

But what good particularly is good-nature to those who possess it? This, after all, is the most important question. It is not always selfishness, as selfishness is usually understood, to think of one's own advantage. Our most unselfish impulses are associated in a subtle and wonderful way with our own interests; and when we deny ourselves a pleasure or give ourselves pain for the sake of others, we are satisfying some impulses within us with an ulterior view to happiness. What, then, is the good of good-nature to ourselves? Suppose we could be as good-natured as some people we know—what then? It is true we should gain the little advantages that society is bound to offer those who are habitually agreeable; but would there not be disadvantages connected with our success? Affability is a snare, is it not, that leads people into the unexpected depths of familiarity, from which they soon

wish to escape? Is not a little surliness or crustiness a necessary safeguard against impostors, and also against those attractable atoms of society, which, having no distinct proclivities or inclinations, and consequently little to make them interesting or useful, attach themselves with indissoluble tenacity to anybody who happens to be near them? No! no! Such suggestions are unworthy of us. Good-nature, being an essential element of Virtue, is its own reward; it increases our happiness and our aptitude for happiness; while, touching the drawbacks to which it is incident, good-nature will guard itself. "Pride, ill-nature, and want of sense," says Dean Swift, "are the three great sources of ill-manners;" and if people will learn wisdom with regard to these three particulars, their good-nature will not expose them to more inconveniences than the just responsibilities of life incur.

LIFE IN A NEW ZEALAND HOMESTEAD.



THE FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE HOMESTEAD.



ACROSS A SHINGLE ALP.

THE general plan of most homesteads on large runs, and the ordinary occupations of their owners, are so similar, that a description of one will give a fair notion of the many hundreds scattered throughout the country. The homestead furnishing our illustrations lies some hundred miles north-west of Christchurch, in the South Island, among

the New Zealand Alps, where the scenery is wild and beautiful. The first impression on reaching the cosy little one-storeyed

house is of peace, and a conviction that the world is left behind. And this is a feeling not readily disturbed; for perhaps, if the family is small, there will only be some dozen souls on a run of a hundred thousand acres, with no news but that brought by a weekly mail, the latter involving a ride of forty miles.

It is not then wonderful that life remains pure and simple, and that one actually does escape from many of the worries of the outer world.

To assert that the domestic life of a New Zealand sheep farmer and his household in the backwoods has in it little of hardship or discomfort will, perhaps, astonish the generality of English people. But such is the fact. The rooms of the house are spacious and cheerful, with a wide verandah outside, covered with creepers, honeysuckle, and roses. By the way, the rose-trees in this part of the world grow so high that at Christmas, when the sitting-room is decorated with

Maréchal Niels, they are inaccessible without a ladder's help.

Though the life is principally an outdoor one, even in winter, every comfort is found within: from Liberty cushions and a Broadwood to fine glass and damask. The mistress and her neighbours vie with each other in making their homes pretty and picturesque. Outside, the sheds and stables are rude and rough, but indoors comfort reigns supreme. Much thought is spent on the fare, and great efforts made to disguise the inevitable mutton, which is, of course, the *pièce de résistance*. The menus are, however, varied now and again by gifts from neighbours—so called, though the nearest is twenty miles away—and the sportsmen who bring in wild cattle, pigs, turkeys, hares, and all sorts of water-fowl. Still, the housekeeper can place no dependence on these, and her brain is exercised in veiling the monotony of the fare; and very wonderfully successful, as a rule, are her efforts. Home-cured hams, bacon, eggs, and cakes are the staple dishes, and supplemented by an overflowing dairy and kitchen garden, it is surprising how much can be done with simple materials. Bread is baked at home, of course, unless one wishes to send seventy miles for it.

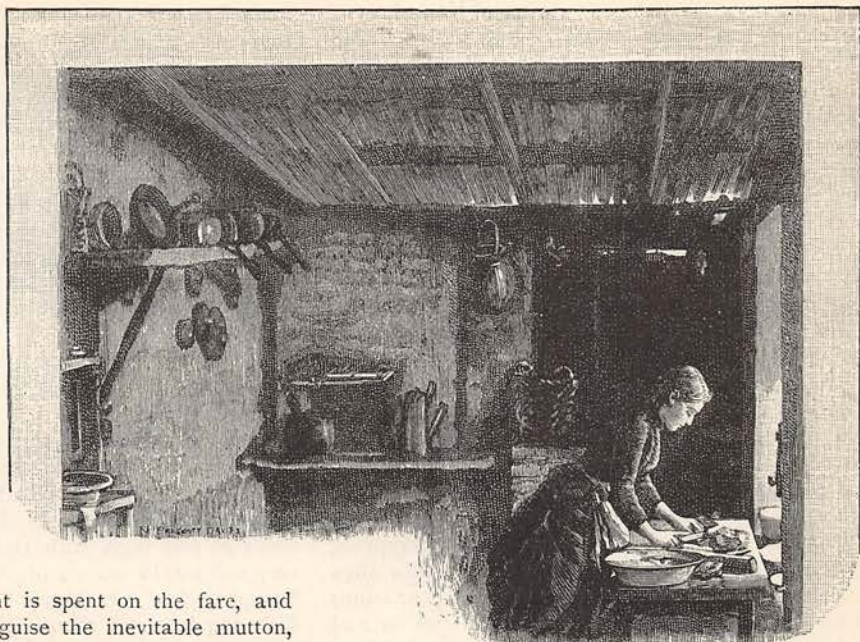
The hours are only comfortably early at the station, unless there is extra work to be done. Generally, however, one is up betimes; for early morning is glorious among the New Zealand mountains: clear and fresh, with an exhilarating atmosphere, and a crisp feeling even in midsummer. It is a pleasure, moreover, which will bear frequent repetition, to watch the sky slowly brighten behind the dark mountains, with long, crimson rays stretching far into the intense blue, until at last the grand old sun bursts forth in full power.

The breakfast-table is always laden with fruit, which has to be freshly gathered, the butter put in the snow stream to cool, and many other duties attended to.

The poultry are cared for by the mistress; and great is the cackling and fluttering at the first sound of her footstep. As a rule the egg returns are good, and broods flourish, except when the playful raids of collie pups result in wholesale massacre.

Fruit-picking and jam-making are very important items of the summer, hundreds of pounds being made for consumption during the long winter months.

Meanwhile, the gentlemen are engaged in the usual work of a farm; the early summer being more ex-



AN UP-COUNTRY KITCHEN.—A MUTTON PIE.

clusively devoted to the sheep, when the mustering, drafting, shearing, washing, and branding of lambs have to be done. Shearing is by far the hardest work, for all hands turn out at 5 a.m., and get through their twelve hours' shift. The master is the first to stir, and usually rouses the twenty or thirty shearers, who sleep in the men's "wharé"; in fact, the boss, if he is really hard-working, has few idle moments to fill up.

In the evening, when work is done, the gentlemen repair to the river-bed for a bath in a deep pool sheltered by a cliff, and fed by a tiny ever-flowing stream, cool and clear as crystal, with a marvellously invigorating power.

The rivers are very treacherous, and so rapid and wide that a ferry or home-made bridge is out of the question. Astonishing are the escapes when fording on horseback or dog-cart, for the water often washes round the waist of the rider and into the carriage. There are few casualties however, and these occur from ignorance or lack of presence of mind. Rain and snow on the surrounding mountains always cause the rivers to swell suddenly, so that in a couple of hours what was a grey, flat, shingly river-bed, with its three or four shallow streams, becomes a rushing flood a mile wide, whirling indiscriminately down its course trees, cattle, and sheep at an awful speed. At such times, and for days after, the river is utterly impassable, and woe betide the unlucky traveller caught on the wrong side! for there he will have to remain until the river subsides. Very exciting are the sudden gallops and hurried departures occasioned by the news that "the river is coming down."

After five o'clock tea, which is taken in the verandah, on the tennis-court, or in the fields when haymaking

and harvest are in full swing, all real work is over for the day, and amusements take their turn. Tennis, reading, needlework, and chit-chat are the rule. Everyone makes a change in dress for dinner, and the evenings slip away quickly under the soothing influences of pipe and music, moonlight and yarns.

Occasionally the quiet of the homestead is broken by a shrill "K—E—A! K—E—A!" from overhead. It is the cry of the gaily coloured hawk-like parrot so destructive to the flocks, and whose note acts on the shepherds like a red rag on a bull. There is a hurrying for guns by any who chance to be about, and a few cleverly imitated calls bring the stupid birds within shot.

The pleasures of a station life are innumerable, especially to those with a fair amount of good health, and a determination to enjoy everything. Horse exercise is the chief feature: long rides, rough and tiring perhaps, but always interesting, and possibly, if you happen to ride a half-broken colt, exciting enough; impromptu races over soft sweeping downs; running in wild horses is good fun, in which the ladies often take part; picnics in the beautiful bush; or tennis tournaments, to which neighbours flock from far and wide. Expeditions, in the form of riding and driving tours to other parts of the island, are some of the amusements; while the monotony of up-country life may be relieved at intervals by trips to Christchurch, for a spell of town gaieties.

In the backwoods, as all the world over, pleasure and sorrow sometimes elbow each other in strange mingling. One day, a merry party from the homestead, riding to a distant part of the bush, drew into a clearing where a young bushman had settled with his wife. Here the pathetic sight which met the riders

hushed their jokes and laughter, subduing them with the presence of a great grief. Bush-robins warbled round, the mocky-mock trilled his sweet soft notes, and the flashing wings of brilliant parakeets lit the clearing. But the sturdy bushman would hear their songs no more. To him, and to the happiness of this quiet bush home, death had come—sudden and awful, dealt by some falling tree or bough.

Pitiful enough to the intruders seemed the young widow, bowed over the stump of a tree felled by the hand that was stilled; his axe lying idly by, and his dog, unheeded, offering the mute comfort of a shared sorrow.

Silently the riders turned back, leaving one of their companions to give the sympathy and the help so needed.

Something must be said of this bush—that marvellous place which defies description. For no words could make anyone who had not seen it understand the imposing grandeur of the immense trees, hundreds of feet high, with creepers falling from their very summits in masses of green and polished twining "supple-jacks," or thorny "lawyer;" the sunshine flickering here and there, lighting up some grand old trunk of hoary growth; or a laughing, sparkling cascade, coursing through giant ferns tall as a man. Often whilst resting in its shadows one hears mysterious voices and steps, which are but phantom sounds; and it is no uncommon thing, when riding through, to turn in the saddle and wait for the horseman, the hoofs of whose steed are plainly heard, but never seen. One dark night, when a storm was gathering, a ball of blue fire appeared to settle on the indignant horse's neck, and restlessly flew hither and thither, disappearing only on reaching the open. All firewood comes from the



"THE POULTRY ARE CARED FOR BY THE MISTRESS" (p. 523).

N. P. DAVIES.

bush, and it is a thrilling moment when some monarch tree crashes down, carrying everything before it, to lie prostrate until fetched by the bullock-team and kindled into glowing life on the open hearth.

The team of ten bullocks is a curiosity in itself. The Herculean work these mild but mighty animals achieve is extraordinary, obeying word of mouth and crackings of the whip.

What country is without some slight inconveniences? Here the strong wind is troublesome in summer; so much so that walking is irksome, and its violence places umbrellas or big hats out of the question. In riding it is especially felt, for the sun is so hot and fierce, one really requires extra shelter for the head and neck; but the only thing possible for a lady to wear is the old-fashioned sun-bonnet, tied under the chin, and so easily kept in place. The sand-flies, too, are a pest, and particularly punish strangers. It is a minute fly, something like a midge, but its sting raises immense swellings, intensely irritable and not easily relieved.

Earthquakes are perhaps the most serious trouble. They are rather frequent, sometimes severe, and very alarming. Imagine awaking at midnight to find the wall cracking from roof to floor, everything tumbling about the room, the bed heaving and trembling, and a hideous underground roaring, which is heard perfectly distinct from the stage thunder of the iron roof. This is a reality beside which nightmares dwindle. In the morning, too, it is vexatious, among other misfortunes, to discover that all the milk has found its level on the dairy floor.

Sheep-dogs are important members of a homestead. Each "hand" has at least one or two, and the boss four or five. They are valuable items, more costly than ordinary horses, and all but human in sagacity. One dog was such a beauty, so perfect in points and

temper, that he was allowed the run of the house—a privilege permitted to no other doggie, but, alas! this produced ill-will towards the favourite, shown by many a snap and snarl. One day the envied one was missing, and search being made next morning, the poor dog was found literally bitten to death by his jealous companions.

Neighbours are few, and therefore valued, the distance from run to run being less hindrance to social intercourse than might be expected; for to the colonial a saddle is as easy as an arm-chair, and to ride twenty miles in the morning for a picnic or tennis tournament, returning the same road at night, is not thought out of the way. One lady well above sixty rode seventy miles to her station against a howling nor'-wester; and on her arrival made the beds and cooked the supper.

If a particular store falls short, or the garden fails in any commodity, friends always supply the deficiency. One morning a fine lake trout, weighing fifteen pounds, arrived in time for breakfast. It had been speared the night before, and sent twenty miles to be eaten fresh.

Hospitality is unbounded, irrespective of the guest's social standing. He is made equally at home in the drawing-room or kitchen, and the traveller is in no need of money. He and his horse may wend their way from homestead to homestead, always secure of a welcome, a meal, and a bed.

The round of a year or so is none too long to appreciate the characteristics of so genial a people, or the enjoyments offered by a life in the backwoods. And when the visitor takes his unwilling departure, he may be sure of carrying with him a hundred pleasant reminiscences, and health infinitely refreshed by mountain breezes.

LILY CARLON DAVIES.

THE MERCHANT PRINCE.

A Story in Three Parts. By J. BERWICK HARWOOD, Author of "What the Coral Reefs Gave Me," "Paul Knox, Pitman," "Lady Flavia," &c.

PART THE SECOND.

IHAD not come to San Antonio to eat the bread of idleness, and that unjust steward, the old factor, was perturbed in spirit when he found how resolutely I set to work from the first to reform abuses and make the best of Don Alvaro's splendid, but neglected, property. The estate had been sorely mismanaged, and sloth, and greed, and ignorance were rampant among those in whom my indolent employer had put his trust. Fertile tracts were being swallowed up by the encroachments of marsh and forest; the rents, which were mostly paid in kind, were shamelessly embezzled by the collectors, and roguery alone fattened; while the copper-coloured peons who tilled the soil were ground down to the veriest pittance on which life

could be sustained. In two months' time I was able to apprise Don Alvaro that the landlord's returns would be at least double what they had been, and that I had hopes of a far greater surplus at the end of the year, when maize, and cotton, and coffee, and tobacco, and indigo should have been fairly grown and sent to market. I became popular, too, with the Indian labourers, whom white men too commonly treated as Helots, or beasts of burthen, and whose humble standard of comfort I trusted to raise, while increasing the revenues of their employer.

But a reformer cannot please everyone, and I was twice fired at from behind a thicket before three weeks were out, and found it expedient to arm with a Colt's revolver, in discouragement of future attempts at assassination.