

THE ODD FARMHOUSE

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The odd farmhouse by The Odd Farmwife

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THE ODD FARMWIFE

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FARMHOUSE**

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TORONTO

THE ODD FARMHOUSE

BY
THE ODD FARMWIFE

"But walk'st about thine own dear bounds,
Not envying others' larger grounds;
For well thou know'st 'tis not th' extent
Of land makes life, but sweet content,"

HARRICK.

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ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1913

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To A.

THE MASTER OF THE ODD FARMHOUSE

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I.

16 OUR search for a house in the country led us further and further to exceed that fifty mile radius round London within which we had hoped to find what we wanted. Without pause we passed through the purlicus of modern red-brick suburban villas, which we would not have, to the remoter territory of great houses seated in their parks, which we *could* not have. We drove about, skirting the edges of these lordly domains, in the hope of something humbler, but with no success ; and the ill-concealed contempt of the parasites and snobs who thrive in the shadow of such feudal landlordism roused our resentment. We resolved to breathe a more democratic air, where the whole neighbourhood did not hang upon the importance and patronage of a few great families. We, being not petty tradesmen, flunkeys, pensioners, peasants, pheasants, or other dependents, there was no place for us.

I shall not soon forget the disdainful back of the liveried coachman who drove the hired fly at Penshurst, as we drew up before one after another of the houses on the list furnished us by a local house-agent. We ourselves were not favourably impressed. The agent or the owners had lied floridly, unflinchingly, superlatively ; and the dwellings were dreary affairs, flush with the village street, or next door to a public-house or the village school.

On our way to them we passed picturesque lodges with ivy clinging to their gables, and these I greatly coveted. We saw one in particular, standing a stone's throw from the massive iron gates on which it attended. I longed to live there, under that slant roof of quaint angles. What were the duties of a portress, were they very arduous ? Would I merely have to run out, fling open the gates and curtsy, in payment for possession ? My husband had more than once played cricket with the lord of the manor to which this was the sesame, and we thought the casual mention of this fact somewhat modified the disapproval of the coachman's back, even though he had heard me proclaiming my willingness to be a portress.

With dwindling confidence and the day-