

Boarding in the Country.

The woes of the average American tourists who seeks a summer in the country are well described by a writer in the New York Sun who has evidently been securing some evidence on the subject. He claims that there are at lowest calculation, 25,000 places between Manhattan and the Canada line, where one can have all the joys of Paradise for from \$5 to \$12 a week. The average summer hotel is bad enough, but there are hotels where you can obtain positive comfort; and by constituting a trustworthy information bureau or experienced friends, one may find a host of hotels where the discomfort has adequate compensations but when it comes to boarding houses, and "life in a comfortable farmhouse," let him that standeth take heed lest he fall.

When one finds the right thing in that line, the farmhouse of the summer novel, the experience is ideal. An honest, bluff, genuine farmer, a bustling capable motherly housewife, fine scenery, splendid trees, hammocks, verandas, fresh vegetables, country butter, eggs, milk and poultry, brook trout, white sheets, smelling of lavender; beautiful drives, excellent wheeling cool weather—there's the ideal summer on a farm. It sounds well. There are mortals who assert that they have known the Arcady. Then there are others.

The comic papers have exaggerated the summer-boarding house joke, unduly perhaps, but in the last month the demand for canned goods, from the country trade, has been enormous. Carload after carload of canned vegetables has been shipped to the country towns where summer boarders most to congregate. The wholesale men say that the same thing is true each year, and that the country boarding houses and hotels buy more canned vegetables during the summer than are sold in the cities. The city markets are full of fresh vegetables of every kind from early spring until late fall—and all through the winter. If one cares to pay the price; but the best of the country produce comes to town. The ordinary farmer doesn't take boarders unless he is a thrifty soul with a hunger for shekels; and that sort of a man knows better than to waste his fresh vegetables on his boarders, when he can sell them at a remarkably good price. Hence the carloads of tinned things, and the woe of the urbanite who dreamed dreams of rural joys.

The same thing is true in regard to butter, eggs and cream. Naturally, there are exceptions to the rule, but in the average country household those articles of diet are used more sparingly than by the average city family. If the farmer's wife doesn't make butter for town trade, there's a chance that the boarders may revel in rich milk and cream, but ordinarily, butter making monopolizes the cream, and even the milk is not as good in quality as that sold by the city milmen. In a Berkshire Hills farmhouse, last summer, the boarders, including a number of little children, had milk so thin that in tipping a glassful of it, the ebbing milk left not the slightest mark upon the glass. Such a case is not by any means rare, and even sadder tales are told. It is a positive fact that a New York family spent last August on a farm in Vermont, and that poultry appeared on the table only once during that time, the unusual celebration being due to the fact that the small boy of the boarding family accidentally killed a hen with his rifle. Yet, every week, young chickens were taken from the farm to the nearest village and shipped to town or the nearest swell summer resorts.

If fishing is good in the neighborhood, one does have fresh fish, but if not, beef and mutton, pork and veal are the diet, and all of a quality that would raise a riot in a city household and send the head of the family to the butcher shop with murder in his eye. The country meat problem isn't as bad as it was years ago, when the farmers depended altogether on local "killing" but even now farm or neighborhood slaughter isn't an obsolete custom. It is no unusual thing for mutton or beef to appear upon the farmhouse table the day after the killing of the sheep or beef, and the condition of the meat may be left to the imagination. Even when the packed and shipped meat is used by the farmer it is poor and tough. The city butcher buys his meat in large quantities and hangs it in his big refrigerators until it is fit to be eaten. The farmer buys his meat directly from the village butcher or from the packer, and as he has little or no refrigerator room the meat is never properly hung and is tough.

Fruit is another thing that is rare upon

the farmhouse menu. The city markets draw from all parts of the country and fruit is cheap in the city long before it is in season in, for example, New England. The city man who has been eating delicious berries and fruit of all kinds go to the country and waits for his fresh fruit until the special variety of fruit peculiar to the locality is in full season. Salads one might expect to have, and usually there is plenty of lettuce, though not the delicious, bleached head lettuce of the city market. But vinegar and sugar or milk and sugar are the rural ideas of lettuce salad dressing and if the concession of oil is made to the boarder's depraved tastes, the oil is usually of a quality that runs its utility save for machine and harness use. As for a mayonnaise, it's not to be considered for an instant. Then there's the bread. Surely, breadmaking is the stronghold and bulwark of the farmer's wife. Often she does make good hot bread, but in fully five cases out of ten her "raised bread" is calculated to ruin the digestion of an ostrich and make the city wanderer think sadly of the bakery on his block.

The farmhouse breakfast is bad enough, and the midday dinner is depressing, but the supper is the abomination of desolation: Coal meat, potatoes, preserves and cake. There you have it. Sometimes there are three kinds of cake, all equally heavy, and three kinds of preserves, all equally sticky, but not a relish in sight, and there are times when the boarder would barter his soul for a grilled sardine, or a scratch woodcock or a croquette, or even a scrambled egg. Anyone who has lived through a season of farmhouse suppers and came out with disposition and digestion intact is proof against all culinary assault and battery.

The poor coffee and tea, the ubiquitous pie and the unfailing beans are a part of the home comfort so recklessly advertised. So are the cotton top mattresses. There was a time when the farm house mattress was a husk one, into which the chambermaid or young lady who helped the housewife, disappeared each morning, through a slit in the cover. The making of a husk bed had its its exciting and picturesque features, but there's nothing to be said for the cotton top mattress whose cotton wads into iron like hardness, where it doesn't collect in cobblestone balls. If the climate is cool enough, one may pull out the feather bed and put it on top of the mattress, but in ordinary warm weather the choice between hardness and suffocation is a trying one and perplexes the boarder mightily. Of course there are no bathrooms and, if one has provided one's rubber or tin tub, getting warm water for it is

an affair of magnitude. On cold, raw days the kitchen stove and the sitting room base burner or grate are the only place of refuge. The house is probably poorly screened and the flies and mosquitoes make life a burden. The barn is too near the house and its orders interfere with the new mown hay and sweet clover fragrance of pastoral poetry. The parlor smells like a tomb and looks like a natural history museum limited; and a stormy day that drives one in from woods and fields is a visitation that calls for christian fortitude and resignation. The air may be as salubrious as the circulars represent, but salubrity comes high at boarding rates, and life among the brown hollands and the asphalt and the cable cars takes on a hue of rose.

Everyone tries the country boarding house at least once in his life. If he is wise he will trust no heresay or wily advertisement made for the beguiling of the city folk. He will go to a trustworthy bureau and get ironclad credentials for the farmhouse of his choice, or, if he trusts the advice of a friend who has already tried the place, he will insist upon a written and solemn guarantee, signed and sealed by that friend and witnessed before a notary public. Then he may find the rural haven, the sylvan retreat of his dreams; but other wise, the chances are the astute and thrifty hayseed will do him to a finish.

LAST STRONGHOLD OF THE BOERS

Description of the Final Battleground of the South African War.

Reference has been frequently made to the Zoutpansberg district in the northeast corner of the Transvaal as the last stronghold of the Boers when compelled to abandon Pretoria after defeat in the field; but hitherto hardly has been known about the country and its capabilities for defence.

Officially the district is known as the Zoutpansberg, but it is more commonly called Magatoland, after the chief of the Makatse tribe, which inhabited it up to 1899, until when it was almost unknown to the Boers themselves. A South African correspondent, describing the country, says it is likely to receive attention in the near future, for it is in its fastnesses that the Boers will make their last stand. Swaziland and Lydenburg have been spoken of as the scene of their final resistance, but among the burghers themselves Magatoland is considered an ideal retreat. It has two back doors, so to say, one across the Limpopo in Mashonaland and the other through the Portuguese territory on the east.

The whole country is one great series of natural fortresses, standing amid dense vegetation, in which a commando could remain concealed for a week if necessary without fear of discovery. It is about 280 miles north of Pretoria, of which some 210 miles can be traversed by rail to Pietersburg. From there to Louis Trichardt, founded a year ago as the capital of Magatoland, is eighty miles, the road after the first twenty running through dense bush and offering many difficulties to an invading force.

Magatoland was practically unknown to the Boers until the beginning of last year when they assumed occupation after the defeat of M'Peta by Gen. Joubert. It was the experience then gained of the country by the burghers of the commandos composing the Boer army that first gave them the idea of making it their last resort in the event of invasion by the British. No regular survey of the district has ever been made, but, roughly speaking, the towering krantz that crown the Zoutpans range and overlook Louis Trichardt and the Klein Spelonken Kaffirs on the south, view ed from Fort Schutte, for many years the Boer advanced post.

The Magato range, elevated high above the clouds, has a most imposing appearance. Rising from the plain in terraces for about three miles the summit of the range is formed of a mighty overhanging krantz of volcanic rock descending sheer 500 feet. This extends with a few breaks the whole length of the range, and is absolutely unscalable. Only one road enters the country at Magato's Hooftstad, a distance of four miles from the plain in a direct line. This road is covered by a recently erected fort, and so winding and steep is the track that it could be held by a single commando against an overwhelming force. The mountain slope is covered with forest, many of the trees growing to seventy feet in height. There are two other passes into the interior of the country, one fourteen miles northeast of Louis Trichardt, and Pisangkhon twenty miles southwest.

On the mountains there is an abundant supply of water, and, unless they have been recently removed, enormous supplies of food. The climate is healthy and comparatively cool, but in the valleys during the fever season it is little short of pestilential. No doubt the burghers count on this in the event of the British following them and encamping in the Dwaars valley for any length of time before trying to scale the Magato heights. Their ranks would be decimated by a deadlier enemy than the Mauser bullet. The malarial fog rolls up from the river in the evenings and spreads over the plain to a depth of eight or ten feet, it does not however, kill out right if proper precautions are taken.

Whether the Boers will be allowed to avail themselves of this alpine retreat undisturbed remains to be seen. If they have already occupied it as there is reason to believe they have, they can carry on a guerrilla warfare indefinitely or until the exhaustion of the ammunition. Aided by the impassable bush, the uneven formation of the country, and the eyes with which the range is honeycombed they could stave off defeat for months. It is probable, however, that the British have anticipated the retreat of the Boers to these fastnesses, and that the corps of so called Bushmen from Australia that were sent into Rhodesia through Beira on the Portuguese East African coast were really directed to the Zoutpansberg and not to Salisbury in the north as reported.

One of the Mac's.

The London Outlook revives a true story of the provost of Kirkcaldy, who is

evidently not a purist in the use of language. He has been laughed at for pronouncing "antipodes" as if it rhymed with "modes", and resolved in future to be on his guard.

Sir William Harcourt, accompanied by Mr. L. V. Harcourt, was honoring the burgh with his presence, and the provost had to discuss with his guests the lamentably unsanitary state of the place.

"And you know, sir," said he, "you know how much people nowadays think of mac-ro-bes!"

Again and again did he dwell on the mystic name, until Mr. Harcourt was moved to ask:

"About these mac-ro-bes, Mr. Provost. Are they a local clan?"

His Own Fall.

Col. C. J. Jones, who had a stirring life in the West, tells in 'Forty Years of Adventure,' some of his most picturesque experiences. One of them, at least, has the comic element sprinkled ad libitum. Colonel Jones was greatly interested in the question of preserving our native buffalo, and caught a number of calves, in order to bring them up, with the domestic cow as stepmother. He says:

Some of the calves gave trouble. They did not take kindly to their stepmother. One of them preferred a bottle covered with a rag, and a certain big calf would drink from nothing but a bucket, although he made a very good supper in that way. And strange as it may seem, he would never afterward drink out of any but that particular pail, which happened to be painted white, outside and in.

If any other was offered him, he would butt it over at once, and prance round, pawing at the dirt, until some one would call out:

'Give him the white pail!'

Then when the white pail was brought, he would fall to and make a hearty meal.

Growing Earthworms.

At a recent meeting of the Springfield Massachusetts, Zoological Club a paper was read, giving an interesting bit of experience in growing earthworms.

The lady whose experience was given had read in a work on natural history that if an earthworm were divided, the anterior part would grow a tail and the posterior part would grow a head. She said:

'I took twelve worms and divided them, placing the divided parts of each worm in a separate glass. In less than a month I had twenty two worms, losing only two tail parts. The head parts had grown tails and the tail parts had grown heads.'

'A second experiment was made later. I divided two worms into halves and put the four parts into a glass, into which I placed earth but no food, and the head parts ate the tail parts.'

Mamma—Ethel, dear, this is Mrs. Lake-wind, from Chicago.

Little Ethel (who has heard things)—How do you do ma'am? How are all your husbands?



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