

# The Greenhorn and the Mule Egg

By Thomas J. Firth

Well now, there was a chap that got real sick of working in the big city. One day, he quit his job, packed up his wife and kiddies and hit-tailed it out to Kansas to become a farmer. He bought a big parcel of land with a grand old barn and some fields just ready to plow and plant.

Now, being a bit of a greenhorn, the poor fellow didn't know where to start with that there farm. His wife suggested that they get a mule to pull the plow for them, and the greenhorn thought this was as splendid idea. He set off down the road to visit their neighbor and ask him where he could buy a mule.

Well, that neighbor was a bit of a wag. He'd sized up his new neighbor as a greenhorn in about five seconds and decided to have a bit of fun with him.

"Well, you could advertise for a mule in the local paper," the neighbor said. "But if you want to do it the Kansas way, well then you should get yourself a mule egg and hatch your own. That way you can train the mule up from birth to do exactly as you want."

The greenhorn's eyes got real wide. "I didn't know mules hatched from eggs," he said excitedly. "Where do I get one?"

"It just so happens I have one mule egg left from the last batch I raised," the neighbor said. He went into the shed and came out with a round, hairy coconut. The greenhorn's eyes lit up.

"How much do I owe you?" he asked his neighbor.

"That'll be a dollar. And mind you, you've got to sit on the mule egg night and day for a week before it will hatch," the neighbor said, accepting the greenhorn's money and handing over the coconut.

Well, the greenhorn ran all the way home and showed the mule egg to his wife and kiddies. Everyone was



thrilled with his purchase, and they all took turns sitting on the coconut, waiting for it to hatch. They waited one week. Then they waited two. By the third week, everyone's bottoms were sore from sitting on the hard coconut, and still there was no sign of a mule.

"It must be a bad egg," the wife said at last. "Better throw it out and see if

our neighbor will give us our money back."

As the disappointed family watched, the greenhorn took the coconut outside and pitched it into the bushes. All at once, a giant jackrabbit burst out of the tall grass next to the bushes and hopped away lickety-split.

"It's the baby mule!" shouted one of the kiddies. "Catch it, Pa! Catch it."

Well, the greenhorn ran after that long-eared critter as fast as he could go, shouting: "I'm your momma, baby mule! Please come back!" But he was no match for that jackrabbit. It darted here and there; it slithered hither and yon; and finally it slid down a hole in the ground and disappeared.

The greenhorn fell to the ground and lay panting in exhaustion. A few moments later, his wife and kids caught up with him and pulled him to his feet.

"Where's our mule?" asked his wife.

"The dad-blame thing got away," said the greenhorn. "And I'm not sorry it did. That's the speediest mule I ever laid eyes on, and I don't aim to plow that fast!"

