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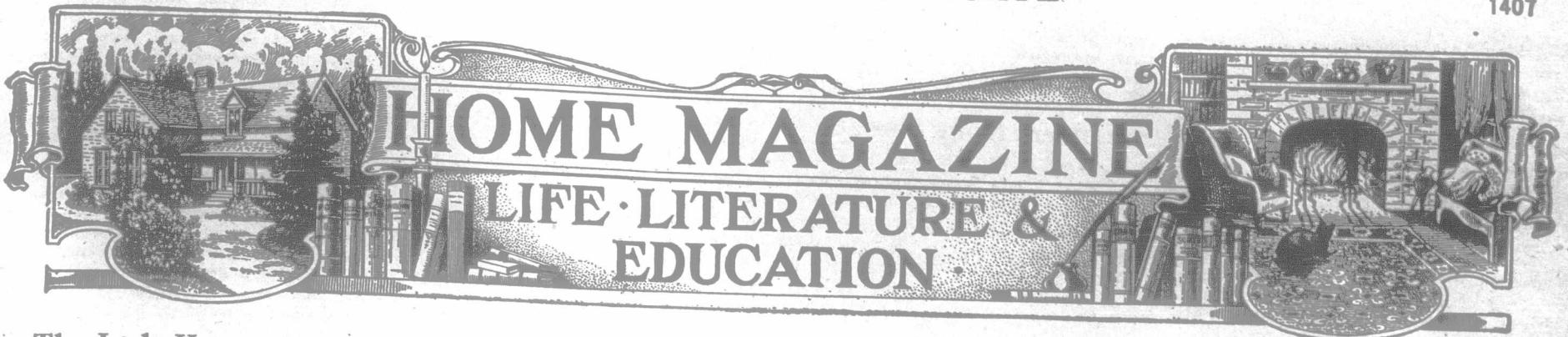
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AUGUST 14, 1913

THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE.

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## The Lady Honyocker.

How Girls Take Up Claims and Make Their Own Homes on the Prairie.  
By Mabel Lewis Stuart.

[When we see the multitude of able-bodied young men hanging around Broadway hunting for somebody who will give them some sort of a job and the still greater number of young women laboring away in offices or idly waiting for some one to come along and marry them, our admiration goes out to the girls of the West who have the courage and enterprise to carve out their own fortunes and make their own homes. You may find them on Wyoming ranches, in Idaho forests or on Dakota plains; independent, energetic and cheerful; good stuff out of which to build a future commonwealth].

In the western parts of North and South Dakota and in Wyoming and Montana are vast stretches of country formerly inhabited only by the occasional cattle and sheep outfit, and the attendant cowboy and herder, but now becoming thickly peopled by a variety of the genus homo known as the "Honyocker" or homesteader. It is probable that in the mind of the average Easterner the homesteader is a slouchy individual of the lonely bachelor type who smokes a stub pipe, lives on pancakes and bacon, and whose occupation of "holding down a claim" is never allowed to become irksome by the introduction of hard work. It is undoubtedly true that such individuals do exist on claims, but they do not by any means form the entire population of the claim country. On the contrary, a large percentage of these pioneers of Uncle Sam's are not even of the masculine sex. More than one-third of them are women who are taking an active part in the up-building of a new country and incidentally acquiring one hundred and sixty acres of Uncle Sam's land. So it is evident that the "typical homesteader" may as fairly be considered feminine as masculine and the "Lady Honyocker" as fair a representative of the claim country as the man. Certain it is that she is taking her part with zest and courage in the development of those vast stretches of country which until a few years or even months ago were a part of the still "uncivilized" West.

To the girls on the claim life presents as varied an aspect—although in a different way—as to the fashionable young lady in New York City. But there are features of the claim life of which the city young lady never dreams, or the result of which, if she did, would probably be the nightmare. To her the thought of being alone sixty miles from the railroad, in a 10 x 12 shanty on the wide prairie, would have only terror. Not so the girl on the claim. Alone in her little shack, a mile from the nearest neighbor, she never thinks of being afraid. Why should she be? The fact of the great distance from the railroad insures safety from tramps. Dis-

"The word 'honyocker,' we are informed by a reliable authority, is from the Russian and in that language signifies 'a greenhorn,' 'one new at his business.' It had been borrowed by the people who already lived in the Western country before it was thrown open for settlement, and applied facetiously to the homesteaders with the meaning perhaps of 'one new at his business,' therefore 'a blunderer.' But far from considering it a reproach, our merry enterprising young people on the homesteads claim it a title of honor and respect. The word is pronounced with both o's short, hon-yok-er. As a term of contempt, it may be curtailed as in the phrase 'Only a honyock.'

tance from a saloon, from drunken men. Of what else should she be afraid? Coyotes? Well, to be sure, she sometimes hears them howling around at night, but they seldom approach nearer than a few yards, and are easily frightened away by shouting or singing. Rattlesnakes? Perhaps. She sometimes hears and sees them. Should a rattler coil to attack, which he never does unless disturbed, she can easily run away, but will usually return with a stick or gun to slay the monster. No, fear has no part in the life of the girl on the claim.

the kind of work that some of these claim girls are capable of doing. Her fearlessness, her courage, and sprightly independence are winning for the pioneer girl the applause of the truest modern chivalry and have made her the subject of at least one real "claim ballad," "The Girl on the Claim," by Arthur Chapman. We cannot forbear quoting entire this little bit of western minstrelsy.

'Tis a shack in the open—the girl calls it home,  
And the winds of the prairie all murmur the name—



Carrying the Varsity Atmosphere to the Claim.  
(This honyocker is a graduate of a university.)

Claim life is a decided change for most girls from the mode of living in settled parts of the country. The independence and freedom, together with the added responsibility of managing one's own affairs, are irresistibly and healthfully entralling. Girls who come out to the claim broken down in health find they can do things which before they would have thought impossible. Some girls go fifty, even sixty or seventy miles for provisions, and many of them sod up their own shacks for the winter. If you wish to form an idea of what this little exercise means, go out to a piece of ground just freshly turned over with the breaking plow, take a spade, cut a piece of the sod about eighteen inches long and carry it a short distance. Remember that it makes hundreds of such pieces to sod up a shack, and you will understand

She has driven her stakes and has furrowed the loam,  
And high is the head of the girl on the claim.  
She fears not the night, nor the storm in its wrath—  
She is proud of her day when the sun sets like flame;  
No prison-like shop casts its shades o'er her path—  
There is hope in the face of the girl on the claim.  
She is winning, each day, toward the coveted prize—  
She is beating adversity's heart-breaking game;  
There is courage sublime shining out of her eyes—  
Hats 'off to the girl who has staked out a claim!



The Musician.

(Sod or no sod, there's really a piano in this shack.)

The castle of the Lady Honyocker is usually a shack 10 x 12, 14 x 16 or perhaps 16 x 20 feet in dimensions. It is built of rough pine boards green from a lumber mill near some pine forest with which these states are dotted. Outside of the boards, black tarred paper is fastened securely with large-headed tacks. The house is then sodded up to afford greater warmth in winter and coolness in summer.

Within, the little house is just what the individual girl makes it. She has her books, pictures, magazines, guitar, and perhaps even her piano and hand-painted china. The little home may have the individuality and originality, though perhaps not the luxury, of a Bryn Mawr or Vassar girl's room. In fact, many claim holders are college girls and their collection of many colored pennants and other college trophies grace the walls of the prairie shack.

The fact that the tiny domicile must be kitchen, sitting room, dining room, library, and bedroom all in one—with usually 120 to 168 square feet of floor space—makes the disposition of furniture and supplies a serious study, the ingenuity displayed in the interior arrangement of these small dwellings would do credit to a modern house-boat or an English pleasure-caravan. A folding sanitary couch serves as bed by night and sofa by day. The stoves, number O's, are tiny affairs, but complete with four griddles and an oven. Most of the other furniture is home-made, probably dry goods boxes. A corner cupboard reaching to the ceiling, or rather the rafters, is sometimes seen. This is a very convenient affair—serving as pantry and larder, dish cupboard, linen press and storeroom.

Varying interests claim the time and attention of the homesteader girl. The musician practices three hours a day on her piano, does her housework, drills the choir, tends her poultry and garden and has some time left for her favorite past-time of target shooting.

Household duties are more or less exacting on the claim, and girls who come out with the idea that life will be one long holiday are surprised to find how busy they are. If one is to live and if the frequent visitors (one girl counted fifteen in one week) are to be properly fed, bread must be made, the cookie jar kept filled, and other important details attended to. Before the cooking can be done, there is also wood to be chopped from the huge pile before the door—it is possible for a girl to become a very good woodchopper.

The idea that the girl on the claim leads a lonely life is one not always easily disproven in the minds of anxious eastern friends. But a short stay in one of these busy claim communities would surely convince the most solicitous. Many times three or four girls take claims near together, building their shacks only a few rods apart. The writer knows one such little settlement in Butte County, South Dakota. Two sisters and their brother took up adjoining claims and the three houses are within a stone's throw of each other. Another pair of sisters, friends of the first two, took adjoining quarters and built their houses close together, and as near to the others as possible. This would be a half mile, the length of a quarter section. The houses were connected by telephone so that the two groups could communicate at any hour of the day or night.

Aside from this pleasant social life with the nearer neighbors, there is a great deal to take away any tendency to "lonesomeness" on the claim in various social organizations. In the community of Redig, Harding County, South Dakota, a little church has been started,