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Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
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Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
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Katharina II. von Rußland Gerstäcker Raabe Gleim Vulpius
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Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Kleist
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Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus
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Our Farm of Four Acres and the Money we Made by it

Miss Coulton

Imprint

This book is part of the TREDITION CLASSICS series.

Author: Miss Coulton

Cover design: toepferschumann, Berlin (Germany)

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg (Germany)

ISBN: 978-3-8491-7485-9

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**OUR FARM OF FOUR ACRES AND THE MONEY
WE MADE BY IT.**

Miss Coulton

From the Twelfth London Edition.

**WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY PETER B. MEAD, EDITOR OF
THE HORTICULTURIST.**

1860

Preface to the Twelfth London Edition.

This little volume has been received with so much favor, both by the public and the press, that I cannot refrain from expressing my gratitude for the kind treatment I have experienced. From many of the criticisms which have appeared respecting "Our Farm of Four Acres," I have received not only complimentary remarks, but likewise some useful hints on the subjects of which I have written. With the praise comes some little censure; and I am charged by more than one friendly critic with stupidity for not ordering the legs of our first cow to be strapped, which would, they consider, have prevented both milk and milker from being knocked over. Now this was done, but the animal had a way of knocking the man and pail down with her side; every means was tried, but nothing succeeded till her calf was parted with. We have been asked whether we had to keep gates, hedges, &c., in repair, or whether it was done at the expense of the landlord. As far as regarded the gates and buildings, that gentleman was bound by agreement to keep them in order, and as for hedges we have none. A stream runs round the meadows, and forms the boundary of our small domain. Since our little work was written we have had nearly eighteen months' further experience, and have as much reason now as then to be satisfied with the profits we receive from our four acres. I must add a few words concerning our butter-making. Some doubts have been expressed relative to our power of churning for four hours at a time. Now it certainly was not pleasant, but it was not the hard work that some people imagine: fatiguing certainly; but then H. and myself took it, as children say, "turn and turn about." We did not entrust the churn to Tom, because he was liable to be called away to perform some of his many duties. Had we not had the toil, we should not have acquired the knowledge which now enables us to complete our work in three-quarters of an hour. We have been pitied for being always employed, and told that we can never know the luxury of leisure. We answer this remark with the words of "Poor Richard," that "leisure is the time for doing something useful."

INTRODUCTION TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

This little volume will possess rare interest for all who own a "four-acre farm," or, indeed, a farm of any number of acres. Its chief value to the American reader does not consist in its details of practice, but in the enunciation and demonstration of certain principles of domestic economy of universal application. The practice of terra-culture must be varied to meet the different conditions of soil and climate under which it is pursued; but sound general principles hold good everywhere, and only need the exercise of ordinary judgment and common sense for their application to our own wants. This is now better understood than heretofore, and hence we are better prepared to profit by draughts from the fount of universal knowledge. We would not be understood as intimating, however, that only the general principles set forth in this little book are of value to us; the details of making butter and bread, feeding stock, etc., are just as useful to us as to the English reader. The two chapters on making butter and bread are admirable in their way, and alone are worth the price of the book. So, too, of domestics and their management; we have to go through pretty much the same vexations, probably a little intensified, as there is among us a more rampant spirit of independence on the part of servants; but many of these vexations may be avoided, we have no doubt, by following the suggestion of our author, of procuring "country help" for the country. Domestics accustomed to city life not only lack the requisite knowledge, but are unwilling to learn, and will not readily adapt themselves to the circumstances in which they are placed; in fact, the majority of them "know too much," and are altogether too impatient of control. A woman, however, must be mistress in her own house; this is indispensable to economy and comfort; and the plan adopted by our author will often secure this when all others fail.

We have not deemed it advisable to add anything in the way of notes; we have made a few alterations in the text to adapt it better to the wants of the American reader, and for the same reason we have altered the English currency to our own. In other respects the work remains intact. In some works of this kind notes would have been indispensable, but in the present case we have thought we could safely trust to the judgment of the reader to appropriate and adapt

the general principles set forth, leaving the application of details to the shrewdness and strong common sense characteristic of the American mind. The object of the work is rather to demonstrate a general principle than to furnish all the minutiae of practice, though enough of these are given to serve the purpose of illustration. The American reader will not fail, of course, to make due allowance for the difference of rent, prices, etc., between this country and England, and the matter of adaptation then becomes a very simple affair.

In conclusion we present the work as a model in style. It is written with a degree of simplicity which makes it readily understood, and is a fine specimen of good old Anglo-Saxon. Portions of it are fully as interesting as a romance. It is written by a lady, which fact gives it an additional interest and value as a contribution to the economy of country life, in which it may be admitted that women are our masters. The incidents connected that women are our masters. The incidents connected with hiring "our farm of four acres" are related in a life-like manner, and will be appreciated by our own May-day hunting country-women, who, we trust, will also appreciate the many important facts set forth in this little volume, which we heartily commend to them and to all others, with the wish that it may be as useful and popular as it has been at home.

P.B.M.

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OUR FARM OF FOUR ACRES.

CHAPTER I.

WHERE SHALL WE LIVE?

"Where shall we live?" That was a question asked by the sister of the writer, when it became necessary to leave London, and break up a once happy home, rendered desolate sudden bereavement.

"Ah! Where, indeed?" was the answer. "Where can we hope to find a house which will be suitable for ourselves, six children, and a small income?"

"Oh," answered H., "there can be no difficulty about that. Send for the 'Times' and we shall find dozens of places that will do for us." So that mighty organ of information was procured, and its columns eagerly searched.

"But," said I, "what sort of place do we really mean to take?"

"That," replied H., "is soon settled. We must have a good-sized dining-room, small drawing-room, and a breakfast-room, which may be converted into a school-room. It must have a nursery and five good bed-chambers, a chaise-house, and stable for the pony and carriage, a large garden, and three or four acres of land, for we must keep a cow. It must not be more than eight miles from 'town,' or two from a station; it must be in a good neighborhood, and it must —"

"Stop! Stop!" cried I; "how much do you intend to give a-year for all these conveniences:"

"How much?" Why, I should say we ought not to give more than \$250."

"We ought not," said I, gravely, "but I greatly fear we shall for that amount have to put up with a far inferior home to the one you con-

template. But come, let us answer a few of these advertisements; some of them depict the very place you wish for."

So after selecting those which, when they had described in bright colors the houses to be let, added, "Terms very moderate," we "presented compliments" to Messrs. A., B., C., D., and in due time received cards to view the "desirable country residences" we had written about. But our hopes of becoming the fortunate occupants of any one of those charming abodes were soon dashed to the ground; for with the cards came the terms; and we found that a "very moderate rental" meant from \$600 to \$750 per annum. We looked at each other rather ruefully; and the ungenerous remark of "I told you so" rose to my lips. However, I did not give it utterance, but substituted the words, "Never mind, let us send for another 'Times,' and only answer those advertisements which state plainly the rent required." This time we enlarged our ideas on the subjects of rent and distance, and resolved that if that beautiful place *near* Esher would suit us, we would not mind giving \$300 a-year for it.

In a few days arrived answers to our last inquiries. We fixed on the one which appeared the most eligible, but were a little dismayed to find that "near Esher" meant six miles from the station.

"Never mind," said H., resolutely, "the pony can take us to it in fine weather, and in winter we must not want to go to London."

We started the next morning by rail, and found the "Cottage" almost as pretty as it had appeared on paper. But, alas! it been let the day previous to our arrival, and we had to return to town minus five dollars for our expenses.

The next day, nothing daunted,—indeed, rather encouraged by finding the house we had seen really equal to our expectations,—we set off to view another "villa," which, from the particulars we had received from the agent, appeared quite as attractive. This time we found the place tenantless; and, as far as we were concerned, it would certainly remain so. It had been represented as a "highly-desirable country residence, and quite ready for the reception of a family of respectability." It was dignified with the appellation of "Middlesex Hall," and we were rather surprised when we found that this high-sounding name signified a mean-looking place close to the road; and when the door was opened for our admission, that

we stepped at once from the small front court into the drawing-room, from which a door opened into a stone kitchen. The rest of the accommodation corresponded with this primitive mode of entrance; the whole place was in what is commonly called a "tumble-down" condition: there was certainly plenty of garden, and two large meadows, but, like the rest of the place, they were sadly out of order. When we said it was not at all the house we had expected to find from reading the advertisement, we asked what sort of house we expected to get for \$300 with five acres of land. Now that was a question we could not have answered had we not seen the pretty cottage with nearly as much ground at Esher; however, we did not give the owner the benefit of our experience, but merely said that the house would not suit us, and drove back four miles to the station, rather out of spirits with the result of our day's work.

For more than a fortnight did we daily set forth on this voyage of discovery. One day we started with a card to view "a delightful Cottage Ornee, situated four miles from Weybridge;" this time the rent was still higher than any we had previously seen. When we arrived at the village in which the house was represented to be, we asked for "Heathfield House," and were told that no one knew of any residence bearing that name; we were a little perplexed, and consulted the card of admittance to see whether we had brought the wrong one—but no; there it was, "Heathfield House," four miles from Weybridge, surrounded by its own grounds of four acres, tastefully laid out in lawn, flower and kitchen-gardens, &c, &c. Rent only \$350. We began to imagine that we were the victims of some hoax, and were just on the point of telling the driver to return to the station, when a dirty-looking man came to the carriage, and said, "Are you looking for Heathfield House?"

"Yes," said we.

"Well, I'll show it to you."

"Is it far?" we asked; as no sign of a decent habitation was to be seen near us.

"No; just over the way," was the answer.

We looked in the direction he indicated, and saw a "brick carcass: standing on a bare, heath piece of ground, without enclosure of any kind.

"That!" cried we; "it is impossible that can be the place we came to see!"

"Have you got a card from Mr.—?" was the query addressed to us.

"Yes," was the reply.

"Very well; then if you will get out I'll show it to you."

As we had come so far we thought we might as well finish the adventure, and accordingly followed our guide over the piece of rough muddy ground which led to the brick walls before us. We found them on a neared inspection quite as empty as they appeared from the road; neither doors nor windows were placed in them, and the staircases were not properly fixed. It was with much trouble we succeeded in reaching the floor where the bed-chambers were to be, and found that not even the boards were laid down. We told our conductor, that the place would not suit us, as we were compelled to remove from our present residence in three weeks.

"Well, if that's all that hinders your taking it, I'll engage to get it all ready in that time."

"What! get the staircases fixed, the doors and windows put in, the walls papered and painted?"

"Yes," was answered, in a confident tone, which expressed indignation at the doubt we had implied.

We then ventured to say, that, "Allowing he could get the house ready by the time we required to move, we saw no sign of the coach-house and stable, lawn or flower-garden, kitchen or meadow."

"As for the coach-house and stable," said the showman, "I can get your horses put up in the village."

We hastened to disclaim the *horses*, and humbly confessed that our stud consisted of one pony only.

"The less reason to be in a hurry for the stable, for you can put one pony anywhere; and as for the lawn and gardens, they will be laid out when the house is let; and the heath will be levelled and sown for a meadow, and anything else done for a good tenant that is in reason."

We were likewise assured that wonders had been done already, for that four months ago the ground was covered with furze. We got rid of our talkative friend with the promise that we would "think of it;" and indeed, we *did* think, that Mr. —, who was a very respectable house-agent, ought to ascertain what sort of places were place in his hands before he sent people on such profitless journeys. The expense attending this one amounted to nearly eight dollars.

Another week as passed in a similar manner, in going distances varying from ten to twenty-five miles daily in pursuit of houses which we were induced to think must suit us, but when seen proved as deceptive a those I have mentioned. We gained nothing by our travels but the loss of time, money, and hope. At last the idea entered our heads of going to some of the house-agents, and looking over their books.

Our first essay was at the office of Mr. A. B., in Bond street. "Have you any houses to let at such a distance from town, with such a quantity of land, such a number of rooms?" &c.

"Oh, yes madam," said the smiling clerk, and immediately opened a large ledger; "what rent do you propose giving?"

"From \$250 to \$350 yearly," answered we, and felt how respectable we must appear in the opinion of the smart gentleman whom we addressed; how great then was our surprise when he closed his large volume with a crash, and with a look of supreme contempt said, "*We* have nothing of that kind in *our* books." To use one of Fanny Kemble's expressions, "we felt mean," and left the office of this aristocratical house-agent half ashamed of our humble fortunes.

I fear I should tire the patience of the reader, did I detail all our "adventures in search of a house," but we must entreat indulgence for our last journey. We once more started on the South-Western line, to see a house which, from the assurances we had received from the owner, resident in London, must a last be *the* house, and

for which the rent asked was \$350; but once more were we doomed to disappointment by finding that the "handsome dining and drawing-rooms" were two small parlors, with doors opening into each other; and that "five excellent bed-chambers" were three small rooms and two wretched attics.

From the station to this place was four miles; and, as weary and hopeless we were returning to it, it occurred to H. to ask the driver if he knew of any houses to let in the vicinity. He considered, then said he only knew of one, which had been vacant some time, and that parties who had been to see it would not take it because it was situated in a bad neighborhood.

At the commencement of our search that would have been quite sufficient to have deterred us from looking at it, but we could not now afford to be fastidious. Our own house was let, and move from it we must in less than a fortnight; so we desired the driver to take us into this bad neighborhood, and were rewarded for the additional distance we travelled by finding an old-fashioned, but very convenient house, with plenty of good-sized rooms in excellent repair, a very pretty flower-garden, with greenhouse, good kitchen-garden of on acre, an orchard of the same extent well stocked with fine fruit-trees, three acres of good meadow-land, an excellent coach-house and stabling, with houses for cows, pigs, and poultry, all in good order.

The "bad neighborhood" was not so very bad. The cottages just outside the gates were small, new buildings; and once inside, you saw nothing but your own grounds. It possessed the advantage of being less than two miles from a station, and not more than twelve from London.

"This will do," we both exclaimed, "if the rent is not too high."

We had been asked \$600 for much inferior places; so that it was with great anxiety we directed our civil driver to take us to the party who had the disposal of the house. When there, we met with the welcome intelligence, that house, gardens, orchard, meadows, and buildings, were all included in a rental of \$370 per annum. We concluded the bargain there and then, and on that day fortnight took possession of "Our Farm of Four Acres."

Before we close this chapter, we will address a few words to such of our readers as may entertain the idea that houses in the country may be had "for next to nothing." We had repeatedly heard this asserted, and when we resolved to give \$300 a year, we thought that we should have no difficulty in meeting with a respectable habitation for that sum, large enough for our family and with the quantity of land we required, as well as within a moderate distance of London. We have already told the reader how fallacious we found this hope to be. Houses within forty or fifty miles of London, in what are called "good situations," are nearly, if not quite as high rented, as those in the suburbs, and land worth quite as much. If at any time a "cheap place" is to be met with, be quite sure that there is some drawback to compensate for the low price.

In our pilgrimages to empty houses, we frequently found some which were low-rented, that is from \$200 \$250 per annum; but either they were much smaller than we required, or dreadfully out of repair, or else they were built "Cockney fashion," semi-detached, or, as was frequently the case, situated in a locality which for some reason or other was highly objectionable. We always found rents lower in proportion to the distance from a station.

We one day went to Beaconsfield to view a house, and had a fly from Slough, a drive of several miles. The house was in the middle of the town, large and convenient, with good garden and paddock; the whole was offered us for \$200 yearly; and we should have taken it, had it not been in such a dismantled condition that the agent in whose hands it was placed informed us that though he had orders to put it in complete repair, he would not promise it would be fit for occupation under several months. The office of this gentleman was next door to Mr. A. B.'s, in Bond street; and we are bound to state, that though we said that we did not wish to give more than \$300, we were treated with respect; and several offered us under these terms, though attended with circumstances which prevented our availing ourselves of them.

The house we at last found was not, as regarded situation, what we liked; not because of the cottages close to the entrance, but for the reason that there was no "view," but from the top windows; as far as the lower part of the house was concerned, we might as well

have been in the Clapham Road. It is true we looked into gardens, front and back, but that was all; and we had to go through two or three streets of the little town in which we were located whenever we left the house for a walk. Still we were, on the whole, well pleased with our new home, and in the next chapter will tell the reader how we commenced a life so different to that we had been accustomed to lead.