

ON A BOER FARM.

A contributor to the Pall Mall Gazette, who spent six months on a Boer farm, has been relating his experiences, from which we extract the following:—

"The homestead, like all boer farm-houses, is stuck in the open veldt and built close to a stream bounded on one side by a garden in which grew orange, lemon, citron, peach, apple, and pear trees. The houses are built of red bricks baked in the sun, the spaces between the bricks being filled with mud, which, to keep from drying to dust, has to be continually moistened with water. That of Mr. Grundling would not have looked so repulsive had the roof been thatched. As the Boer, however, has no eye for the picturesque, he finds galvanized corrugated iron an admirable substitute. But if the outside was not prepossessing, the inside was absolutely forbidding.

"Wood is scarce in the Transvaal, so the houses are never more than one storey high, which does away with staircases; and for boards they find a substitute in dung, which, when well smeared with blood after the dung has been well flattened, makes a long-enduring substitute for Brussels. The aroma exhaled by Boer carpets is not exactly all that could be desired, but as a keen sense of smell is not one of the Boer's strong points he is as satisfied with his carpet as he is with his galvanized roof. Another feature of home life for which these people entertain a most lofty contempt is furniture and domestic crockery. All the furniture belonging to my host was unmistakably of home origin; the stool on which I was invited to seat myself while partaking of the Boer national beverage, coffee, having at least two short legs. Cups and saucers, as well as knives and forks, being unknown among these primitive people, I was handed my coffee in a basin. I should have liked a little milk, but milk, although the Boers are a pastoral race, is practically unknown in the Transvaal; and sugar they despise, mainly, I believe, because they understand it is popular in Europe.

"Before I had been at the farm a week I discovered that not only was their mode of life suited to the modern ideas of the European, but that the diet from its want of variety was detrimental to health. This was the sort of life I led for six months. Daybreak would find me at the front door of the farm by the side of Jacobus as he leaned against the door, sleepily counting his sheep and cattle as they were driven past by his Kaffir herdsmen. Boer farms average from 8,000 to 6,000 morgen—that is, 6,000 to 12,000 acres. Consequently, the farms being about ten miles apart, there is plenty of room for the rearing of live stock. But the flocks are very small. The sheep are subject to a disease called redwater, which the Boers obstinately imagine can be cured by soap and water or tobacco water. A good veterinary surgeon could make a fortune in the Transvaal if the people could be prevailed on to trust to his skill.

"Ten a.m. was the hour for the first meal, consisting of stewed meat and coffee. Then the entire family, consisting of some twenty people, many of them men verging on middle age—for a Boer farmer does not start in business for himself till he is well advanced in years—all set to work to water the garden, smoking Boer tobacco, which is of excellent quality.

Idling or riding about would bring us up to 2 p.m., at which hour the household would close doors and shutters, and indulge in a siesta till four. Then smoking and riding about the farm would be resumed till six, at which hour the second meal, consisting of soup and stewed meat, would be served. During the whole of my stay I never saw any departure from this bill of fare. Bacon I asked for; there was none to be had; the Boers disliking pork. I bought a joint once of the vrow, but I was glad to return to the stewed meat. Transvaal sheep, when well, gallop about like dogs, and consequently do not show to advantage on the table. I could get no butter; the few fowls there were I soon devoured, and although I quickly began to loathe the stewed meat, I had to eat it or starve."

CYCLE TOURING.

As the use of the bicycle becomes more general, remarks *Harper's Weekly*, touring becomes more a matter of interest to the average rider, or, more specifically, to those who have taken up the bicycle as a means of pleasure and exercise, and who are not interested in racing or in records. This class of riders already far outnumbers that which pursues cycling for purposes of personal gain, or from the desire to excel in speed upon the track or road; and although the sporting pages of the daily newspapers ignore the former class, and devote columns to the doings of the latter, the sport is really most largely supported through the recently developed interest of the non-racing cyclist.

In touring the rider should be wary of coasting, which leads very often to serious accidents, especially as touring parties generally traverse roads with which they are not familiar. As a rule one should not coast on a very steep hill, or on one with a turn in it, where the bottom cannot be seen, and, in fact, coasting should only be indulged in on a straight, smooth hill, with moderate incline, and then with the brake partly on, and the wheel under full control. All cross-roads should be carefully watched, and no one should coast just behind a vehicle going in the same direction, as this may slow suddenly or turn sharply into some side street. In touring, side-path riding comes very often into use. Be careful to watch your path ahead so as to avoid runaways, thorns, and sharp stones, and also be sure, even in the outskirts of a town or village, before you take the side path or sidewalk, that there are no signs prohibiting its use. It is always wiser when you get near the centre of a town or village, whether any signs are visible or not, to ride in the street if it is at all passable.

Mr. J. Cleveland Cady has summed up the charms of cycle touring very succinctly as follows: "Any one who wishes to get the most out of a vacation, both in healthful invigoration and pleasure, will find a wheeling tour superior to any other means. Nothing so completely takes the mind from business; the wheel demands and will have all the attention that is not absorbed by the scenery, or circumstances of the trip; business and the ordinary cares of life are quite forgotten. The lungs receive a thorough revivifying, and the circulation starts into healthful activity; sleep becomes sound, appetite voracious, and digestion perfect. Certainly this is an ideal condition for an overworked brain-worker, or a man enslaved in the routine of business."

Our Young Folks.

THE TABLES.

"O, I cannot say these tables
For the teacher skips, you see,
All the questions that are hardest
She'll be sure to give to me.
The twos, threes, and fours are easy,
The fives and tens and 'levens,
But it's hard to learn the sixes,
The eights, the nines, the sevens.

"Sometimes I wish I might be ill,
So I would not have to go
To school the days those hard ones come,
For I'm sure to miss, I know.
But then, of course, I could not play
Out of doors when school is done;
And these spring-days we boys do have
The jolliest kind of fun.

"To ask mamma for an excuse,
That she did not think was fair,
Would do no good—she's very strict
To have things on the square.
I s'pose I'd better pitch right in,
And fight my way clear through
Those tables, 'till I've mastered them—
And that's just the thing I'll do."

Now that's the sort of scholar
For all girls and boys to be,
If you don't master the hard places,
I'm sure that you'll agree
That you never can acquit yourselves
With high honour to your name,
Because you stopped in schooldays
When difficulties came.

You'll find that life is very much
Like those tables learned in school;
You will have to know your figures
And well understand the rule.
Some problems will be easy, like
The fives, the tens, the 'levens,
But there'll be others in the nines,
The sixes, eights, and sevens.

—S. Teall Perry.

AMONG THE MOHAMMEDANS.

"Oh, it is funny where the Mohammedans live," said little Ben. "It is all different from the United States. People do not look or talk the same or do the same things. I went to Turkey and Arabia once. I traveled about a great deal with grandpa.

"I saw the mosques, which are their churches. They do not have bells; they call the people to prayer with their voices; going out upon places made to stand on, and clapping their hands and crying out: 'Come to prayer, oh, ye faithful, come to prayer.' Then the people pray, but they wash their hands first. They must wash before they utter the name of 'Allah,' which is what they call, God.

"Grandpa told me what they meant, and after awhile I understood a little myself, and could talk to Ali."

"Who was Ali?" asked Cousin Jim.

"He was Mr. Kutub's largest boy," said Ben. "Of course, the gentleman was not called Mister, but I do not know what else to say. He was a merchant. He entertained grandpa very nicely.

"They always drank coffee when they talked business. Mr. Kutub had a long, black beard. It came to his waist. It was glossy as silk. He was always very serious.

"Mrs. Kutub stayed in a room of her own, where there were other ladies, and kept the little girls with her.

"The ladies wore thin, white veils even in the house. Out of doors a black silk gown, like a Mother Hubbard, and a veil that hid every bit of her face but one eye. The ladies rode on donkeys when they went out. They never walked. They seemed very pleasant, and laughed a good deal.

"The little girls never played with us.

"All the little boys had bald heads. They were shaved smooth. They wore funny little turbans on them, and had loose trousers and cloth gowns, and slip-

pers with curly toes. They took off their slippers when they went into the house.

"I went to school with them once. The schoolmaster was a young man, dressed much as they were. He sat on a flat cushion in the middle of the room, and all the scholars sat about him in a half-circle, right on the floor. He had a sort of flat tray, full of sand, and a long ivory stick with a sharp point. When they were all assembled he made them say something. I think it must have been a little prayer. Then he wrote something on the sand with the stick. Each of the pupils read it in turn. Then the teacher wrote something else. When the sand was covered with writing, a little black boy came and made it smooth again.

"The bible they use is called the Koran, and all the boys had to be taught that by heart; but I could not stay while they were learning that, because I was not a Mohammedan. The boys played more than they studied, and they had cimitars made of tin and gilded.

"I stayed with Mr. Kutub's family a good many weeks. Then he left home to go with a caravan across the desert, and he told me that he would take me to my grandfather.

"I said good-by to Ali and the other boys, and asked them to come and see me in New York, and then I went away with Mr. Kutub.

"We travelled some time before we came to a town on the borders of the desert we had to cross. It was a great place, covered with sand. There were lots of camels, laden with packs of goods.

"The camels kneel down and are loaded, and rise with their loads. There were litters on most of them for people to ride on, and awnings over them.

"There was one camel which carried, besides a litter with a striped awning all trimmed with fringe, a very queer, long bag. Mr. Kutub told me I must ride that camel. The camel was named Lulee. The drivers were kinder to her than they were to the other animals, but she seemed unhappy. The bag seemed to worry her, and she kept turning her head to look at it, and grumbling and grunting discontentedly.

"It was such a queer looking bag that I kept wondering what could be in it. Now and then I thought it moved. We started at night. People always cross the desert after dark for the sake of coolness, and the stars and moon were overhead, and the bells on the camels' necks jingled, and the drivers began to sing together. It was all so strange and quiet that I should have liked it very much, only that riding on a camel makes people as if they were sea-sick at first. When the morning came and the caravan stopped for breakfast, I was very glad.

"The camels seemed glad, too, especially Lulee. She knelt down in a great hurry, and looked at me as if she would eat me when Mr. Kutub lifted me off her back. Then she looked at the bag and gave such a heart-broken cry. Mr. Kutub laughed, and said:

"Now look, little Ben—look!"

"Indeed I did look, for one of the camel-drivers was opening the queer bag and as he did so, out came four long legs like stilts, and a tiny, white body, and a neck like a snake, and a queer little head, with yellow eyes, a great mouth that seemed to be grinning, and big, flapping lips. It was funnier than any Brownie. I could not guess what it could be, and I asked Mr. Kutub.

"He is a baby camel," he told me, 'Lulee's baby. She loves him—see how glad.' And indeed Lulee was glad, and so was the baby, who began the funniest dance you ever saw, its long legs going all ways at once. He seemed to be showing off, like a conceited person, and I laughed and laughed. I have to laugh now when I think of that baby camel. It was the funniest thing I saw in all my journeys. After a while it grew tired and lay down close to its mother, and had its breakfast, just like a little calf, and when it had finished, the men milked Lulee, and we all had camel's milk and hot cakes for breakfast. They tasted very nice."—*New York Ledger*.