The year is 1896. You live on a small farm in upstate New York. The cows have been milked, the pigs slopped, supper eaten and the dishes washed, and you and your wife sit down by the light of a kerosene lamp and several candles to read the latest issue of the weekly newsmagazine, The American Agriculturalist.

How small the print is, and you strain your eyes in the dim light to read of the latest developments in swine breeding and of new techniques to prevent peach rot. The ads for Victor incubators, the Columbia Chilled Plow, and the Acme Pulverizing Harrow seize your attention, and your wife wonders aloud whether Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound will really cure every female complaint as advertised.

A contest was announced a month ago for the best bill of fare for a "hard times" Thanksgiving dinner, "one that should be as economical as possible while making the mouth water," and the winning entry, which earned its author five dollars, was:

- Celery cream soup
- Mock macaroni
- Roast suckling pig
- Apple sauce
- Mashed & browned potatoes
- Escaloped tomatoes
- Southern baked sweet potatoes
- Celery salad
- Pumpkin pie
- Amber pie
- Farmers' fruit cake
- Fruit blanc mange
- Apples, pears, nuts
- Sweet cider

Thinking it might be time to turn the farm over to your son and retire to the city, you study with interest the architectural plans for a modest three-bedroom house with sitting-room, parlor, kitchen and pantry which can be built for under one thousand dollars. Of course it has no bathroom, but who needs one of those new-fangled things when the little house out back serves perfectly well?

A letter to the editor catches your wife's eye and she insists you read it. "When I hear of a man and a farmer 'supporting' his wife, it gives me 'that tired feeling' that no patent medicine can cure. Did you, any of you, fellow citizens support her? Indeed! If she were the hired girl he'd have to pay her at least $2 per week and she would do nothing but the housework. But our average family, the children, the household help, the machinery on the farm, are all like a big family. So if he wants to be hatefully unfair, he hires a man and he doesn't stop until he hires a housekeeper, and she does things like 'the morning.'"

Your wife is determined to still have a perfect Thanksgiving dinner correctly planned to accommodate to 20, according to a top price estimate of $1.40 per person.

There are:

1. LE E
2. OUR
3. U CAN
4. OH!
5. IF I DARE

There are:

1. Memo
2. Biog
3. & L
4. YAR
5. 3
6. OTHERS, CARE

There is: 3 X

Supposing it is a cornucopia...
average farmer's wife raises poultry enough to clothe herself and
the children, and the eggs she sells provide the groceries and
household expenses. He puts his money into fine stock, farm ma-
chinery or more land, rarely giving any of it to her and he grows
like a bear if she needs anything or 'just a little money.' But
then, he's supporting her, she's his wife, and he's a right to
be hateful ... If a woman does the housework, cares for the poul-
try, takes care of all the sickly pigs and lambs and a calf, raises
a man's children and teaches them all the virtues she knows,
doesn't she earn every blessed cent she gets? Let her die and him
hire a housekeeper, and then he'll see what a helper he has lost;
that she saved him money and earned as much as he did and he
wasn't supporting her at all: that it was a partnership affair
and she earned fully half, but didn't get it because he was enjoy-
ing 'the manly privilege of supporting her.'" The letter was signed
"Joe" - clearly a man ahead of his time.

Your wife would have liked to pursue the matter further, but
to still her diatribe, you turn to the puzzle column. Here are of-
erred one to five challenges - mostly word puzzles - and if you
correctly solve all the puzzles offered in one month, usually 15
to 20, and are a paid-up subscriber to the magazine, you can win
a top prize of $2 (enough to pay that hypothetical hired girl) or
one of 14 lesser prizes guaranteed to be "good ones."

There are a number of basic puzzle types which repeat week
after week, for instance Anagrams (or more properly Transpositions
since no attempt is made to relate the anagram to its base):

1. LE BIT A QUE
2. OUR RARE SPOUTS
3. U CART FAN IN MUG
4. OH! POOR SIR HUZ
5. IF I RAIL CAT

There are Rebuses, some of which are fiendishly complex:

1. Memoir of Caesar
   Biography of Washington
   SUM AREx2/3 5 10000 United States
   c AN 1000 K 3600 sec 50 444 L1 1000 E
   & LEDAV ourselves E
   YARD S 3 T pr S 888 oft view myself

2. S N WE & Mothers R to be correct **

Others, called Geographical Rebuses, are more transparent:

3. (E 19 AARK
   GA
   AARK (IRW)

There is the occasional cryptogram, this one with the clue that
it is a couplet from Pope:

New York.
eaten and
by the light
latest issue
in the dim
tor incuba-
ing Harrow
ether Lydia
very female
bill of fare
would be as
wge
our son and
arlor, kit-
thousand dol-
one of those
she insists
supporting'
ent medicine
rt her? In-
er at least
ork. But our
You could test your knowledge of literature with this puzzle of Shakespearean characters clued as charades (some parts phonetic):

1. Numerous, and judicial remedies
2. A domestic animal and an exclamation
3. Male and an animal
4. A piece of cured meat and to allow
5. A blemish and ourselves
6. An animal and a mound
7. Timid and to confine

Or you could try your skill with a biographical acrostic:

From 1 to 2: English poet
From 3 to 4: King of Visigoths
From 5 to 6: French painter
From 7 to 8: Mexican statesman
From 9 to 10: Noted Speaker of the House of Commons
From 11 to 12: English poet
From 13 to 14: French theologian
From 15 to 16: German sculptor (all of six letters)

From 1 to 15: Prussian musician
From 2 to 16: American general (all of eight letters)

Be warned that few of these names (possibly only the Visigoth king) are familiar to the present-day reader.

A rare puzzle type asked you to look for nine hidden flowers in the following paragraph:

John, who was the hero, settled himself in his now dropped-back chair and told us about making a call at his girl’s house. She was writing, and being afraid she would drop ink on the carpet, she had covered the floor with crash and put the ink in a viol. Etiquette, she said, required this. He said she was prim, rose early in the morning, and always looked sweet, peaceful and happy.

Charades are common, as are puzzles designated Sentence Making.

Charade: My first is always present, but seldom seen by day; my second often holds food, and my whole is all right.
Sentence Making: Fill the first blank with a word, and the others with the same word beheaded for each subsequent blank:

The ______ struck the bell, making a ______ that lasted ____ minute

More challenging are the puzzles called Geographical:

One pleasant day in June I took my best girl whose name was (a town in Georgia) for a stroll by the (city in California). She was a splendid (county in Alabama) and we went several miles. She was rather timid, and when a (town in Pennsylvania) ran across our path, she nearly fainted. I gave her some (county in Alabama) that I had in my pocket, and we sat down on a (town in South Carolina) to rest. She would have been all right if a (town in Indiana) had not jumped from a tree over our heads. I had all I could do to quiet her fears, but after giving her some (town in North Carolina) leaves to chew, she seemed better, and I got a (town in North Carolina) and we started for home. We had not gone far before we struck a (town in South Carolina) and were both thrown out into a (town in North Carolina). We were soaking wet, but not hurt, and when we got to a (town in Illinois) we again sat down to rest and look over the situation. After awhile we crossed a (town in Massachusetts) in which there were some cows, but they did not molest us, and we finally arrived home safely. My girl was inclined to blame me for the chain of accidents, but I convinced her that it all came about because she insisted on walking when I wanted to hire a (town in Ohio). She finally said she would not say any more about it, but next time we went out to walk she thought we had better take the (town in New Jersey) path, and so keep out of danger.

A Cross Word Enigma catches your eye:

My first is in dog but not in cat.
My second is in mouse but not in rat.
My third is in collar but not in button.
My fourth is in eating but not in glutton.
My fifth is in monkey but not in ape.
My sixth is in berry but not in grape.
My seventh is in elder but not in parson.
My eighth is in fire as well as in arson.
My whole denotes the time of year
That brings to us such right good cheer.

Going through your back issues of the Agriculturist, you find other challenges to tempt you: numericals, word squares, forms, word-changes, and drop-letter puzzles. But the candle gutters, your wife yawns, and it is time to wind the clock, go up to your unheated bedroom and hunker down under a goose-feather comforter. As you trim the lamp, you wonder what kinds of word puzzles your great-grandchildren will be doing 90 years from now, and you marvel at the ingenuity of the puzzle editor. Just how, you ask yourself, will he or she make a rebus out of "Three wise men of Gotham went to sea in a bowl."