samuel Mazzuchelli; *Half a Century*, by Jane Swisshelm; *Born Three Times*, by Thomas L. Johnson; *Dark Hollow*, by Anna Katharine Green; and *1492: Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, by Mary Johnston.

For further information about **TWELVE MILES FROM A LEMON**, or to arrange an interview with the editor, please contact Cassandra Foxton, inform_at_anzapublishing.com. The publisher's website address is AnzaPublishing.com.

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