AN OLD STEP-MOTHER.

BY MARY KYLE DALLAS.

Mr. Samuel Locke being a widower, and wishing to make a figure in society, remembered that a tall daughter made him seem much older than he felt himself, and finally bethought him of a fine old country-house that was going to rack and ruin through neglect, sent down some people to furnish it up, and inquired of his wife's cousin, Miss Sophy Penn, whether she would be willing to become resident companion to his daughter Fankie.

"Who has no mother, you know;" said Mr. Locke, looking pensive.

"Poor, poor Cousin Clara, she must be a loss," said Miss Sophy. "Of course she was much older than I, but I remember her very well. She taught Sunday-school and gave me such good advice. Dear me and is little Frankie like her?"

"No, Frankie does not much resemble poor Clara," said Mr. Locke. "N ot much. Her features remind me of her mother, but her character is so very different. She is just home from boarding school, and I think the country the best place tor her. I have had Pine Park put in order, and if you don't mind——"

"Oh, I love the country," said Sophy; and then Mr. Locke spoke about salary, and the the thing was settled.

Sophy Penn went down to Pine Park and found a tall girl of seventeen.

"I declare—I thought I should have a child to take care of," said Sophy.

And I thought you would be some dreadful old spinster," said Frankie, "and you are so nice. We'll have lots of fun."

Certainly from their point of view they did.

Before long they were spoken of by the farmers' wives about as "them two tom boys."

They lived more out of the house than in, rode about on two old horsas that were kept on the place, climbed mountains and hunted up waterfalls in summer, went skating and coasting in winter, and finally—— Oh, such dreadful girls, really they ought to have been ashamed of themselves—entered into flirtation with two gentlemen.

One a very young one to be sure, from a college hard by; the other, his tutor, but a young man still—thirty, perhaps and as full of fun as his pupil.

Mr. Webster and Mr. Holland—"Harry Holland" they soon called him—had come to the girls' aid one day when Frankie had gone through the thin ice to the pond, and saved her life, and since then they had spent many hours together.

Nearly six months had gone by, and Mr. Webster was paying the most devoted attention to Sophy Penn; and Harry Holland and Frankie Locke were on the point of becoming engaged, when prying old Betsy Bobbs, the cook, wrote a note to Mr. Locke which brought him down to Pine Park.

Betsy admitted him, and he walked into the parlor and found a happy quartet gathered about the piano.

"Pa!" cried Frankie.

"Cousin Samuel!" ejaculated Miss Sophy.

But Mr. Locke took no notice of them.

"Who introduced you to my daughter?" asked Mr. Locke of Mr. Webster.

Webster waved his hand toward Harry Holland.

"And who introduced you?" queried Mr. Locke of Harry.

"Well, I—I don't know whether—that is, there was no regular introduction. But I sincerely admire Miss Locke, and I—I hope——" began poor Harry.

"Quite sufficient," said Mr. Locke. "Do you two gentlemen prefer walking out of my front door or being kicked out?"

Harry might have said more, but the more experienced Webster saw that they were in a very unfortunate position.

A man had a right to be very much offended by the presence of men—who had not been introduced in regular fashion—in his own parlor, and he took his pupil by the arm, bowed respectfully to every one and departed.

That night Mr. Locke carried his daughter, her chaperon and Betsy Bobbs away to a small cottage which he owned, in quite another part of the country.

"Betsy is to go everywhere with you," he said.

"And the hired man, John is to shoot any young man he finds on the premises."

After having thus performed his parental duty, Mr. Locke returned to New York society.

Whether the hired man, John, would have risked electrocution or not, in case a young man had entered the gate, I cannot say; but Betsy Bobbs did not go everywhere with the young ladies, I assure you. She made two or three efforts and retired to her kitchen, feeling that it was easier to stay there. Miss Frankie had a will of her own, and, besides, there was the work to do, and the girls, as before, lived out of doors all day.

They bemoaned their cruel treatment when they were alone, but there were no young men to flirt with. The cottage was situated on the outskirts of one of those deserted villages of Yankeeland, whence all masculine inhabitants under ninety seem to have flown.

Frankie spent a good deal of her time in going for letters—she corresponded with some of her old schoolmates, and always expected to hear from "poor Harry," but never did. And when the days grew cold the girls sat in the upper front room, read novels, ate candy—which they made themselves—and bewailed their desolate condition.

At last, one bright December day Sophy, sitting at the window, saw Frankie hurrying toward the house with an open letter in her hand, every movement betraying wrath and indignation, and was prepared to see her dash into the room, fling her hat against the wall, stamp her foot, and ejaculate:

"This is the last blow. I'll bear no more, the end has come."

"Ah," said Cousin Sophy, "I guess I know what all that means—Cousin Samuel has married again."

"Oh, Sophy!" cried Frankie. "Has that ever entered your mind before as possible!"

"Yes," said Sophy, "if he had not thought of it he would never have sent his daughter away. Is it really done?"

"Yes," said Frankie, "they are at Pine Park. You and I and Bobbs are to come at once—Bobbs—think of it! Well, I shall go, defy her, tell him what I think of him, and go away forever."

"Where?" asked Cousin Sophy.

"I do not care," said Frankie.

"Well," said Sophy, "it is very hard, but perhaps if we manage nicely we may get him to send us to take a trip to Europe together. His wife will like your going away if she is of the pattern of most step-mothers. We have no money of our own, and if he dismisses me I shall have to go back and take care of my sister-in-law's children, so for my sake, Frankie, let us try that plan'"

"For your sake I'll do anything," said Frankie. "But how cruel pa has been to me about Harry——"

"And how cruel to me," said Sophy. "I should have been Mrs. Webster now, a happy woman, if he had only been moderate. And then, though according to law he could still exact obedience of you, of any child under age, his wife's cousin, a woman of twenty-eight, had a right to do what she pleased. However, he thought Mr. Webster was your admirer, and I did not dare explain, and all is over for me forever."

Then they rang Bobbs up-stairs, told her to get ready at once, dressed themselves and were driven to the train.

It was nine at night before they arrived at Pine Park—and saw the house blazing with lights, as if in welcome to them.

Mr. Locke opened the door himself. At his side stood a very pleasant looking lady of middle age, who did not wait to be introduced:

"This is Frankie, I know," she said, "and this is Miss Sophy Penn—I, you know, can be no other than your dreadful step-mother. Kiss your papa, Frankie, and I'll show you your room. It is furnished in white and blue, and yours opens from it, Miss Penn—white and pink."

She led the way up-stairs, not noticing that Frankie neither smiled nor said anything, and opened the door of a lovely little room, which was certainly a proof of her great taste in such matters; then she shut the door and looked at the girls with a quizzical expression.

"You are ready to hate me, I see," she said to Frankie, "and you will hate me more when you know that I am a born match-maker. I have, by my first marriage, a son, to whom I intend to marry you—don't express your feelings yet. He has told me that he wishes to marry you, and I venture to say that the wedding will come off in a year or two. He is a nice boy, though rather young. Well, now, Frankie?"

"Absurd!" said Frankie.

"Ah," said the step-mother, "perhaps your affections are engaged already?"

"If they were, I should not confess to you'" said Frankie.

"No, I dare say not," said the lady; "but I am, quite a clairvoyante. What a pleasant time you used to have when you were alone here, before papa came home and sent Harry Holland away, rather roughly. To be sure Harry had no right here; but then his feelings got the better of him, and if all had gone well, you would have said, 'yes' when he asked you to marry him, I think, eh?"

Frankie arose to her feet.

"Madame, she cried, "you are impertinent; but you cannot shame me. I have nothing to blush for. I did like Harry Holland—I had as much right to like him as you had to like papa, I suppose. As for your son——"

"Hush!" said the lady; "my son is awfully nice—and you know circumstances alter cases. Did you ever hear what my name was before I married your father?"

"Really, I do not care," said Frankie in a fury. "Perhaps it was Brass, for certainly you have more brazen im——"

"'Sh!" said the lady. "I have told you that circumstances alter cases. I was Mrs. Holland before I became Mrs. Locke, and I am Harry Holland's mother——"

She paused, and seated herself upon a lounge, and burst into a peal of laughter.

"When Harry heard I was to be married again," she said, "I can tell you he was furious; and when he saw Mr. Locke, and recognized him, I really thought we should have a quarrel—though I did not quite know why. Harry only said that Mr. Locke had done him 'a great wrong.' Finally I got him to tell me his story, and then I brought him to reason.

"'Don't you see,' she said, 'that is the best thing for you? For I can be your friend. Mr. Locke will never object to your visiting his daughter—I know she is very nice, and all will be well if you still like each other.' Well, my dear, I sha'n't tell you what he said about that, only that he considered himself engaged to you, and however you felt, should never like any one else, and—— Well, he will tell you all about it, you'll see him tonight. I've got up a nice little supper for you all. Now make your toilets—the trunks are coming up-stairs, and let us all be happy."

"Oh you are so kind, Mrs. Locke," said Miss Penn, running into her room. But Frankie threw her arms around the lady's neck and kissed her.

"I never thought a stepmother could be so nice," she said, and then—as Harry's mother, it would be the regular rule for you to hate me."

"Exactly said Mrs. Locke, returning the caress; "I've just been getting married myself, you see, and I am very happy, and want to see other people so."

Then she left Frankie to make herself as pretty as possible.

That was a very happy evening, I assure you. Mrs. Locke having made herself the good genius of the long parted lovers, was adored accordingly, and was always spoken of thereafter by Frankie, as "my darling step-mother."

ORIGIN OF A SLANG PHRASE.

"To Eat Crow" Originated on Manhatten Island Many Years Ago.

The origin of the expession "to eat crow" caused a dispute in a New York clubhouse one evening, and one white-headed old politician subsequently accounted for it in this way to a Tribune reporter:

"Years ago," he said, "a soldier stationed on Governors Island wandered up into the city and out upon the pasture lands just north of Chambres street to have some fun. There he spied a crow hopping about among the cows, and he instantly aimed his gun at it and shot it dead. As he did so a ragged little boy, who had been watching him dashed off with a wild yell in the direction of a distant house. The soldier laughed at what he thought to be the boy's terror at the report of the gun and laying it down carefully at the root of the tree he went to pick up the crow. After that something else attracted his attention and he did not think of his gun again till he heard an angry voice behind him and turning round, found himself gazing straight down the barrel. A furious Dutchman was at the other end of the gun. The soldier had shot the Dutchman's pet crow, the boy had borne testimony to the deed and now for the penalty.

"Sparing you a recital of the heated conversation which followed, the result was the Dutchman spared the soldier's life only on condition that he would straightway eat the crow he had shot. The soldier argued vehemently, but to no purpose. He finally secured permission to pluck the crow and cook it a little over a fire made with a few chips. Then he began to eat, but before he had eaten more than half of the carrion bird he became so sick that he swore he would rather be shot than finish it. The Dutchman's wrath seemed to be appeased by this time, however, and he restored the soldier his gun and bade him begone. The soldier took the gun, but instead of begoneing he instantly took aim at the Dutchman's head and vowed to blow his brains out if he did not at once eat the other half of the crow. The Dutchmau was compelled by fear of death to swallow the rest of the loathsome flesh, and then the soldier departed, leaving the injured Dutchman ready to burst with rage and chagrin. The latter swore vengeance, and the next day appeared on Governor's Island and made complaint to the commandant that one of the soldiers had wantonly shot his tame crow. The commandant told the Dutchman to pick out the offender and he should be punished. The Dutchman pointed to a soldier not far away and identified him.

"Calling the soldier to him, the commanding officer said, sternly, 'Did you ever see this man before?" pointing to the Dutchman.

"'Yes, sir,' replied the soldier, with a laugh in his eye, 'I dined with him yesterday.'

"This answer so amused the Dutchman, besides reminding him of how all his friends would laugh at him should the story get out, that he refused to push the complaint against the soldier, and 'to eat crow,' meaning to suffer anything mortifying or humiliating, passed into a proverb from that day."—New York Tribune.

A CARPENTER-COOK.

Royal Menu on a Deal Table With no Table-cloth.

For forty years there was maintained in the same ownership an eating-house, at the corner of Market and Monroe streets, which was renowned for its beefsteaks. Some time since the proprietor of this place retired from business, or at least attempted to do so; but his former clients would not hear of it. Although he abandoned the eating-house down town he has continued to gratify his patrons under conditions which would deter any but the most enthusiastic bon vivants. In the office of a carpenter shop up town he still continues to cook his famous beefsteaks. So much is he in request that parties must notify him days in advance of their coming. The most exacting amateurs of the town to avail of his cookery are content to put up with what, under ordinary conditions, they would consider revolting inconveniences. All that this famous man provides for them in the carpenter shop is a deal table without a cloth a towel—not a napkin— to each person, a plain bench without a back to sit upon, no knives, forks nor plates. The steaks are cooked over the embers of a fire made of hickory wood. When the meat is done the proprietor cuts it up into small slices, which he places between two pieces of buttered bread. These his patrons eat while held in the hand. The merit of this man's cooking resides in the use of only the very choicest well-ripened beef and his method of broiling. It is unquestionably superlative and not to be equalled in any restaurant or private house of this town. It is related that on a certain occasion a group of twenty persons consumed seventy pounds of beefsteak.—New York Sun.

THE AGRICULTURAL WORLD.

SOME PRACTICAL HINTS FOR PROGRESSIVE FARMERS.

Care of Dairy Utensils--Best Cheese Cow--The English Wheat Crop --Benefits of Drainage-- Useful Hints--Farm Notes.

Care of Dairy Utensils.

In no other work is there as great a demand for cleanliness as in the three parts of the dairy business, milk, butter and cheese, says the American Agriculturist. The most attention is needed to maintain the cleanliness of the milk receptacles, such as pails, pans, cans and churns. In the first place there should be a sufficient supply of pans that those emptied and washed in the morning need not be used until evening or the next day. After washing they should be placed in the sunlight until used. On cloudy days they can be thoroughly dried about the stove and not nested when they are wet, and allowed to thus remain for several hours, as in that condition they cannot dry, and when separated at night they will give off a disagreeable odor, and the warm milk placed in them is certain to be contaminated. All tin dairy utensils should be first washed in boiling water, then thoroughly rinsed in clean cold water, and turned bottom side up to drain and dry until again used. All vessels about the dairy should be cleaned as soon as emptied, and not allowed to stand neglected for hours thereafter. The shelves, benches and racks upon which the pans are set should be washed with soap and water every time they are cleared. Even a few drops of milk allowed to remain on them to mould or gum up with butter fat would prove unhealthy, and detrimental to the milk in the same apartment. Where only a few cows are kept the same scrupulous cleanliness should be observed. The surface of the butter in the tubs should be covered with a cloth saturated with strong brine, both during and after the filling is completed. Locate the filled tubs in a cool, dark portion of the cellar, examine once a week, and if the brine is found oozing through the staves, it should be wiped away and not allowed to remain and stain the wood, giving it a most uninviting look.

Useful Hints.

The following schedule sent out by the experiment station of the Agricultural college, Guelph, Ontario, contains some useful hints in regard to butter making:

1. We do not consider that we know every thing about buttermaking, as something new is being discovered every month. Not only from our own work are we continually learning, but also from the observation and research of others.

2. We do not keep a cow that makes less than 200 pounds of butter to a year;

3. Nor put a cow on a starvation ration;

4. Nor expect a cow to make something out of nothing;

5. Nor keep our cows in an ice-house, hog-pen or dungeon;

6. Nor allow them to go a whole year without carding or brushing them;

7: Nor depend upon pasture alone for a supply of summer feed.

8. We do not allow the milk to stand very long in the stable to absorb foul odors.

9. We do not neglect to strain the milk at once after milking;

10. Nor set the milk in deep cans in water without changing the water at least twice, or without ice;

11. Nor mix sweet cream with cream to be churned less than 12 hours before churning (the cream is ripened in one vessel which holds the cream for a whole churing);

12. Nor add scalding water to the cream; nor guess at the temperature with the finger; nor take two or three hours to churn;

13. Nor gather the butter until the "dasher stands on top," and then dip it out of the buttermilk;

14. Nor add coarse salt by guess; nor work the butter into grease;

15. And finally; we do not send our butter to market wrapped in old rags that may have seen other service in the home.

The English Wheat Crop.

According to Sir J. B. Lawes' annual letter on the wheat crop, England this year has a poor yield of light grain. The figures show an average of twenty-five and seven-eighths bushels per acre, weighing sixty pounds per bushel; and the yield on the 2,295,183 acres of wheat now grown in the United Kingdom is, therefore, less than 7,500,000 quarters.

After deducting two bushels per acre for seed, the quantity available for consumption is less than 7,000,000 quarters.

The population being nearly 38,500,000, and the annual consumption six bushels per head, the quantity of wheat required for the twelve months ending next harvest will be 28,750,000 quarters, 22,000,000 quarters of which will have to be provided by stocks and imports; and there is no doubt we shall get all we require easily, since the stocks on hand are enormous, while 6,400,000 quarters of American wheat now on the water constitute the "visible" supply, as against 3,680,000 quarters at this time last year.

These figures are quite sufficient to account for the low price of wheat, and while they assure the public of abundant bread, they deprive the farmer of all hope of better prices for some time to come. So long as the average production of wheat remains in excess of average requirements, so long will the price remain abnormally depressed.—London Chronicle.

Best Cheese Cow.

The Dairy Editor of Orange Judd Farmers, in reply to an inquiry say she would take the Holstein and feed her well. This is saying nothing against any other breed, in fact we can picture special conditions where we should not change to the Holstein if we already had a herd of excellent butter cows. But suppose we have a herd of Jerseys giving 5 per cent milk. The ordinary cheese maker will run too much of this fat into the whey vat. To save it the patrons will be under heavy pressure to have it partly skimmed, and like telling your hired man to drink whisky every day, but not let the habit get the better of him is the habit of skimming milk for cheese-making. Then again, the Holstein is already well developed as a great milk producer. As to steer calves, A. H. don't intend to raise steer calves on whey, as a business, so he will work for milk production in big, paying quantities. The dairying that needs crutches is poor dairying; the dairyman who "needs steer calves to make his business pay" can't keep pace with the fellow who walks without them. Then for cheese—and without saying aught against any other breed—we can recommend pure-bred Holsteins, and the grades from best common cows and a first-class Holstein male and think they will fill the bill nicely.

How to Cure Hams.

Many hams, like cider vinegar, are spoiled in the curing. A good brine may be made as follows: Five pounds of sugar to 200 pounds of meat, one ounce of saltpetre to 20 pounds of meat, one ounce of salt to every pound of meat, and water to cover all the hams packed in this brine. It should be understood that the lower the temperature the longer it takes to cure them and in very cold winters the temperature in the cellars for ordinary pork-curing is so low that considerable time is required.

After the hams have been well brined they must be smoked for three days, and if on cutting it is found that the pickle has not reached all the way through them, the brine can be boiled over and skimmed. Pack the hams away in a temperature of about 40°. They should then be returned to the smoke house for a day after the brine has dried off. A bitter taste will be given to them if hung in the smoke-house wet with the brine. To give the rich brown color so well known in market hams, hang near a stove for several days, and rub over thoroughly with cotton cloth. Fine looking and nicely flavored hams will thus be secured.—Northwestern Agriculturist.

Benefits of Drainage.

It is never out of place nor a waste of time or money to drain wet land. Without proper drainage, there can be no surely successful agriculture. In many cases too much dependence is placed upon natural drainage. It is doubtful if there is any soil that can not be somewhat benefited by underdraining. If dry, the drains let in the air, from which the cooler earth attracts the moisture, to the benefit of the crop; if wet, they furnish an outlet for the surplus moisture, and this also benefits the crop. For it is an undeniable fact that either too little or to much moisture is injurious. If too little, there is no circulation of water in the soil and the plant not only suffers from thirst but starves for want of liquid containing available food; if too weak in nutriment to furnish sufficient food, so the plant literally both drowns and starves, Hitherto very little thought has been given to the circulation of water in the soil; but it is found that this is one of the most important considerations in the growing of a crop, and is receiving attention.

Farm Notes.

If you want eggs give your fowls plenty of good, wholesome food. Successful poultrymen place much more reliance in that than in patent egg-producing compounds.

If raising fowls for meat instead of eggs, you want the large breeds and those that grow rapidly. These will require lots of food, but they will use it to good advantage.

Too much heat in an incubator is just as bad as too little. It should be kept steady at 103 degrees. Practice maintaining an even temperature before you put the eggs in.

To learn any trade thoroughly requires study as well as practice—head-work as well as hand-work. Our boys should be taught that farming is no exception to this rule.

If you have not already done so, it would be well to examine your granary now and make sure that it is rat-proof. It will not pay to hold grain if the rodents have free access to it.

Millet is of very great value to the dairyman, when properly grown and harvested. In planning for next season's crops try and arrange for a field of it. If you have no silo, this will to some extent make amends in the winter feeding.

One or two acres of well selected and well cultivated fruits will go far toward supplying the ordinary household expenses. A little land devoted to such purposes always makes an appreciable addition to the cash income, and will repay the labor needed to secure it.

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