

THE OLD HILLACRE HOMESTEAD

WHY, it's redikits!" declared Aunt Melzema Mellen. "Perfectly owdacious!" agreed Uncle Simeon.

"Does the gal expect to live on grass an' yams, like the row-brutes?" grumbled Cousin Gideon.

"She better of took the five hundred dollars Squire Stafford offered her," said Uncle Simeon, sagely. "It's more'n the ole place is worth, half rocks, an' the rest 'grows up with nullein stalks an' hoariboul an' wild chamomile."

And so the chorus went on among the Mellen and Hillacre relations, far and near, and all because Mollie Hillacre, self-willed girl, refused to part with the old homestead and its twenty acres of sterile soil, which had become hers on the death of Grandpa Hillacre, some few months previous.

Among all the clan there was no one to take Mollie's side of the question but old Uncle Dabney Mellen, who occupied the adjoining farm.

"Mollie ain't nobody's fool, I kin tell ye," he would say, nodding his head wisely. "An' of she hangs onto the old homestead she'll make it pay, one way or another, or my name ain't Dabney Mellen."

But the other relatives only shook their heads forebodingly and declared that "a willful woman must have her own way," and they washed their hands of her entirely.

"As she makes her bed, so she must lay in it," declared Uncle Simeon, trite-ly. "An' if she comes to grief she needn't spect us to help her out."

"Of course not," echoed the rest.

But still Mollie persisted in "taking her own head," in spite of their predictions and prognostications.

Even Steve Kimble, Mollie's affianced lover, sided against her. He was a distant cousin on the Mellen side.

"What could we ever do here, Mollie?" he argued. "I couldn't make a livin' on this old worn-out ground! Tain't fit for nothin' but black-eyed peas. Why, it wouldn't grow a bushel o' wheat to the acre! An' look at the ole sheep pasture. The ain't skeersely a blade o' grass on it all summer. But if we had the five hundred dollars I could set up a store at the crossroads, an' we'd soon be a gittin' rich."

"But I love the old place, Steve," persisted Mollie. "I was born here, you know, and—"

"Shuck! What if you was?" interrupted Steve, impatiently. "Well, you kin have your choice, Mollie. If you think more o' the ole place than you do of me, why, keep it. But you can't have both, that's all."

"Steve," cried Mollie, "do you mean it?"

"Yes," returned Steve, sullenly, "I do mean it."

"There's your ring, then," said Mollie, quietly, "and good evening."

And she walked proudly up the grass-grown walk to the house, while Steve slung himself angrily away.

Here was fresh food for the gossips, for the news of Mollie's broken engagement soon spread abroad, and the tongues wagged and heads were shaken more than ever.

But Mollie paid no heed to their faultfinding.

"I must contrive some way to make a living," she told herself, "and why not try keeping boarders? If the place is worth five hundred dollars to Squire Stafford, it's worth that much to me. The old house has rooms enough to quarter a regiment, nearly, and if the furniture is old-fashioned, it's well preserved, and I must make it do. I think I can get grandpa's old housekeeper, Mrs. Hall, to stay and help me, as she has not made any engagement yet. And now for ways and means. The place is rocky, and worn out, to be sure, but I'll have the old stable torn away—it's ready to tumble down anyway—and take that place for my garden, and a shed will do for the cow. I can raise vegetables enough, with a little outside help, to pay for most of my groceries, and the old orchard and the berry patch, trimmed up a little, will bring quite a crop of fruit."

And having laid her plans, like a skillful general, Mollie went to work with a will.

Mrs. Hall's services were soon secured, and the old house put into "apple-pie" order.

The windows were scoured, curtains taken down, washed and ironed, and put up again. Carpets were taken up, cleaned, and put down again.

The old-fashioned, ponderous furniture was rubbed with turpentine till you could see yourself in the tall bed-posts and chair backs, and the mirrors and brass fire irons were polished till they shone again.

Uncle Dabney Mellen, with his hired hand, and pulled down the rickety stable, chopped up the old logs into firewood, and plowed and harrowed the garden, besides helping Mollie to plant it.

And when all was ready a few judicious advertisements brought Mollie the requisite number of boarders.

There were Mr. and Mrs. Smythe, a wealthy elderly couple, who were charmed with the big rooms, the old-fashioned, clay-legged tables and chairs, the vine-hung porches and verandas and the wholesome country fare.

There was Mrs. Penhew, a gushing widow, who went into raptures over the beautiful view of crusted hillsides and shadowy valleys, bounded by the far, blue-tinted horizon.

And there was Miss Tufton, a good-natured, placid-faced maiden lady, who was quietly content with everything about her.

Besides those already mentioned, Mollie's boarders numbered a sallow-faced young gentleman, who had sought the country in quest of health, and a brisk, wide-awake geologist, Professor Tallman, whose chief delight and occupation was in gathering "specimens."

The garden thrived luxuriantly, and once a week Mollie took her early peas and cucumbers, mountain sweet corn and young cauliflower to the neighboring village of Sweet-briar, where she readily disposed of them, bringing back their value in coffee, tea, sugar, and other necessary commodities.

Uncle Dabney's horse and wagon were always at Mollie's service on Saturdays to convey herself and her "truck" to market, which proved quite a convenience to the young householder.

The old orchard, too, which had been well trimmed and cared for, showed its gratitude by producing quite a crop of Harvest Sweetings and Red Astrachans, affording Mrs. Hall ample means for the exercise of her culinary skill in the construction of luxurious "pan-dowdies," apple cobbblers, and the like, while the milk from "Buttercup," the little Jersey cow, furnished butter for the table and cream for the tea and for the big bowl of raspberries or blackberries which figured daily at the evening meal.

But, while affairs continued to go swimmingly for Mollie, the croakers found fresh cause for gossip in that very fact.

"They live mighty fine, an' set a tip-top table," admitted Aunt Melzema, who had been "spending the day" at the old homestead. "But I dunno how Mollie works it. I'm feared she goes in debt for all them nick-nax."

But Mollie was too smart a girl to go in debt, and, if she did not lay up much, she paid her way as she went.

"Miss Mollie," said the professor one day, taking a seat on the porch beside Mollie, who was scraping carrots for dinner, "what do you think these are?"

Mollie gave a cursory glance at the rough-looking bits held out to her. The professor was always exhibiting "specimens" of one kind or another.

"I should say they were rocks," returned Mollie, in true Western dialect.

"Exactly," smiled the professor. "But what kind of rocks?"

"I don't know," was the answer. "I don't know one kind of rock from another."

"So I thought," returned the professor, gravely. "If you did, you would not be keeping boarders for a living."

Mollie looked up in surprise.

"Why?" she asked, with some curiosity. "What have rocks to do with my keeping boarders?"

"Just this," was the answer. "This bit of white rock here I chipped off a ledge in the old sheep pasture, on the hillside. And to the best of my knowledge and belief, that ledge is magnesian limestone, a superior kind of building stone which is in great demand. This other bit is of a different kind of rock, but quite valuable also, and is used for door and window sills. It is worth forty cents a square foot, and there is no doubt but what it exists in abundance on your farm. But if the other proves to be really magnesian limestone, you could sell out to-morrow for ten thousand dollars, Miss Mollie!"

"O, Professor Tallman! But how— but how should I go to work to find out?" asked Mollie, clasping her hands excitedly.

"Leave it to me," said the professor, kindly. "I am going to the city to-morrow on business, and I will take these bits of rock and exhibit them to the proper authorities. Then, Miss Mollie, you can either lease or sell your property to good advantage."

"I shall not sell," declared Mollie, "if I can help it."

In due time the professor returned. The specimen he had exhibited proved to be magnesian limestone, and two business men accompanied him to inspect the ledge.

Before they left Mollie was offered a good price for her farm, or one thousand dollars a year and a certain share in the profits of the quarry.

She accepted the latter offer, and soon the sound of hammer and drill was heard in the once despoised sheep pasture.

The news was a nine days' wonder among the neighbors.

"As rocky as the Hillacre farm" had been a byword in that locality for years, and now to think those self-same rocks were to be coined into money before their very eyes!

The astonished relatives flocked to the old homestead to congratulate Mollie on her good fortune.

Steve Kimble was one of the first to put in an appearance.

"You was right in holdin' onto the old place, Mollie, after all," he declared, radiantly. "And—and, of course, you didn't think I meant to break off with you, fur good and all, Mollie?"

"Indeed!" answered Mollie, with a smile.

"Of course not! I only wanted to try you, an' see if you wouldn't give in to my way o' thinkin'. But it's lucky you didn't, after what's happened. And—"

say, Mollie, when shall the wedding be?"

But Mollie drew herself up with a show of spirit, as she retorted, coolly: "I don't know when your wedding will be, Mr. Kimble, but mine is to be the 1st of September. I've been engaged to Professor Tallman for two months."

And there was nothing for the disappointed Steve to do but hastily to take himself off.

Before Mollie's boarders left, in September, there was a merry wedding at the old homestead, to which all her relatives were invited; but the most honored among the guests was Uncle Dabney Mellen, his genial face aglow with good-natured triumph.

"I said our Mollie wasn't nobody's fool," he asserted, proudly. "An' I reckon she's proved it."

And nobody felt disposed to dispute the assertion.—The Housewife.

PUCK'S MODERN COOKBOOK.

Advance Sheets Secured from Publishers at Great Cost.

Dressed celery—Bathe the celery carefully in tepid, soapy water. A Turkish bath, though advocated by some, is not necessary unless the celery has been playing out in the dirt. Dress each stalk daintily in various colors. A white Swiss muslin frock, with blue ribbons, is pretty, or a pale pink chiffon made up over green taffeta.

Cup cake—Take two coffee cups and a tea cup. Dredge china in best, but cauldron or other English ware will do. Break the cups into small bits after which pound them into powder. Sift this carefully into a bowl and add six eggs, also broken. Bake in a quick oven and when done sift a powdered sugar bowl over them. Little cup cakes are especially nice for afternoon teas.

Waffles—Take a large piece of sole leather, cut it into oblong shapes and mark it off into small squares. Fry in any old grease and serve with hot syrup. These are just too waffle for anything.

Ribbon cake—Take four yards, or say four yards and a half, of narrow blue ribbon, and a yard of light pink ribbon. Place these in a chopping bowl and mince into fine shreds. Add a spool of sewing silk and a paper of needles. Mix thoroughly and spread between layers of well-pounded cake.

Bath sponges—In a good-sized bath tub set several bath sponges to rise over night. In the morning remove the sponges, squeeze well and add two ounces of powdered soap and an ounce oforris root. Make up into small buns, place carefully in a sponge basket and fry in boiling lard. When done sprinkle thickly with powdered sugar and serve with a whisk broom.

Live Woman Farmer.

Mrs. Nellie E. Lakin, of Boscawon, N. H., is said during the last year to have carried over \$500 worth of farm produce to the stores of Boscawon and Penacook, \$400 worth of which she raised on her own farm, doing the work almost wholly herself. Last summer she loaded and stowed away forty loads of hay. She raised 100 bushels of corn, cutting most of it up and husking all of it; also raised eighty-five bushels of potatoes, digging most of them herself and putting them into the cellar. Last fall she picked 200 bushels of apples. She did all the work in her garden, and had four cart-loads of vegetables. She drove to Penacook once a week, missing but four weeks during the year, and all through last spring and since last September she has driven to Franklin twice a week to carry her 16-year-old son George to the Franklin High School. In addition to all this work, she has performed the household duties in a family of five, continues the Woman's Home Journal. When New Hampshire women can do farming in this energetic way, it is no wonder that in 103 grants of that State a majority of the members have recorded themselves in favor of female suffrage. Yet the opponents of equal rights for women will no doubt assure the public that the New Hampshire woman would be crushed under the burden of a ballot.

Pat's Plea.

The victory is not necessarily to the worthy. Some three years ago there was a strike of ore-handlers in one of the lake towns, and two gentlemen, one of whom was L. C. Hanna, brother of Senator Hanna, undertook to persuade the men to return to work. They got on very well—chiefly by compromise—with all except the engineers, says the New York Evening Post.

Finally a merchant of the town was mutually agreed upon as arbitrator, and it was arranged that both sides should argue before him the question of an increase in wages. Mr. Hanna represented the employers, while an engineer, Pat Ryan, spoke for his fellow-men. Mr. Hanna made a long, elaborate argument, covering all the points he expected his opponent to raise. When he finished Pat got up.

"Misther Ref'ree," said he, "th' byes wants th' raise!" Then he sat down. A few hours later Mr. Hanna was telling of this, and had just expressed himself as certain that the decision would be in the employers' favor, when the telephone bell rang. The referee was at the other end. He informed the employers that he had reached a decision in favor of the men's demand for more wages.

Grand Ceremonies at St. Peter's.

Being in unusually good health, the pope intends closing his pontifical jubilee year with grand ceremonies at St. Peter's.

"I think a man can't keep a secret; I think of the bad things he knows about himself."

WHEN HE PROPOSED.

Word "Cataclysm" Nearly Wrecked His Impassioned Avowal.

As Mr. Blinks paced to and fro within the limits of his 8x10 chamber, it would have been evident to the most casual observer that the mind of the young man was greatly perturbed. Upon his broad forehead the finger of anxiety had traced a wrinkle and his abundant hair was disheveled where his hands had grappled it in the stress of the problem he faced. As he paced the floor he occasionally muttered to himself, but the mutterings seemed devoid of meaning. At last he chanced to observe his own reflection in the mirror on the dresser and, pausing in front of it, he addressed his imaged self:

"You are a nice party, you are! A nice apology for nothing in particular! You are six feet high and built accordingly, and you are afraid of a bit of femininity that stands five feet nothing in its French boots! Yes, you are; it is useless for you to deny. I know you, you great, overgrown coward; you pose as being somebody, but you are a mere bluff. You swell around and try to keep up the pretense until you meet five feet nothing, and then—"

Mr. Blinks abruptly ceased talking and moodily walked from the mirror. Again he ran his hand through his hair and after that violently bit his mustache for a time. Then he again spoke: "I'll do it. If I die for it, I will. I will go over this very evening and have the thing settled once and for all. Nobody shall longer have an opportunity to say that I am afraid of a lawn dress and its contents. I will summon my courage to the sticking point. Here goes!"

A half-hour later Mr. Blinks, still chewing his mustache, was sitting in a small and cozily appointed parlor awaiting the arrival of five feet nothing on the scene. The little lady took her time and the young man in his nervous tension suffered accordingly. Seconds seemed minutes and minutes seemed hours while still he waited. At last the rustle of a dress was heard and she whom he awaited appeared.

Mr. Blinks said to himself that he dared not wait lest he should fall by the wayside. So he drew a long breath, summoned courage from the deep and hidden recesses of his nature and, almost before the young lady fairly was seated, took the decisive plunge.

"Mary," said the young man, as he nerved himself to the effort, "you must ere now have observed the condition of my feelings. You must long ago have felt how I have seen—that is, you must long ago have seen how I have felt. You must know the emotions with which I look upon you. When I am with you I feel as if my entire nature had undergone a complete cataclysm—that is, a complete kitzclasm—or, I should say, catechism. Mary, what I wish to say is that in your presence I feel that my nature has undergone a complete kitzclasm—kizzyklattem—a complete clazykit—Mary, a complete lizzyclat—a clempote climpyzaz—"

"Mr. Blinks!" a low, sweet voice interrupted him.

"Yes, Mary."

"Don't you think you might get along better if you would skip the word cataclysm and go right on?"

So he skipped the word, says the New York Times, and everything went along too beautifully to be told.

Greatness of an Agricultural Education.

"You remember when Duncan's son wrote home from college that he was fencing Duncan thought he was building fences?"

"Yes."

"Well, now he writes home that he is vaulting, and Duncan thinks he is building vaults."

The Place.

"You can't very well miss it," said neck-whiskered and pessimistically inclined Farmer Bantover, in reply to the inquiry of the stranger. "Just keep on along down the road till you come to a white house on the right-hand side, with green blinds, where there's a commanding-sized woman inside, sharp considerably like a clothes-horse, trimming a hat or sewing a rag mat or something of that sort and at the same time putting up preserves, rocking the cradle, believing in predestination and a literal hell, picking flaws in the entire neighborhood, watching to see everybody that passes by, wondering if gracious where they are going and what for and giving lists, singular, 44 c's of her mind to a small, frightened-looking husband, who appears to be on the point, most of the time, of trying to crawl inside of himself, as a kangaroo is said to bide in its own watch pocket in time of danger. Yes, that's where my second cousin, Cammie J. Pennypacker, lives."—Smart Set.

An Immense Wheat Field.

The biggest wheat field in the world is in the Argentine Republic. It belongs to an Italian named Guazone and covers just over 100 square miles.

POVERTY STRICKEN MEXICO STILL LAVISHES MONEY ON BULL FIGHTS



SUNDAY in Mexico is the day of enjoyment if not of rest. All the stores are open until 1 p. m., and trade is even greater than on week days, for it is the great shopping day of the lower classes.

The streets are filled with people, rich and poor, old and young, well-dressed and in rags. Here is a ranchero magnificent in his gold embroidered hat and tight-fitting "Charro" suit walking side by side with the poor peon whose raiment consists of a cotton shirt, blue jeans and "guaraches," or sandals, with a red "serape" or blanket thrown over his shoulders. Here the lady of fashion in silks and satins elbows her less fortunate sister in cotton waist and skirt—barefooted, but always with the inevitable "rebozo" or scarf over her head.

All morning bands have been playing through the streets advertising "La gran Corrida de Toros," or bull fight, which will take place in the "Plaza de Toros," at 3:30 p. m. The three Revertes, greatest of bull-fighters, are named as the "matadores." Are they not well worth seeing? Ask any citizen of the Republic of Mexico.

We purchase tickets at \$5 a head and pass in. The bull ring is arranged as were the amphitheaters of olden times; in the center the ring, then a barrier, inside of which and running around the ring is a passage about 3 feet 6 inches wide, with little gates at intervals, so that in case the bull jumps the barrier he may again reach the ring; then another fence, and tier upon tier of seats, and finally, at the top, the boxes holding ten persons, with the judges' box in the center.

The bugle blows, and the gate of the bull pen is thrown open. The bull appears in the middle of the ring, his back ornamented and his rage increased by a dart which has been placed in his shoulders as he passed the gate. Swiftly he makes a tour of the ring, driving all except the "placadores" over the fence. Soon one seemingly more venturesome than the rest runs forward and flaunts his red "capa" in the bull's face, and is immediately chased over the barriers. Most of this is done for effect.

The "matador" then takes a hand in the game and stands in front of the bull, allowing him to charge the "capa," and nimbly stepping out of the way when he does so.

The "placadores" spur their ponies forward, and apparently for the first time the bull notices them. He charges fiercely; the "placador" is unable to repel the attack with his long pike, and in an instant the "placador" and horse are down, the former underneath, and the horse dying from a wound in the heart from which the blood spurts, or rather gushes. Another "placador" rides forward and is upset. His horse picks himself up, and runs madly across the ring into the fence on the other side and drops. He is soon removed. Another "placador" has his horse badly gashed on the shoulder, and then the "placadores" leave the ring. The bull has charged them three times, and their duty is performed.

Then come the "banderillos," armed with sticks two feet long, in the end of which is a barb-pointed like a fish hook. The first stands facing the bull and waves his arms and stamps his foot dramatically to bid defiance. The bull looks surprised. The banderillo runs forward, and as the bull charges this new enemy places his "banderillas" in the bull's shoulders at the base of the neck, one on each side of the spinal column, and, skipping nimbly out of the way, runs for the barrier with the pain-maddened bull after him.

The second "banderillo" introduces a novelty. He places a pocket-handkerchief on the ground, stands upon it, and as the bull charges, places his "banderillas" and sways his body out of the road just in time to escape the horns. Three pairs of "banderillas" must be placed, and then the bugle sounds once more.

The "matador" takes the "espada" (sword) and the "muleta," or scarlet cloth, and after asking and receiving the permission of the judge to kill, advances to the bull.

The first "matador" is Reverte Espanol. He waves the scarlet "muleta" before the bull, who blindly charges to find nothing—but as he turns, there again is the tantalizing piece of red before him. After several charges of this kind, he stops, puzzled and somewhat tired, and watches the "muleta" closely. Now is Reverte's time. He turns sideways, the sword poised on a level with the shoulder, glances along it to make sure of his aim and running at the bull, who also charges, he sends it home through the bull's heart.

The bull sinks to his knees, and a small dagger is plunged into the spinal column behind the horns. The King is dead.

The band plays the "Victorious Torero," the people shout, and the body of the bull is hauled away to be put up and sold to the poor people. Then the victorious "torero" makes a circuit of the ring and receives the plaudits of the people. Hats are thrown down into the ring, and happy is he whose hat is thrown back by the hand of the matador. Money and cigars also fall thickly, all picked up by the attendant members of the "cuadrilla."

TRY ROPE SKIPPING.

Novel Remedy for Many of the Ills that Annoy Women.

Times have changed since then, and even the skipping rope has undergone progress. The rope has been promoted, until now it is brought out at all seasons of the year, and is used by old and young alike. Its mission now is the restoration of the skin, the making of a pair of dimples, the strengthening of the heart and the renewal of youthful charm.

From this list it will be seen that the skipping rope is relied upon as a modern miracle worker. And the woman who tries it will agree that it is such to the last inch.

To manipulate the skipping rope properly a rope should be obtained of the kind which is fitted with handles. Thus one can have a support for the fingers to keep the rope from cutting into the hand. Then, too, the handles enable one to shorten the rope and to make highest skips at will.

The second requisite is that the air in which the skipping is performed shall be fresh.

Women go out into the air more than they once did, and when it comes to exercising they exercise directly in the open. Who does not remember the first gymnasiums, stuffy things, under ground usually. Fully heated, almost unventilated, breathing of the heaviness of stone, they have opened to the pupil, who was expected to come in and get health and strength by exercising in the dark place.

The gymnasiums now are luxuriously fitted out. But, if bereft of luxury, they are at least well aired. In one house, where there is a room called by courtesy the gymnasium, the sole apparatus consists of dumb bells, a bow and arrow, a tin horn, a skipping rope, a wand and a pair of flat irons.

But there are many little low windows, for the gymnasium is an attic

floor, and one side of the room has a wide, low mirror. In this place the women of the family go beauty hunting every day, says the Indianapolis News. And the first move on entering the gymnasium is to open all the windows.

What He Was Paid For.

A new application of the rule of proportion between wages and labor is the motive of a little story from the Cincinnati Commercial Tribune. The leader of the band stopped the man in the middle of the bar and frowned.

"Say, Pumpernickel," he demanded, in a loud whisper, "what do you mean by playing a lot of half-notes where there should be whole notes?"

Pumpernickel took the horn off his neck.

"Well," said he, "I make explanations by you. You remember dot you end down my wages to halfnut, don't you?"

The leader stared in amazement. He had done so, but—

"And so I continue to make dot notes mid dls horn, but dey will p' halfnut notes until der wages was stored into whole vages. Ain't it yes?"

Plenty on Hand.

"You would get along a great deal better if you didn't get so excited," said the calm man to his fractious friend. "Can't you learn to keep your temper?"

"Keep my temper! Well, I like that!" retorted the other. "I'd have you understand that I keep my temper in one day than you have in your possession during a whole year!"

The point in securing an evangelist seems to be the same as in getting a new dress; very important that he should come from a larger town.

When a girl is 16, and a prince's, her father begins to think that she is nearer his age for social pleasures than her mother.

