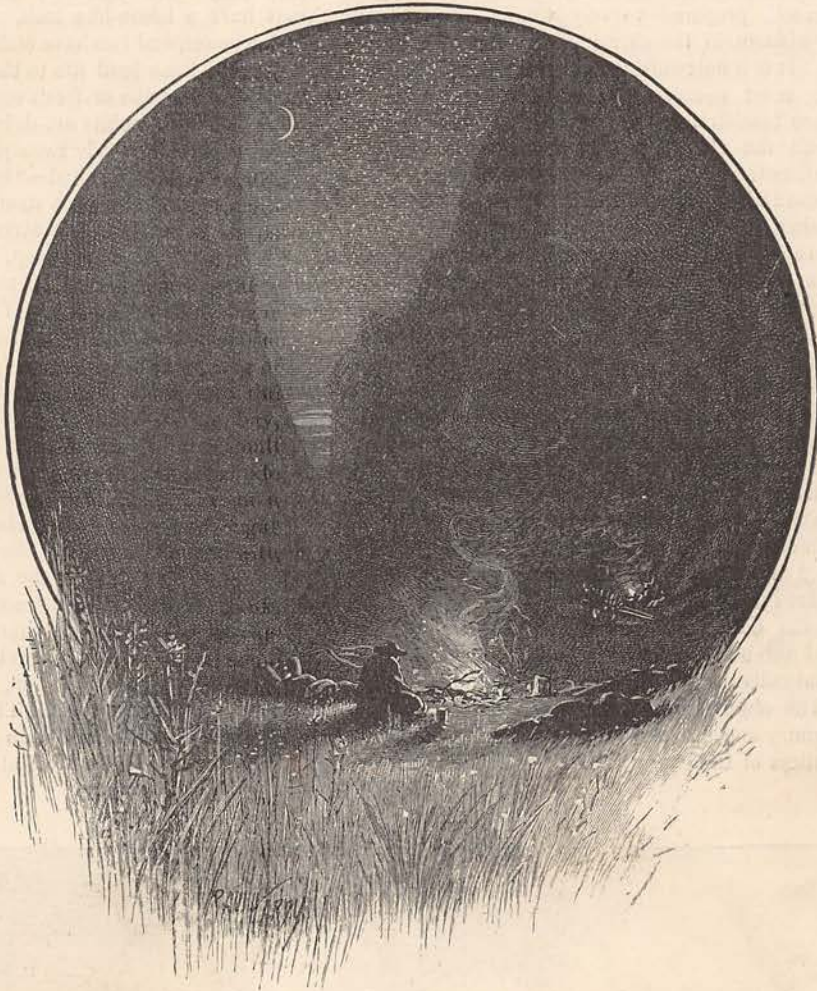


AMERICAN FARMING FOR WOMEN.

BY A LADY FARMER.



A CAMP IN THE CAÑON.



AT a time when so much interest is felt in the opening of new employments to women, it is possible that some in England may care to hear of the novel way in which a few women attempt to gain a livelihood in the Far West. It is true that they not infrequently fail. Moreover, the undertaking calls for pluck, endurance, and energy in no common degree; but, on the other hand, it has a certain educational value, and offers to those rightly constituted a good deal of enjoyment. Throughout some of the Western states and territories of America the United States Government still retains large sections of land. This land is open to settlers under certain conditions. Every American citizen is possessed of these land rights, each entitling him to

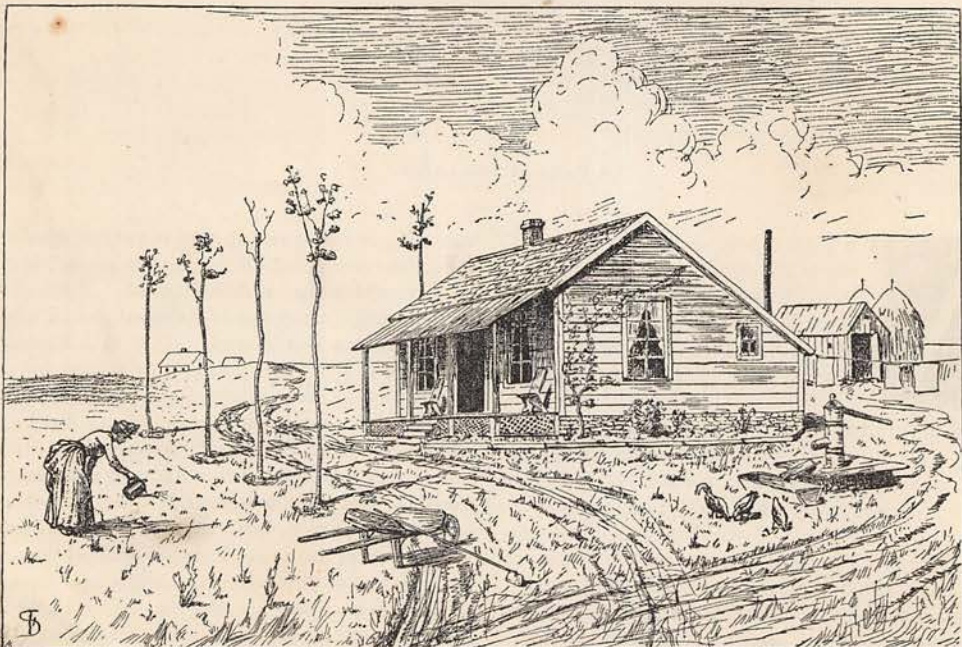
160 acres of Government land of varying quality. The conditions under which the settler takes his claim or quarter section vary with each case. If his claim is a pre-emption, a residence of six months and a payment of 5s. an acre is required. If it is a homestead, a residence of five years gives him the land for nothing. With a timber claim neither residence nor payment is required, but a certain number of acres must be planted with trees. Most of the country west of the Mississippi was settled under these conditions by enterprising men from the Atlantic States, and now the children of these early settlers are pushing westwards to make homes for themselves in the newer states and territories. Of late years many of these homesteaders, as they are comprehensively called, are women. The United States Government in bestowing land rights on American citizens made no distinction of sex. The majority

of these enterprising women who "take up" land accompany a farmer-brother or father, who manages their claim for them. Their life, therefore, differs but little from the ordinary life of women on a Western farm. Occasionally, however, a woman comes out by herself, prepared to rely wholly on her own wit and wisdom in the carrying out of her new undertaking. It is a noteworthy fact that many, and perhaps the most successful, of these independent women are teachers. To such, worn out as they often are with the close confinement of the schoolroom, the unrestrained life of the frontier possesses a great fascination. Their success is due, perhaps, to the patience and perseverance acquired in teaching; also to the fact that the educated woman, possessed of greater resources, is less likely to become restless and dissatisfied than her uncultured sister.

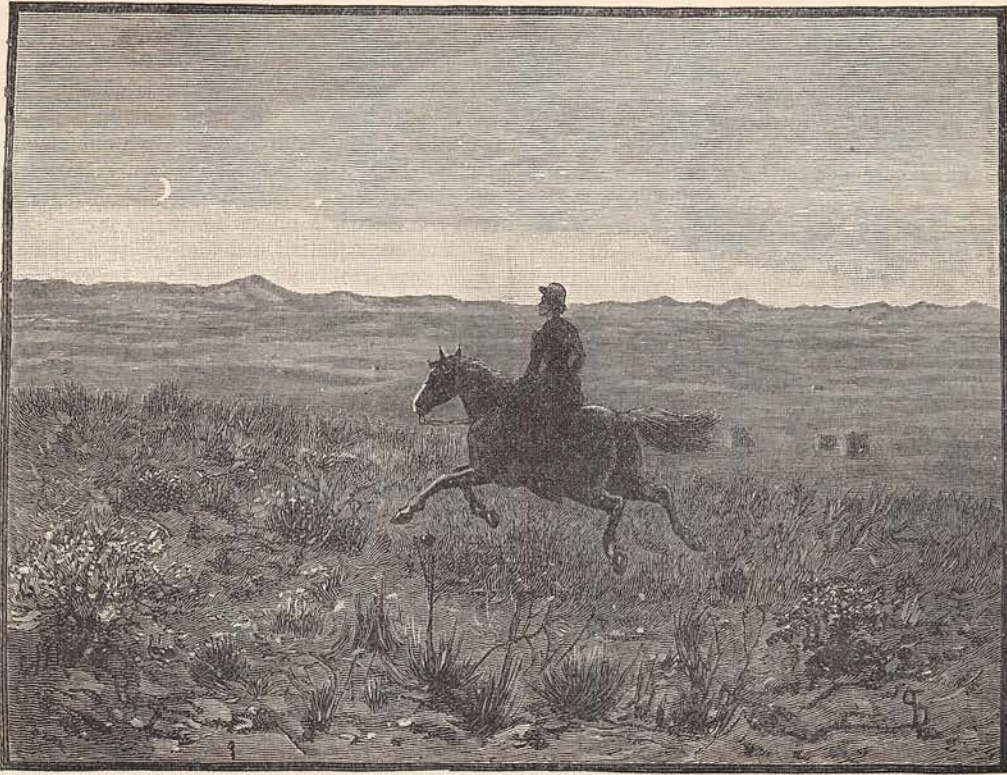
Perhaps after this general sketch a page from the life of a real settlement of teachers in a Western state may be of interest. A railway has recently been constructed from Holdrege, Nebraska, to Cheyenne, Wyoming, across the north-eastern corner of Colorado. It is a branch of the Burlington and Missouri Railway—the line on which the great strike took place last winter. The opening of the new railway was followed this year by a rush of settlers into a part of Colorado heretofore occupied by only a few widely scattered ranches. In a short time mushroom towns sprang up where a few months before the range cattle were grazing. It should not be forgotten that in the West it is the railway that calls the towns into existence, and not *vice versa*. The object of a new line is often to "open up" the country and bring in settlers.

In one of the valleys of the charming rolling prairie

that covers Northern Colorado, east of the Rocky Mountains and not far from the new railway, four young women, college graduates and teachers, settled this spring. The three homesteads and one pre-emption which they have taken up are adjoining. Already things have a home-like look. Each has a neat little wooden house, and two have stables. Ponies, a cow, a dog, and chickens lend life to the settlement. The gardens hold out a hope of fresh vegetables, but ground squirrels and jack rabbits are doing their best to render the hope vain. Already twenty-five acres of the virgin sod have been ploughed—"broken," it is called here—and surrounded with a strong wire fence to keep off the range cattle. Five acres have been planted with potatoes, the best sod crop. For part of the work neighbouring settlers, anxious to earn a little money, have been employed, but part of it was done by the feminine homesteaders themselves. Cutting up potatoes for seed, and dropping them in the furrow, is not the easiest or cleanest of work, but it is not wholly disagreeable, for it can all be done out of doors, and is not a tax on the nerves. While the gardens are being made and the crops put in there is enough, and more than enough, to do, but even when that work is over time does not hang heavy on the homesteaders' hands. Household cares take time, for though life is planned on a very simple scale, the scantiness of materials to work with gives room for some planning and ingenuity. With no beef nearer than the "round up," and butter to be got only by a twelve-mile ride, while fruit is quite out of the question, it is not an easy matter to provide for the table. Then the cow and poultry must be cared for, and each pet broncho has learned to expect from his mistress attentions and



"EACH HAS A NEAT LITTLE WOODEN HOUSE."



“THE DELIGHT OF A GALLOP OVER THE WIDE PRAIRIE.”

caresses which at first he scarcely knew how to appreciate.

A cow-horse—that is, a broncho, or horse caught wild off the range and broken to the saddle for a cowboy's use—is scarcely a model riding horse for a lady, but no other is so well adapted to this country. He does not need to be tied, but will always stand if the long bridle is thrown over his head so as to rest on the ground. Martingales are rarely used, and he is guided by simply drawing the reins across his neck in the direction in which he should turn. Generally he is broken to the lariat, and can be picketed out by the head or foot in genuine Indian fashion. No matter how dark the night or how great the speed, a broncho rarely gets a foot into a prairie dog or coyote hole; and his skill in picking his way over a country thickly covered with cactus is marvellous to the beholder, and extremely unsettling to his rider. He is very clever at getting a living where the civilised horse will starve. In other respects too he is unlike the civilised horse, for often he does not eat oats, and shows a decided aversion to a stable. Although small in size, he has great endurance and is capable of a fair rate of speed. He is cheap, too: £8 or £10 should buy a good broncho. But all these desirable qualities are to some extent offset by the fact that he rarely appreciates good treatment, and is somewhat uneven in his temper. A broncho without some

bad trick is as rare as trees on the prairies. Nevertheless, owning one adds greatly to the enjoyment of life on the plains. There are few things that can equal the delight of a gallop in the early evening over the wide prairie, with scarcely a barrier nearer than the Rocky Mountains standing out in splendid line against the western sky.

It is unfortunately true that of trees there is a sad lack in this part of Colorado. Hardly the apology for one can be found nearer than the bluffs, which form the edge of a high table-land that begins a little south of the Wyoming line. Here, growing on the sides of the cañons, can be found cedars and pines. But even these are fast disappearing under the ruthless axe of the settler. Early this spring the “schoolmarm settlement”—as the little colony of teachers is locally called—made an expedition to the bluffs, accompanying a friend who was going with his ox-team for a load of wood. A nine miles' ride in an ox-cart has its drawbacks, and the sun had set before the party reached the camping-place in a beautiful little cañon, with high rocky walls and a grassy floor. A blaze was quickly started, and soon all were ready to turn in, that is, roll up in blankets and lie down beside the fire. For a time the inevitable dog smelt about in a way unpleasantly suggestive of rattlesnakes, but finally he too settled down, and became a comfortable pillow for his mistress's head. No one slept very soundly,

perhaps, for it was a novel experience to lie there, with the sky for a roof and the distant howling of wolves for a lullaby. It was rather cold, too. But the glorious sunrise, seen from the highest point of the bluffs, well repaid all for any discomforts of the night. Picnics are not very frequent, but then there is much to interest in the every-day life of the "settlement." From their doors the teacher homesteaders can often watch the antelope bounding through the valley, or a grey wolf or coyote sneaking over the hill. Now and then comes an exciting but tiring day spent in the saddle, when the cow or a pony has stampeded in the night, and is to be found fifteen miles away perhaps.

The prairie flowers too, so new and beautiful, are a great delight. During the flowering of the cactus the prairie seemed thickly studded with Marshal Niel roses. Then there is always tennis. No turf can make a better ground than the thick mat of buffalo grass. Moreover, there is the exciting possibility, when hunting a wandering ball, of finding it resting on the coils of an indignant rattlesnake. This last, how-

ever, is rapidly disappearing from the country, in spite of the kindly consideration of the Indians, who always spared it, saying that the rattlesnake was the only snake that gave warning.

Thus life in the "settlement" has a novelty about it that is in itself a rest. Then, too, out on the frontier the burdens of society are reduced to a minimum, and the petty cares that infest civilisation seem less real. In the meantime civilisation is coming nearer. Last winter a station was built a few miles away. Now a town has been platted out and given a name. It already possesses two lumber yards, several shops, a livery stable, an hotel, and a newspaper, but no dramshop, owing to the rigidly enforced prohibition law of the county. After a while the mushroom town will have a "boom." Then, perhaps, the land round about will rise in value, and the teacher homesteaders may hope to make a little money. In any case they will have gained a new lease of life, a rich fund of experiences, and 160 acres of land on which to raise potatoes.

TO BE GIVEN UP.

By KATE EYRE, Author of "For the Good of the Family," "A Step in the Dark," &c. &c.

CHAPTER THE FIRST. A MIDNIGHT ALARM.



THE church clocks had just struck one a.m. on a warm moonlight night early in June, when a young Englishman might have been seen to emerge from the Champs - Elysées, and saunter across the Place de la Concorde.

Notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, Paris still presented an animated scene, and, as the Englishman neared

the obelisk of Luxor, he paused to look around him. Then he turned off to the left, and was soon leisurely making his way along the Rue du Faubourg St. Honoré.

Although it was so long past midnight, he was in no hurry. He had come to Paris for a brief holiday, but that holiday was now nearly over; on the following, or rather the same day he intended returning to England. This last evening he had been spending with some friends in the Avenue d'Orsay.

Having walked for about half a mile along the Rue St. Honoré, he stopped in front of a small but highly respectable-looking English hotel, and rang the bell.

The door opened almost immediately, having ap-

parently achieved this feat by its own unaided efforts, for no one was behind it. The phenomenon, however, admitted of a very simple explanation. The door was connected, by means of a cord, with an apartment on the ground-floor, in which the concierge slept, an arrangement which enabled that hard-worked functionary to open it at any hour in the night without getting out of bed.

The young man groped his way to a hall-table, on which a lantern was burning very dimly. Selecting a candle labelled with a number corresponding to that by which his bedroom was distinguished, he lighted it, and began ascending the polished-oak staircase.

He went up rather slowly, partly because he did not wish to disturb those who had already retired to rest, and more particularly, perhaps, because he was unconsciously influenced by that sense of awe which makes men tread softly in a house full of sleeping people.

He had just reached the "troisième étage," when the oppressive stillness was broken by a piercing cry, which echoed along the silent corridors—a cry of human agony. He was an Englishman, one whose nerves were, as a rule, well under control; nevertheless he nearly dropped the candle he was carrying, as he clutched hold of the balustrade.

He waited for a minute or two, but the cry was not repeated, nor could he decide the direction from whence it had proceeded.

Hardly knowing what to do, he at length slowly ascended the next flight, and had just gained the