

## Influence Unawares

By FRANCES GREENMAN.

I. "I calculate," said Pa Dallas, "that the commissioners ain't asking odds of no one. Dear knows both roads are far from good, and there's not a mite of use to try to make them decide on our west road. I feel it in my bones they're going to pick on the east route."

Pouring two buckets of foaming milk into a big pan in the milk house, he looked inquiringly at his wife. Ma Dallas took her time to finish the skinning; she plunged the skimmer into a pail of water and hung it on its own particular nail before she demanded:

"Why?"

"Cause we don't know what sort of influence is going to bear." "Influence—what a word! I'd think it would be dead from overwork. Why don't you men-folks try?" "We can't think of anything to do," said Pa as he picked up his pails. "Billy Mix ain't one to ask nor take advice. Tom Hart's most as bad, and neither of 'em wants to be re-elected. Besides, they've called in a highway engineer and a good-roads expert. I calculate we'll have to let matters take their course."

Mr. and Mrs. Ted Dallas had neither "chick nor child" of their own, but, nevertheless, they owned many children. To the whole countryside they were Pa and Ma; their house door was the easiest one to swing open, and no one ever passed a dull hour within the four walls of the old farmstead. Mrs. Dallas gazed speculatively through the open door of the milk house upon the flowering trees and the sheen of spring grasses. A lilac bush beside the door swayed in the morning breeze, penguins flattered from the barn roof, and Good Fellow, the best chum dog in Precious Meadows township, thumped his tail on the wide store step.

"Your turn's coming," said Ma. "I'm going to start you churning right off. You can 'influence' the machinery, and the machinery'll 'influence' the churn, and the churn'll 'influence' the cream, and—" Ma Dallas laughed. She was a sixty-year-old woman and in spite of her weight as stout as a girl. All the countryside loved Ma Dallas and the butter she made. The proprietor of the Great Eastern Emporium, at the highest price for the firm, golden balls with a deer stamped neatly on each one.

"Only fault I find with your butter, Ma," he told her, "is you don't bring in cream." "I'd come often, Mr. Swift, if it wasn't for the road. There are forty-seven kinds of bumps and hollows in it. I'll own I'm comfortable except by the time I reach your store."

Ma lingered a while in the milk house that morning. Everyone who came to the farm said the milk house was the "nicest place." A cool light broke rippled among the stones; the pen, "four feet square," stood on iron legs at a convenient height for Ma and Clarissa; Ann to skim the laces of milk topped with yellow cream. The little windows were wreathed in vines; shining this and implements ornamented the walls; and on a shelf was a row of stems with delft-blue boys and girls, and cats chasing round and round them. Outside a big blue-wood whistled, and in the friendly shade of the tree Good Fellow paced round and round "influencing" the butter to "come."

"While I'd love to have the paved road past our place, I've got no time to worry this morning," said Ma to herself. "Sugar cookies and bread to mix and a nice hot dinner after! Mercy! I better be flaxing round a bit swifter."

When Ma reached the kitchen Clarissa was just hanging up the dish pan. "Aunt Dell," began Clarissa, "Uncle Jed ventures the commissioners'll pick the east road. My! What wouldn't it mean to us west roaders to have a decent highway clear to town! I wish we had some influence."

"Run down cellar, Clarissa, and 'influence' the lard and that dish of berries to come up into the kitchen." "But don't you care about our getting the paved road?" Aunt Dell's wailed pretty Clarissa.

"You know well I do, child, how I'm all but jounced to a jelly after a trip to town. However, I'm real busy now, thinking about 'influence'."

While Ma made cookie dough she pondered her subject. She got out the crimp-edged cookie cutter and began to make circles the sugar-sprinkled dough on the moulding board.

"Let's see," she mused, "I spanked Ted McCoole once when I caught him in my cherry tree, and now he's real important—a highway engineer, been called on to go over both roads and advise the commissioners. Now I'll wager—"

What she would wager she did not say. For the dinner hour was at hand and a tall, thin woman with a silk bag on her arm came into the kitchen.

"Why, Mistle Brewster!"

"I knocked at every door, Ma. I told Henry I'd rather sit a spell with you than look at the best Berkshire ever panned. Henry's daft on pigs. He's gone over to Charlie Stetson's to try to buy another."

Mrs. Dallas plumped up the cushion in the calico rocker by the morning-glory window.

"I'm glad you did, Mistle, but I'm right in the middle of cookies."

"Go on, Ma; you know I can't eat and talk same as you can bake and talk. My! You own the homeliest kitchen in the country. I tell folks if I was collecting kitchenware, like we used to collect buttons, I'd have yours on my charm string sure."

Ma laughed and tested the temperature of the oven with her hand be-

fore sliding in a pan of cookies. It's just a pot or so of geraniums and cheerful paint, Mistle.

The visitor shook her head. "Your kitchen has a soul, Ma. I suppose you have heard the commissioners are going over our road Saturday. They have a Mr. Paul, a good roads expert, down from the city."

"Better get a bad-roads expert," said Ma dryly. "If anyone can show two worse roads than the east and west ones our commissioners are inspecting, I don't want to view 'em. There's not one reason why we shouldn't get the paving on our road, nor, so far as I know, why the east road shouldn't neither."

"Every time it rains I tell Henry I'd about as soon be tossed up in a blanket as to go to town over our road. Sam Sprout's going to be a widower one of these days, it takes so long to get a doctor when Mary has those spells. On a smooth road Doc Kilroy could make it in a quarter of the time. Think what a good road would mean to us all."

Ma placed a plate of cookies on the broad window ledge near her guest, rested her hands on her hips and surveyed the woman in the rocker. "I'm real pillowy, Mistle," she said, "but I own feelings, especially when I'm trying to reach town with my butter and my disposition in the same condition the way when I left home."

Mistle Brewster held forth on roads until a long call from an auto horn broke the quiet of the morning.

"That's Henry!" she exclaimed. "I got to go, Ma. If you can think of one thing to do—you use your influence." The rest of the day Mrs. Dallas reflected on "influence." "Haunts me like a composition subject," she murmured. "Now I wonder what sort of a man this road-roads expert is. A whiff of mingled odors from the kitchen came to Ma as she rested in a comfortable rocking chair in the living room. There were fresh bread and baked beans; and a large pot of "good luck" simmering for supper on the back of the range added also its pleasing aroma.

Ma was putting a plate of sally luncheon on the table when an idea came to her. Hastily crossing to the telephone, she called a number.

"That you, Mr. Thorpe? You acquainted with Mr. Paul? Yes, he's a good-roads expert. What sort is he? No, no, I suppose he is honest. City man? Lived on a farm when a boy. Oh! What? Friend of Ted McCoole's? Sho! I don't even know him. A little shrewd? We all are. Thank you."

All during supper Peter and Clarissa talked road.

"It won't do a mite of good to try to influence men like Billy Mix and Ted McCoole," said Pa.

"Jed," asked Ma, "passing round dishes of strawberries, 'just what do you mean by 'influence'?"

"Oh, sort of talk 'em over. You know I'm no doctor, Ma. I can't 'influence' 'em."

"I wouldn't try, then," said Ma cheerfully.

That evening Ma Dallas's mind reverted to a long-gone year when she had spanked a little boy for eating cherries. "It seems dreadful now," she told herself. "I never see a cherry to this day but I also see that youngster's brown eyes that looked at me so reproachful. I wish ashamed right off. If he hadn't broken a limb from my best tree, I don't suppose I'd have touched him. My, how he put for home! Kent looking back as if I was going to chase after. Left his hat and never did come back for it."

Ma laughed softly. Her memory, like her butter, was excellent. She continued to rock and to "visit" with herself. "Ever since I heard Ted had come back, I've wanted to make some sort of reparation, though I don't have any notion he's one to harbor grudges. I've most a mind to do it. I've an idea he's a real lovely little fellow. I'd like to see him again. I believe that little straw hat of his is up garret this very minute, and I'll ask him to come get his hat."

(Concluded in next issue.)

## Old Pigsty is Foundation of Library

A reading room and library that can exist in complete independence and probable ignorance that any such person as Andrew Carnegie ever lived is sufficiently unique to command attention. One such not only exists but flourishes in a pigsty in Hartshay, a Derbyshire, England, hamlet, and its beginning possesses many interesting features.

Up to about thirty years ago the men, the sober-minded ones, had no other meeting place in Hartshay after the day's work was done than the bridge over the Cromford and Derby Canal. There they smoked, read the evening paper aloud and talked over current events. This was not a bad thing, for when the weather was warm and fair, but in the winter it was not quite as pleasant. Then, when it rained or was very cold, they walked down the towpath and held their meetings under the bridge.

In the autumn of 1892 one of the members of the little assembly came into undisputed possession of a pigsty, the former occupants of which had been converted into pork. The new owner furnished it with a few boxes for seats and invited his mates to make it their winter quarters. They jumped at the chance, and thenceforth met nightly in the pigsty.

It was the rudest hotel, barely six feet square, and without windows, so

candles were necessary day and night. To enter it was necessary to crawl through the low door on hands and knees. Nevertheless, the former habitation of the canal bridge promptly constituted themselves a society, and drew up rules for the government of Lower Hartshay Reading Room.

Soon a rough table was added; a daily and a weekly newspaper were subscribed for, and in addition to the few books that the members owned, a number were contributed by outsiders. Five nights in the week reading, smoking, games and social intercourse were in order; but Wednesday and Friday evenings were devoted to reading aloud by the best scholar, and the first two books thus read were Carlyle's "French Revolution" and Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire."

When there were twenty or more members they decided to take the adjoining pigsty. A full sized door was put in; a skylight placed in the roof; rough wooden benches added; also a battered and smoking stove; the walls were whitewashed and bookshelves put up. All the work was done by the members.

Thanks to good financial management, the shelves are now laden with books; otherwise the pigsty library has not been further improved. Nor is there need of finer surroundings; the men are the finer.

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### His First Parade.

Swaying music, music led, toward a breezy dawn.

All the east adrift with flame, Gayly down the misty road where the night had gone—

That's the way the circus came.

Something sweet and fairy-wild struck across the dew.

Just a mystic thrill of sound calling elusively;

Then he stopped and held his breath, waiting, for he knew

Nothing woke such echoes but the callopes.

So it came upon his view; Band glitter, gold and blue;

Women, habited and plumed, riding steeds of snow;

Cowboys, too, erect and brown; Elephants and—oh, the clown;

Cages closed upon what beasts he would never know.

Never still, the music spoke like a pixy code;

Wrapped him in its lilting notes, held him like a charm;

Passed and left him rooted fast in the empty road.

Guarded by the friendly fields of his father's farm.

Charlotte caught the sunrise light As they climbed the hills from sight;

In a little distant voice still the music played;

Faded, rose and sank away— There was corn to hoe to-day—

Like a dream of fairyland passed his first parade.

Silver lined the maple trees in the dusky light;

Eyes upon the hilltop bent, Chin in palms he watched the road

Climb and dip from sight— That's the way the circus went.

### Commercializing the Shark.

Sharks, dreaded by sailors, and hated by fishermen, have long been the pariahs of the seas, but now they can be fished at a profit, and hundreds of Canadian fishermen will be hunting them this summer. Not only can their skins be converted into an excellent leather, but their oil has assumed a commercial value, as a process has been discovered by which fish oil can be deodorized. Lord Leverhulme, the British soap king, has been acquiring interests in the British and Canadian fisheries, and it is reported that he has rights in the deodorizing process, and that his chief purpose in entering the fishing industry is to secure oils for his factories, one of which is located in New Brunswick on the shores of the Bay of Fundy. Sharks pursue the herring and mackerel schools in great number along the coasts of the Maritime provinces, in summer.

In Nova Scotia, the catching of dogfish, which belongs to the shark family, has been carried on to some extent, the dogfish being used in the fertilizer factories. Their skin can also be converted into leather.

### Cattails for Food.

Possibly cattails may yet be cultivated for food. Their rootstocks, which are rich in starch, are eaten by some tribes of American Indians.

These cattail roots contain four times as much starch as potatoes, weight for weight, with more than 3 per cent. of fat, and they yield a flour that makes a "pleasing and palatable" bread. Under cultivation, the plant would yield, it is thought, valuable crops.



## Woman's Interests

### Why We Set Our Tables.

Why not put all the silver on one side of the plate, or on top of it? Why make all the fuss we do about table setting? Is "setting the table" a mere matter of style—somebody's notion—or is there a reason behind the custom?

There are people who seem to be annoyed by the way "some folks put on style" at the table; there are others who are in doubt as to what is correct form; and some young people who have not yet learned to set a table just right.

Unnecessary racket at table interferes with pleasant conversation. Pleasant conversation helps digestion, so for the sake of quietness as well as to save a good table, we put a silence pad under the tablecloth.

Things which annoy any one can spoil a meal. Things every annoy orderly souls, so out of kindness to these we put both the pad and the tablecloth on straight with the table and hanging at even lengths on opposite sides. Then we set the table square with the room.

If the table is of that unfortunate variety which spots when liquids are spilled upon it, slip an oilcloth under or between the parts of the pad to prevent a brown of worry on the part of the hostess should someone spill his coffee.

Now, having placed the table and covered it with a neatly ironed tablecloth, we plan for the seating of the folks.

To be comfortable, each person needs at least twenty-two inches of side of the table for "elbow room."

The host or hostess may serve all the plates or not, but there must be enough space in front for each person to set down, without moving the silver, a plate of the largest size to be used at the meal.

Moving silver to make room for the plate is not comfortable.

If a plate is not to be before each person when he sits down, the napkin is put in this place because it is removed before the plate comes. If a plate is there, place the napkin by the side of the silver on the left-hand side of the plate, the silver next to the plate and the napkin further away because the napkin will be taken up first. It is placed on the left, because there are usually fewer pieces of silver on this side and more room for it. Lay it with its edges square with the edges of the table and parallel with the silver. It "looks" better that way.

Napkins should all be folded with a corner on the outside. There will then be no riddle about unfolding it. Place the napkin so that the corner points toward the plate and the edge of the table. This corner can then be grasped and the napkin will unfold almost of itself as it is drawn across the lap.

Certain forks are used at least during a part of the meal in combination with a knife and in the left hand, therefore all such forks are placed at the left of the plate, to divide the silver and designate which ones they are. It is proper to put all other pieces of silver at the right of the plate as they are used with the right hand.

The spoon or knife to be used first is placed farthest from the plate and the one second next, to help in knowing who's silver is who's as each piece is removed.

Some pieces of silver such as knives and spoons are used at the same course and it is immaterial which is lifted from the table first, but to save confusion all knives and spoons closest to the plate and all spoons farther away. The forks have already been placed at the other side of the plate.

Most waiters would rather put an extra fork at each plate for the diner to have to run to the silver drawer to get one fork during the serving of the meal, for some person who has chanced to leave his fork on the plate removed by the waiter.

The flavor of food which adheres to a piece of silver does not always blend with that of the following dish. Out of this has grown the custom of changing of plates and silver for each course.

Plates and silver should never come closer than one inch from the edge of the table. Then they will not get knocked off or upturned. Place forks with the tines up and spoons with the bowls up; they set firmer this way. Turn the sharp edge of the knife toward the plate.

Place water and other glasses on the space near the end of the blade of the knife. This has proved a convenient position for reaching them and one where they are least often overturned.

Place the coffee cup by the side of the silver at the right of the plate after the soup spoon or other silver used in preliminary courses have been removed. This makes it necessary to put side dishes at other places such as on the space at the end of the fork and to the left of the plate; or if no coffee is on the table they may be placed at the right of the plate, spoons and knives.

The use of a separate small plate for bread and butter is an economy and a comfort. The bread and butter plates, for convenience and so as not to interfere with the position of other dishes, are placed at the ends

of the forks to the left of the plate. For the same reason, salts and peppers fit in at the far side of the plate between the glasses and the bread and butter plates.

Food is passed people on their left sides as they can thus take it from the dishes most easily with their right hands.

Plates are removed from the table from guest's right side. Use the left hand to lift the plate. Have the new plate to be placed on the table in the right hand and set it down by shoving it under the one being lifted by the left hand. All these ways make for comfortable meals.

### Christmas Strawberries.

Select your runners from some perfect flowering, hardy variety. In mid-summer put the plants into five or six-inch flowerpots. Since the transplanting should disturb the roots no more than can be helped, it is best to take the plants up with a trowel.

Choose carefully the earth in which they are to be set. Clay soil is likely to sour and pack, and sand runs out and dries up too quickly. The ideal preparation is rotted turf, but that is often hard to get; dark loam-sifted garden soil will answer—makes an excellent substitute. To every bushel of the soil add a quart of bone meal. That is not absolutely necessary, but it will greatly improve the quantity and the quality of the crop.

When you have set the plants in the pots put them into some place that is not too sunny, and that is sheltered from drying winds, where they will have a chance to grow steadily. A hotbed or a cold frame answers very well. Water them as regularly as you water geraniums.

You can keep them outdoors until frost threatens; then you should take them in and place them where they will have warmth and sunlight. In general, they need the same attention that other potted plants require.

The process by which strawberries are forced into bloom in winter is interesting. When a plant is forced to labor under adverse conditions, or when, in the pride of growth and strength, it is stricken with disaster, it will at once put forth all its powers to reproduce itself. In the case of strawberries the plants are readily brought into bloom by what is known as the "drying-out" process, which consists in nothing more than cutting off the plants' supply of water. It must be done not suddenly, but gradually and judiciously, so that they will not wilt. When the plants find that hard times are setting in, they will put out fruit stems; as soon as those are well established, the watering should begin again.

Under ordinary indoor conditions strawberries will ripen in four or five weeks from the time when they blossom, so that by cutting off the water for a few days about the middle of November, it is possible to have berries at Christmas time.

You must take one other step in order to produce the crop. In the garden polinization is carried on by bees and by the wind; but in the house the fertilization of the blossoms must be done by hand, by transferring on a match stem some of the pollen from one wide-open flower to another on the same plant. Unless the blossoms are fertilized the fruit stems will be barren.

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### The World's Oil-Tank.

Baku, it is said, has fallen into the hands of the Bolsheviks.

As an oil city, Baku was born in 1859, when oil was first tapped there by boring. Natural naphtha-springs had, however, been known there for very many centuries.

In 1875 the Nobel Brothers took charge, and that was the beginning of the great oil boom. Baku is, perhaps, the most hideous town in the world. It is a howling wilderness of sand, where no green thing will grow. The whole place reeks of petroleum. All the food smells and tastes of it.

When the walls were first opened the oil was caught in reservoirs, dipped into barrels, and in them taken down to the Caspian Sea, which is visible from the town. It was the Nobel Brothers who first laid a pipeline to the sea, at a cost of \$5,000. The saving was enormous, for, previously, one refinery alone spent \$75,000 a year on men and camels for transportation.

The carriers, thrown out of their job, attacked the piping, so that eventually it was necessary to build small stone forts for the purpose of protecting the line.

Baku has had "spouters" bigger than any ever known in America. The famous Drogba, when first tapped, spouted one million eight hundred thousand gallons a day. It took three months to cap it, and the amount of oil wasted during that time is reckoned to have been five thousand tons.

At present the yearly output of the Baku wells is estimated at ten thousand million pounds weight.

### Pussy Under Fire.

Admiral Beatty tells an interesting story regarding the ship's cat on the Lion. During the Jutland battle the sleek bay was shattered by a shell. Happily, the invalids had been removed beforehand, but, by an oversight, the cat, who lived in the bay, had been left behind.

General grief was expressed by the crew at the loss of the cat, but greatly to the surprise of the men told off to clear away the debris, a good healthy meow was heard, followed by five little meows. Fuss had hidden away on a shelf, and had signaled the battle by giving birth to five kittens, who are now distributed throughout the Navy.

Another cat story is told by Captain Llewellyn of the s.s. Naldera. One of the ships which he commanded in the war was blown up by a mine. In a rough sea all the passengers, some 500 in number, were safely taken off in boats.

When rowing away from the scene of the wreck, the captain noticed one of the ship's cats floating on a mall-bag. He shouted to the officer in charge of the boat nearest the cat to have her taken on board, but ascertained some days after that this had not been done, as before the explosion, the cat, when chasing a rat, had lost a part of her tongue in a rat trap. This had made her savage, and the officer in charge of the boat had, therefore, deemed it unsafe to act on the captain's request.