

**MY
HOME FARM**

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My Home Farm by Mrs. J. H. Burton

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MRS. J. H. BURTON

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BY

MRS J. H. BURTON

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MY HOME FARM.

CHAPTER I.

SERVANTS.

YES, my dear M., I quite approve. I see no reason you should not succeed, despite your want of experience. You are reasonable—do not expect too much—and active, accustomed to exert yourself.

You think of taking a little farm. You can have one, you say, for half the rent you pay for a mere dwelling in a town, and you think the occupation will suit the tastes of yourself and your children.

Certainly at first sight I thought your plan rash, and I still feel that it involves some risk, but not more than you are entitled to run. If I could but lend you my experience! That is proverbially impossible. I will try to do what is most nearly like it—to tell you, as familiarly and in as much detail as possible, how I myself managed matters of the same sort as those you are now about to undertake. My operations were on a larger scale than those you contemplate and had a different origin—so much the better

perhaps. In this sort of work it is at least as necessary to be adaptable as to be systematic.

One should be as systematic as one can, as soon as one can, short of any root and branch work. Pull down nothing till you see your way to erecting something better. I am not addressing a lady of large fortune, looking to the building of an artistic dairy and hennery as an amusement and a means of disposing of some of her superfluous cash. Neither do I wish to recommend farming in any of its branches to persons entirely without pecuniary resources.

Some people, I believe, imagine they see the way to the success of Hen Farms, Bee Farms, &c., apart from any other branch of agriculture, and their suggestions are very attractive, because a farm limited to one such branch as I have named might be begun with so very little money that it might be said to require no capital at all. The whole hope of profit from it rests on the farmer's belief in her own capacity for an incessant and minute attention, combined with extraordinary powers of economy—of saving both money and material.

The sort of thing which you think of undertaking, and in which I hope to help you with my experience, is entirely different. I must first premise that it involves the employment of some capital in some shape or other. The requisite capital may exist either as a lump sum or as a very moderate yearly income.

The expenses of a small farm managed as I would propose do not amount to thousands or even hundreds of pounds annually, but most payments are made in ready money, and I would advise no one to attempt the thing who is either so poor or so improvident as not to be able to lay

out fifty pounds each spring, or at any time. Many of the expenses connected with farming come to some extent unexpectedly, and no person of the hand-to-mouth character or habit will make a successful farmer. Thrift is the very marrow and mainspring of the business—thrift personally practised and steadily enforced on children and servants, *not* a narrow or selfish economy.

In the latter I have no sort of belief. Even if I had I do not think I would practise it, but I believe that a worrying, too minute, too suspicious system defeats itself. At this point one arrives at the ever-difficult question of servants. The Hen or Bee Farm I believe proposes to dispense with them, or at least with their service as anything more than machines. The farmeress is to be always present herself during every operation. This in my mode of life would have been utterly impossible.

I should be sorry if I were to be supposed an enemy to what is termed 'Minor Food Production.' I am not. I shall be very glad to learn that some peculiarly constituted woman has made anything by it, and I think it not unkind to point out how very heavily handicapped she is in her attempts by those who carry on her industry along with several others. One thing fits into another in country matters, and I merely say here that it is clear to me that much more considerable profits may be expected by persons able to put some capital into their business, and to engage in several branches of agriculture at once, than by those who can devote little more than their own personal exertion to it, and devote that to one branch alone.

I am not advocating large farms either. Their day seems gone by. They no longer pay. They cannot com-