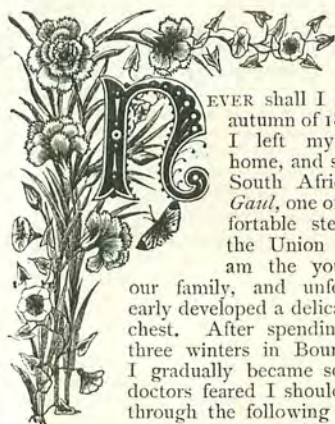


LIFE ON A TRANSVAAL SALT FARM.



NEVER shall I forget the autumn of 1894, when I left my English home, and set sail for South Africa in the *Gaul*, one of the comfortable steamers of the Union Line. I am the youngest of our family, and unfortunately early developed a delicacy of the chest. After spending two or three winters in Bournemouth, I gradually became so ill, the doctors feared I should not live through the following year, and urgently recommended my trying a sojourn in a warmer climate. Arrangements were therefore made for me to spend the winter at the Cape. We heard through a friend of ours of a Salt Farm in the Transvaal where dwelt delightful people who would let me make my home with them for a few months, returning to England for the summer.

At the time of sailing I was twenty-four years of age, and it did seem lonely to bid good-bye to all I loved, and start by myself for a strange country. On the pleasures of the voyage I must not touch, suffice it to say I enjoyed it from first to last, and was heartily sorry when we reached Cape Town. It seemed almost like leaving home again when I quitted the ship, and landed alone in a strange place, for of course the people from the Salt Farm could not come so far to meet me. I did feel a little lump in my throat when the steamer got alongside, and I saw the rapturous greetings between those who rushed on board to meet their absent ones. It seemed to me all were met but myself. At last feeling a more solitary girl than I have ever felt in my life, I drove from the *Gaul* in a hansom driven by a Malay, to a boarding-house, the address of which had been given me.

To the great relief of my mind I found they were able to take me in. I stayed there a few days before starting on the long journey up-country. I was delighted with Cape Town and its surroundings, which are very beautiful. The wild flowers are simply gorgeous and very plentiful. To me it was amusing to see the many coloured people (five to every one white) of every nationality, and wearing in some cases most picturesque costumes. It was with feelings of regret I left Cape Town one Sunday night and started on my long journey. I had no choice in the matter, I was obliged to start on a Sunday if I wanted to arrive that week, the post-cart service (part of the way by which I had to travel) not at other times of the week fitting in with the trains. Unfortunately I had a trouble about my luggage. Usually in going up-country it is sent by ox-waggon, and arrives in process of time, but when I wanted to go, I was sorry to hear foot-and-mouth disease had broken out, and ox-waggons were not allowed to cross the border between the Free State and the Transvaal. Consequently I had to take my luggage with me, which was expensive. They allow you very little free, and charge exorbitantly for what is over weight. I left my heavy baggage in Cape Town, and only took one moderate-sized box, for which I had to pay 13s. 6d. for extra weight by rail, and £1 10s. by post-cart. My travelling expenses amounted to £12.

and this was second class. Oh, it was a wearisome journey! I started at nine o'clock on the Sunday night, and travelled by rail as far as Warrenton. From there I went on by post-cart to Christiana. This post-cart was drawn by six mules; they were changed twice during the journey, which took four and a half hours.

Christiana is a small place boasting about a hundred inhabitants. A political meeting was being held in the grassy main street when we arrived, and I saw Paul Kruger, the President of the Transvaal. He was smoking a pipe while the audience asked him questions, and this he would remove for a moment, reply, and put back again.

Mr. Jones, the owner of the Salt Farm, drove to Christiana to meet me, which was very kind, as it meant a day's journey. I was thankful to find he had taken a room for me at the hotel. Such a place! Ant-hills in the corners of the room, a canvas ceiling, through which I could see the roof, and everything else in the same style. However, I got a wash and a sleep, both of which I sadly needed. We were on the road again next morning at five o'clock, and did eighteen miles before breakfast. We finally reached our destination at sun-down after seventy-two hours travelling on my part. The kind people of the farm gave me such a warm welcome, and I fell in love with Mrs. Jones at once, and have never wavered in my first impression of her. She and her husband are English, and had lately returned from a visit to the old country, so we had much to talk over.

And now I want to tell you a little of what life on a Salt Farm is like. The chief work is obtaining the salt, which is done in this way. Holes are dug in the soil from which a briny spring wells up, the water evaporates, leaving salt. This is collected, and still in the unrefined state, is done up into small packets which are mostly sold to the coloured people. The salt pan as it is called, around the edges of which they continue to work, looks like a big lake away in front of the house, with willow trees, meaties, etc., growing around. This farm contains 8000 acres, and is situated at an altitude of 6000 feet above sea-level. It is fifteen miles from the nearest house, and many miles from any town, consequently as far as possible it was the object of Mr. Jones to be as independent of outside help in the matter of food as possible.

Groceries were sent up once in six months, and with that exception the farm produced what else was wanted. You understand that the salt was the industry of the farm, and cattle, sheep and poultry-rearing, grain-growing, etc., were only carried on as a means of living for the household. The distance was too great to send for coal, so their fuel consisted of dried cow-dung, but this was so prepared as to be perfectly inoffensive, and I should never have guessed what it was.

When I was there we numbered only eleven white people, six of whom were children. All the labour was done by coloured folks, Kaffirs, Bushmen and Boers. Of these there seemed any number about, and at night when they all came up to the homestead for rations they looked quite an army of darkies.

The house is long and white, of one storey, with a thatched roof; the rooms opening one out of the other. To reach my bedroom I had to pass through five rooms. The other bedrooms were at the further end of the house. I could not help thinking, if I screamed in the night no one could hear me, and just at first I felt a wee bit nervous, for they had no locks on any of the doors, only latches, nor any

fastenings on the windows, and there were any number of Kaffirs, snakes, and horrid crawley things about.

Mrs. Jones led a more than busy life. She was up early and worked hard all day, having to make the bread, see to the cooking, superintend the dairy, sew for the family, in fact, she regularly slaved. I did admire her energy and disposition to make the best of things. Naturally she loved society, was fond of reading, and it was most praiseworthy the way she tried to keep up with the times, making leisure to read the magazines and papers of the day which came from Cape Town. She had a governess for the children, and all being fond of music, they often had musical evenings.

But oh! the solitude, the loneliness! Unless you have been right up-country away from civilisation you cannot realise it. Kind as they were to me, I felt I could not live or rather vegetate all my life in such a place. Living in such solitude has many drawbacks. One is the lack of a church, and another, there is no doctor within eighty miles. And, oh! it does seem such a long way from England, and so utterly out of the world. Then the Post is a most uncertain affair, for it is only occasionally they can drive into the town, which is a long journey off, and your letters and newspapers reach you in no other way.

Unexpectedly, my stay was shortened to six weeks instead of six months, as was originally intended.

When I arrived, the middle of December, the weather was perfect. We had chronic sunshine and refreshing cool breezes, and I was feeling wonderfully well. Soon however my throat began to trouble me. I wrote to a doctor at Cape Town for a remedy, but it took ten days to come. He said if my throat continued painful, no doubt it was caused by the air at such an altitude passing over the salt pan, proving too irritating. I grew so much worse, that arrangements were made for me to return to Cape Town.

The Christmas spent at the Salt Farm was one of the jolliest in my life. On Christmas Eve we all sat up till twelve o'clock, a violent thunder-storm was going on, but it usually thunders some part of the day in the Transvaal. We told ghost stories and reached an eerie stage of feeling, when twelve struck, then we all shook hands one with the other, sang "Christians, awake, salute the happy mom," and retired to rest. Next morning the excitement of the children was beautiful to see. Presents were put on every one's plate at the breakfast-table; the room was decorated with willow and mimosa, and looked very pretty.

Mr. Jones conducted a service during the morning, to which the coloured people also came.

We had a regular English dinner, a bullock had been killed for the occasion, and the pudding contained the money, ring and thimble of old renown. Some visitors from Kimberley were spending the festive season on the farm, and in the evening the young folks had a gay time, with tableaux and dancing, the blacks forming a very appreciative audience.

One night about the beginning of the new year, it had been too hot to go out by day, so we all took a walk by moonlight.

We went to some huts across the veldt and saw a number of Kaffirs and Basutos dancing.

They play a *monotonous tune* on the concertina, and the blacks in curious costume dance away with a peculiar sort of revolving step. It looked so weird by moonlight.

I cannot imagine anything more health-

giving than life on the veldt, though in a few cases, as in mine, the air has been proved to be too irritating.

As I had to return to Cape Town so much sooner than was expected, Mrs. Jones kindly said she would hurry on her plans, and travel with me. She had for some time talked of placing the orphaned niece she was mothering in a good school at Cape Town. Accordingly one Saturday we started by bullock-waggon, which took us as far as Warrenton, and occupied four days. We had twelve oxen, and trekked three times in the twenty-four hours. We rather enjoyed it by day, but at night it was horrid, for the waggon jolted dreadfully. After dark we enjoyed sitting on the waggon-rail, watching the wonderful stars, and feeling

the air cooler and more refreshing. It was a strange Sunday, camping right out on the open veldt, with the glorious blue sky overhead. We took the train at a little siding called Border, only one tiny tin house in the place—no station, of course. The scene that last night was really picturesque. Imagine the lonely veldt, then there was our bright fire, the black boys (our drivers) lying around it, the waggon looming up, and the cattle sighing and puffing. Myriads of stars, and the Southern Cross flaming away, and we all crouched on a karoos, talking quietly, as befitted the scene, waiting for the train.

At 2.30 A.M. we got into the middle of the line, and waved a red light to stop the train; there was not a soul about, it seemed quite weird,

and I was glad not to be alone. I was glad to feel myself going further and further away from this hideous, God-forsaken looking country, so utterly flat and treeless. The railway journey occupied rather more than two days, making a six days' journey in all. I felt quite excited as we neared Cape Town and caught the first view of the sea; why, I felt close to England!

I must now bring this brief sketch to a close, and before doing so must confess I am lonely no more. In Cape Town I met my ideal, and I most emphatically can say, "Marriage is not a failure." I feel I owe a deep debt of gratitude to South Africa for giving me first of all renewed health, and then the kindest and best of husbands.
R. M. W.

A PRETTY BED-QUILT.

USING UP THE ODD PIECES.

"WHAT can I do with all these odds and ends of wool?" is a question one often asks when necessity calls for a thorough clearing out of work-baskets and drawers, when short

too glad to work for the poor and sick if they knew in what direction to employ their efforts, and it is for these and all who have a little leisure that the following directions are given.

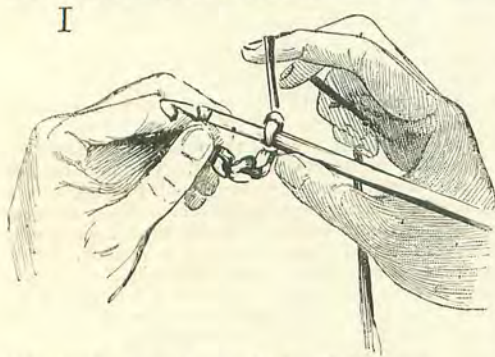
Just a few hints to start with. A fair sized crochet hook is required, and the work must not be tightly done, as it spoils the effect.

Double crochet consists in putting the wool once over the needle before making a stitch; in single crochet you omit this.

All kinds of wool can be used in the same quilt, for Shetland and other thin wools may be doubled or trebled to match "fingering" or "single Berlin," except for the outside edge where only black "fingering" or "single Berlin" may be used.

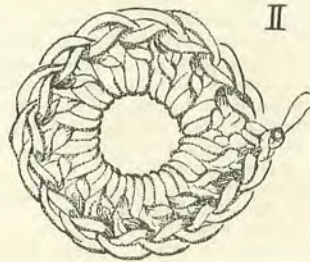
Every colour under the sun may be used indiscriminately for the centres; the greater the variety the more charming the quilt, indeed the effect is much

the eighth; fasten off at the point from which you started, and you have completed the second stage, see Diagram III.



lengths of wool of every shade and thickness have been accumulating for months and even years, and almost invariably the answer is, "Throw them away, they are quite useless."

Yet these same despised fragments might have been worked up into the prettiest of bed-quilts and covers for perambulators for poor people, who value them extremely both for their warmth and brightness; they give to the cottage or the attic just the bit of



colour wanted; and to the sick or crippled children in their perambulators they are a perpetual source of pleasure and amusement.

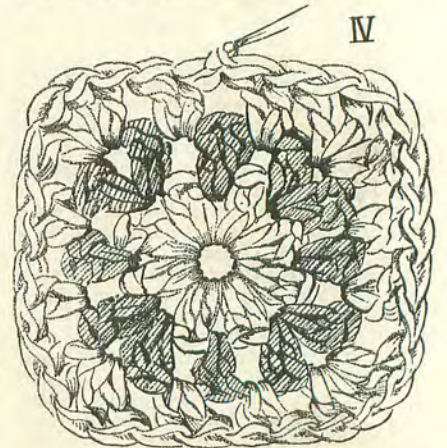
There are many ladies who would only be

prettier if you mix the colours with Oriental recklessness rather than try to harmonise or shade them.

Now to business. Select a length of wool, say, two yards, of any colour you like, and crochet a chain of six stitches, see Diagram I.; join this in a circle and work into it sixteen stitches of double crochet, Diagram II., fasten off and you have a little star.

If you consider each two of the sixteen stitches you have just made as one, you will have eight spaces.

Now take a rather longer fragment of wool, it may be blue, green or any colour you please, and work two double crochet stitches into the first space, and four double into the second space; two double into the third space, and four double into the fourth; two double into the fifth space, and four double into the sixth; two double into the seventh space and four double into



Take a yet longer length of a wholly different colour and work two double stitches on either side of the stitch, consisting of two



double crochet in the row just complete, and in the middle of the four make four double stitches again. Continue this till you come