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Title: Familiar Fields

Date of first publication: 1925

Author: Peter McArthur

Date first posted: December 15, 2012

Date last updated: December 15, 2012

Faded Page ebook #20121221

This ebook was produced by: David T. Jones, woodie4, Mardi Desjardins & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at <http://www.pgdpCanada.net>



The KINGS TREASURIES

OF LITERATURE

GENERAL EDITOR
SIR A·T·QUILLER COUCH



FAMILIAR FIELDS

BY
PETER
McARTHUR

M·DENT & SONS·LTD·LONDON & TORONTO

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FIRST EDITION 1925
REPRINTED 1926, 1927

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN



The collection of some of Peter McArthur's writings in a volume intended for use in schools is a recognition of their educational value. That involves also the idea that his work, even when humorous in form, was serious in purpose. And that is true, as I am convinced not only by McArthur's literary productions, but by the knowledge of his character gained in more than thirty years of intimate friendship. He was always trying to work out a philosophy of life, and to live the life of his meditation. He was a humorist too. The serious and the humorous view of life are not contradictory, but complementary. The basis of both is a right sense of proportion and of relative values. In order that the flower and the food-plant may grow, we must get rid of the weeds; and the humour that laughs at folly and pompous pretence is a process of weeding. Consider, for instance, the folly of the miser. He is lacking equally in serious purpose and in sense of humour; unable to perceive that his life is at once a tragedy and a joke; and his reform, if possible at all, might be effected by appealing to him on either side.

McArthur's philosophy was founded upon a strong conviction of the value of the home. As a young married man he left New York, with all its attractions for a brilliant writer, and went back to the old homestead in Ekfrid, in order that his children might have home advantages such as are hard to obtain in the great city. He preached what he practised. He praised farming, not as a money-making occupation, but as a means of maintaining a home. Farming, he said, is above all a home-building occupation, rather than a money-making business. "The home was the one great ideal of the men and women who braved the perils of the ocean and conquered the wilderness." He wrote a great deal about fields, trees, tame and wild creatures, but he differed from some nature writers in that all these things were pictured as the environment of the home, and part of the family life.

He had a very deep sense of the value of the work of the pioneers. "I have the good fortune," he wrote, "to be living on the farm on which I was born—the farm which my father cleared. Although I was born too late to take a hand in the clearing, I learned the history of every acre before the open fireplace many years ago." The roots of his patriotism were

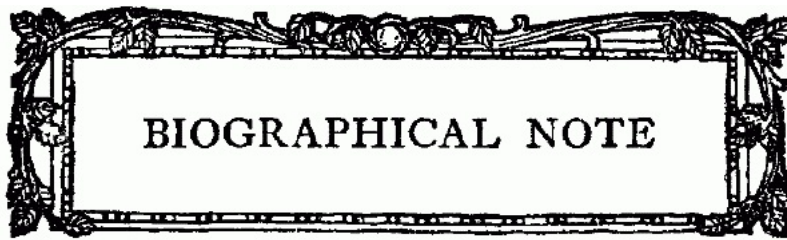
planted deep in the soil of his native land, and the plant was nourished by the homely, familiar things that he loved to describe. That does not mean that it was narrow. He was following the example of Scott, who in his classic poem of patriotism, "Breathes there a man with soul so dead," drew inspiration from his own home, "Land of brown heath and shaggy wood." There was no question of the breadth of Scott's patriotism, but he sang of what he knew and loved best. Much of the charm of old-world poetry is due to this concentration upon a place—a stream, a hill, a grove; while the amateur is apt to essay the hard task of constructing a poem out of a sort of inventory of the physical features and natural resources of his country. When McArthur wrote of Canada there was in his mind and heart a particular place and a personal experience.

He was anything but a sentimental writer, and his deep affection for his home and for his country as his larger home often lay far below the surface of the written word. Yet it was remarkable how, without conscious effort, he made personal friends by his writings in *The Globe* and elsewhere, and had a very large correspondence. Strangers would approach him and say in effect: "I know you by what you have written; I think of you as a friend. I want to complete my experience by personal acquaintance." Through the writings they saw a man earnest, thoughtful, brotherly; and they perceived that even his humour was of the kind that plays lightly over deep waters of serious meditation.

JOHN LEWIS.

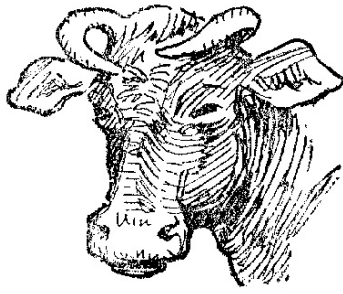
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The greater number of the essays in this volume are taken from the two books *In Pastures Green* and *The Red Cow*, and, with several that have not hitherto appeared in book form, first appeared in *The Toronto Globe*. The poems "Sugar Weather," "Earthborn," "Corn-Planting," "The End of the Drought," "Birds of Passage," and "A Thaw" are from *The Prodigal and other Poems*. Acknowledgments are tendered to *The Youth's Companion* for permission to use the poems "Wisdom" and "The Weather-Prophet," and to the Dominion Rubber Corporation for permission to use the article on "Why I Stick to the Farm."



Peter McArthur was born on 10th March, 1866, on the farm which his father had cleared in Ekfrid Township, Middlesex County, in the Province of Ontario. His parents, Peter McArthur and Catherine (McLennan) McArthur, had come to Canada during the great Highland migration in the middle of the nineteenth century. Public school, the Strathroy Collegiate, and five months at the University of Toronto provided his schooling. He did not leave the farm for high school until he was eighteen. These early years on the pioneer homestead not only gave McArthur an enduring love for the land and a deep sympathy and respect for the pioneers who cleared the wilderness of forest, but he had access to a local library and made the great classics of English literature his own. The Bible, Shakespeare, and the masters of English poetry and prose were read eagerly and stored in a memory that was unusually retentive.

Lacking the means to continue his university course, in 1889 McArthur turned to journalism. In the following year he left Toronto for New York. There, as editor, humorist, critic and free-lance writer, he gained a wide experience of life and letters. For two years—1902-1903—he lived in London, England, where he was a regular contributor to *Punch* and the *Review of Reviews*. He left England for New York, where he continued to follow free-lance journalism and advertising writing until 1907. The year 1907 was the turning-point in Peter McArthur's life. With his wife and family of four sons and a daughter he returned to his native Canada, and the following year established his home on the farm where he had been born and which his father had cleared. For the next eighteen years he contributed regularly, in prose and verse, to Canadian, and occasionally American, publications. The bulk of his contributions appeared in *The Toronto Globe*, first as a weekly, and later as a bi-weekly article. His death took place following an operation at the Victoria Hospital, London, Ontario, on 28th October, 1924.



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FAMILIAR FIELDS

MY FRIENDS, THE TREES

Near the house there is a sturdy oak tree that I always think of as one of the oldest of my friends. I grew up with it. Of course that is not exactly true, for I stopped growing many years ago, while it kept on growing, and it may keep on growing for centuries to come. But when I was a growing boy it was just the right kind of a tree for me to chum with. It was not too big to climb, and yet it was big enough to take me on its back and carry me into all the dreamlands of childhood. Among its whispering branches I found lands as wonderful as Jack climbed to on his beanstalk. And it had a stout right arm that was strong enough to hold up a swing on which I swung and dreamed for more hours than the teachers of to-day would consider right. When it whispered to me I whispered to it, and told it more secrets than I have ever told anyone in the world. It became a part of my life, and no matter how far I wandered in later years my thoughts would always return to the tree in times of sickness and trouble. I always felt that I would be well and happy again if I could only get back to the tree and throw myself at full length on the grass that it shaded and listen to its never-ending gossip with the breezes that are forever visiting it. At last I came back from the outer world and made my home beside the tree. During my absence it had pushed up higher and had spread its branches wider, but it was still the same companionable tree. The grass still made a carpet over its roots, inviting me to sprawl at full length and renew our voiceless communion. While I was away I may have learned some things, but the tree had been in harmony with the universe from the moment it began to emerge from the acorn, and knew all that I so sorely needed to learn.

Although the oak is my particular friend among the trees on the farm, there are others with which I can claim at least an acquaintanceship. There is a maple at the edge of the wood-lot that always makes me feel uncomfortable, because I have a feeling that it has a joke on me. It stands on what would be called rising ground—which means an elevation that does not deserve to be called a hill—and while lying on the grass in its shade I can see over several farms to the south and east. It used to be a favourite of my boyhood, and once I composed a poem while lying in its shade. If you bear in mind the fact that I was seventeen years of age at the time, you will understand why the tree has a joke on me. Here is the only stanza I can remember of the little poem I composed to express the "unmannerly sadness" of youth.

It long has been my cherished hope
Upon my dying day
To lie down on some sunny slope
And dream my life away.

At that age I could not have cherished the hope so very long, and the old tree must have chuckled to its last twig at my absurdity. Anyway, I never see the tree without recalling that wretched stanza, and I immediately hurry away to some other part of the woods.

But there is one tree on the place with which I can never establish a feeling of intimacy. It is the one remaining specimen of the original forest—a giant maple over three feet in diameter, whose spreading top rises far above the other trees in the wood-lot. Even though it stands beside the public road, it seems to retain some touch of the shyness of the wilderness, and does not invite the fellowship of man. Its first branches are so high in the air that it has never been profaned by the most venturesome climbers, and its great roots start out from the trunk in a way that seems to thrust back all attempts at familiarity. The second-growth maples by which it is surrounded appear to be domesticated by comparison with this wilding, and when they are tapped at sugar-making time they yield sap as lavishly as a dairy cow gives milk. But the giant gives grudgingly, as if it resented the wound it had received. Its companionship seems to be with the wildest winds and storms, that alone have the power to rouse its huge branches to motion.

I sometimes wonder that I should be fond of trees, for when I was a boy trees were regarded almost as enemies. The

land had to be cleared of them before crops could be sown, and they multiplied the labour of the pioneers. I learned to swing an axe by cutting down saplings, and ran "amuck" among them just as my elders did among the larger trees. In those far days trees were things to be destroyed, and no one thought of sparing them. But when I came back to the farm and found that the noble forest had dwindled to a small wood-lot that had no young trees in it—because the cattle had nibbled down all seedlings for many years—I was seized by a rage for planting. Finding that the Government was willing to supply seedlings to anyone who would plant them out, I immediately began the work of reforestation and planted thousands so that when the present trees mature and are cut out there will be others to take their place. These little trees are now thriving lustily, but they seem to regard me with an air of aloofness, and I feel when among them as if they were looking at me furtively and trying to decide whether I am to be trusted. Perhaps there is still a tradition in the wood-lot of the havoc I wrought in my youth with just such tender saplings as these.

Yesterday while I was sitting at some distance from the home oak, admiring the curved spread of its branches, a barefoot boy came out of the house. Without seeing me, he walked straight to the tree and then looked up at its inviting branches. After a while he got a piece of a rail and placed it against the trunk. Then with clutching fingers and spreading toes he worked his way up to the lowest branch. Through the higher branches he clambered as if going up a ladder, and finally when he found one to his liking he bestrode it, with his back to the trunk, and looked away to the south. For a long time, with childish gravity, he gave himself up to the "long, long thoughts" of a boy. At last his eyes began to rove around and presently they rested on me, where I was watching him. He laughed in a shame-faced way as if he had been surprised in doing something that he would have kept secret, but I laughed back joyously and we understood. I am glad that there is another of my name who will love the old oak and the other trees and to whom they will perhaps give their friendship even more fully than they have given it to me.

A LARGE DAY

It is a great day, an expansive day, a large day. The first thing that impressed me about it was its size. I know it is not customary to describe a day in terms of space, but there seems to be no way out of it. This is not a day of the kind that can be enjoyed in a house, or a field, or even within the rim of the horizon. It reaches up to the great neighbourly sun, and spreads as wide as the imagination. It is a day that overwhelms me, but, on thinking it over, I have found the key to its mystery. When I got up this morning it was the sun that first fixed my attention. It came bustling over the horizon with the air of one about to start spring house-cleaning. It awakened the south wind, plucked the myriad icy fingers from the little rivulets and flooded the world with light and warmth. But it is hardly exact to speak of the sun as house-cleaning. It is really building a new home and using only the foundations and framework of the old. It is upholstering the hills, decorating the woods, and refurnishing the fields. In a few days it will recarpet the earth and tack down the green breadths with brass-headed dandelions. When that work is done we can get down to a consideration of the buds and flowers and birds and the exquisite little things of spring. To-day the invitation is to have an outing with the universe. Only the sun and his work are worth considering.

On a day like this it is hard to believe that the sun is ninety million miles away. Why, it is just up there in the sky, and is busy at our feet and all around us. I do not thank the astronomers for teaching me that it is so distant. I would much rather have the point of view of the Prince of Morocco, who protested:

Mislike me not for my complexion,
The shadow'd livery of the burnish'd sun,
To whom I am a neighbour and near bred.

All through the winter the sun may have been as far away as learned men say, but to-day it is visiting with us. It is at work in the back yard and in the front yard and in the fields and woods. It is making the warm wind blow and the sweet sap flow, and making us all so happy that we drop into rhyme without noticing. But one cannot do justice to such a day as this even while sitting on a log in the sugar-bush and writing in the intervals of firing-up under the pan. To enjoy and describe it aright he should be able, in imagination, to sit on a mountain with his feet in a pleasant valley and his head aureoled with smoky haze. He should be conscious only of the kindly sun and of its footstool, the earth. His singing robes should be woven of golden sunshine, and—and—I guess I had better leave that sort of thing to the poets and put a few more sticks under the pan.

SUGAR WEATHER

When snow-balls pack on the horses' hoofs
And the wind from the south blows warm,
When the cattle stand where the sunbeams beat
And the noon has a dreamy charm,
When icicles crash from the dripping eaves
And the furrows peep black through the snow,
Then I hurry away to the sugar bush,
For the sap will run, I know.

With auger and axe and spile and trough
To each tree a visit I pay,
And every boy in the countryside
Is eager to help to-day.
We roll the backlogs into their place,
And the kettles between them swing,
Then gather the wood for the roaring fire
And the sap in pailfuls bring.

A fig for your arches and modern ways,
A fig for your sheet-iron pan,
I like the smoky old kettles best
And I stick to the good old plan;
We're going to make sugar and taffy to-night
On the swing pole under the tree,
And the girls and the boys for miles around
Are all sworn friends to me.

The hens are cackling again in the barn,
And the cattle beginning to bawl,
And neighbours, who long have been acting cool,
Now make a forgiving call;
For there's no love-feast like a taffy pull,
With its hearty and sticky fun,
And I know the whole world is at peace with me,
For the sap has commenced to run.

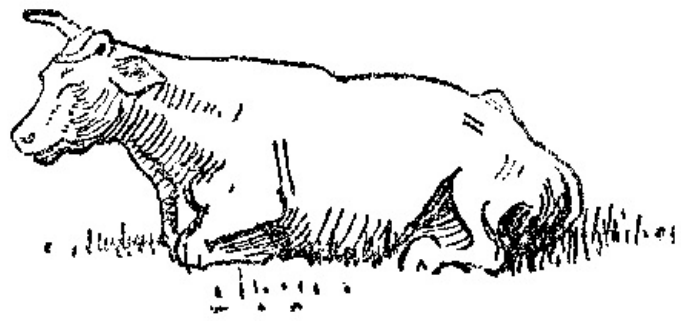


GETTING OUT TO GRASS

Getting out to grass is certainly the event of the year for the animals on the farm. I know, because I have a strong fellow-feeling for them. When the sun begins to get warm, and the grass starts to grow, I get impatient for the time when I can fling myself at full length on the sod without being scolded for taking chances of catching cold. When the cows were allowed out for the first time, they could hardly wait to go through the gate before they started to graze, and for a couple of hours they kept at it as if their lives depended on getting a good meal. But presently something stampeded the young cattle, and the whole bunch began running, bunting one another, and jumping around as if indulging in a foolish sort of sun-dance to celebrate their freedom. When this was over, the red cow started on her annual inspection of the fences. The thorn hedge, woven with barbed wire, baffled her, as it did last year, and I thought everything was all right. The next time I looked she was in the clover field. The spring flood had loosened things around the Government drain. After driving her out I fixed this break in the fence, only to find that she was in the field again. She had found a place where the wire fence had been cut to haul out wood and had managed to push through. Turning her out again I made a thorough job of mending this, and that ended the trouble. She made a complete round of the field, stuck her head over every fence and bawled, but that was all. Now I can go about my work without giving a thought to the fences. The red cow and I examined and tested them thoroughly on the first day and fixed them for the summer. Really, the red cow is a great help. If it were not for her I might be bothered with fences all season, but one day is enough. She examines the fences thoroughly, and after she finds the weak spots I fix them up. If her calves take after her I shall be able to advertise a new strain of useful stock. No farmer should be without one of these fence-testing cows to help him keep his farm in shape and protect his crops.

For a few days everything was quiet in the pasture field, and then, all of a sudden, there was a tremendous noise. All the cattle began to bawl defiance. A big, slab-sided two-year-old steer began to lead the herd towards the line fence. He had his head down, his mouth open, and he walked catercorner, roaring like one of the bulls of Bashan. A neighbour had just turned out his cattle, and they were approaching the line fence, and putting up the same warlike bluff. I should have had more respect for the dehorned two-year-old and his war talk had it not been that on the previous evening I had seen him being prodded across the field by a sharp-horned little yearling heifer. He grunted and got out of her way like a fat man getting beyond the reach of a suffragette's elbow in a street-car rush. But he certainly did make an awful noise. I don't know why it is, but I always find something in the actions of cattle to remind me of politics. There is the same tendency to go in flocks, to make a wholly unnecessary amount of noise, and then to accomplish nothing. When the two roaring herds finally met at the line fence they merely stuck their noses through the wires and sniffed at one another for a few minutes, and then went back to pasture. The crisis was over.

When the driver got out for the first time she went through the gate on the run. She ate quietly for a couple of minutes, then lay down and had a most satisfactory roll. When she got up she took a look around the field, squealed, jumped into the air, and began to give an exhibition of energy that I didn't think was in her system. She must have had it in cold storage all winter, for she hadn't been using much of it on the road. She galloped, kicked, and snorted, and I sat down and tried to figure out whether she was snorting at the kick or kicking at the snort. But like many another problem I have tackled, it was too deep for me. There were times when she had all four feet in the air at once, and looked as if she could have kept four more going. She would gallop round in a circle, then come to a sudden stop and snort. When the echo of the snort came back from the woods, it would scare her so that she would start off on the gallop again. After she had relieved herself and galloped around the field in this way about a dozen times, she finally settled down and began to eat. After watching this exhibition I made up my mind that there will be more speed in my drives to the post office in the future. I thought she was troubled with "that tired feeling" that comes to all of us in the spring, but now I shall have no compunction about using the whip. She has simply been loafing on me.



AN OLD-FASHIONED SPRING

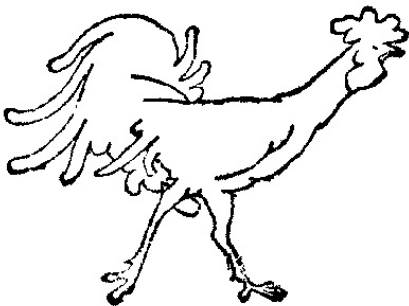
The impression I have gathered from the stories I have been reading is that a late spring in the old days was a real hardship. It meant more than a delay in getting in crops and spoiling the chances for a money-making harvest. The great question with the settlers during the first few years was not money, but food. A late spring meant, time and again, that they were forced to eat their seed grain and seed potatoes in order to preserve life. I have just read about one pioneer, and not one of the unthrifty kind either, who was forced to dig up the potatoes after they were planted in order to feed his family. In spite of all this, one of his sons is now an eminent doctor and another a banker. When spring came to the woods there might be a few people who were glad to see the flowers, but there were more whose first search was for leeks, cow-cabbage, nettles, and other pot-herbs. Many had to live for months during the winter on potatoes. Those who could afford pork and oatmeal were already on the high-road to prosperity, and to many wheat bread was a luxury. The more I read and learn about pioneer life the more I am forced to the conclusion that much of the courage shown was the courage of despair. Having moved into the wilderness and built their log huts, there was absolutely nothing for them to do but to maintain life by every possible means. Many of the settlers were scores of miles from any place that could make a pretence to civilisation. Even if they struggled out, what could they hope for without money? The hospitality of civilisation soon wears thin to the penniless, and, even if they were too proud to confess failure, they would soon find that it was better to depend on the sometimes niggardly bounty of nature than on the bounty of fellow-men whose condition was but little better than their own. When men and women had to depend on the spring for food, as well as for warmth and opportunity, they had some reason to be despondent if she lingered a little longer than usual in the lap of winter.

When the spring finally came the settler was in many cases a prisoner on the patch of high ground which he had started to clear. It was not until government drains had been put through that there was much thought of clearing the low ground. If any of this low ground was cleared it was left under grass, the native redtop. For at least a month every spring it would be flooded most of the time, but I have been told that this flooding fertilised the ground, and that the hay crops were more wonderful than anything we see to-day. Even though the snow might melt during winter thaws, the water remained in the swamps, and when the spring "breaking-up" really began the country became a series of islands. I know of one place not a mile from here where there is now a good gravel road that is passable at any time of the year. Fifty years ago people who had to pass that way were forced to use a raft for about three-quarters of a mile during the spring floods. That was on a public road, of course, and was a great improvement on the blazed trails through the woods which most people had to use. A pretty custom of those days was to have a pole wherever the trail crossed a creek or water-hole. The foot passenger was supposed to take this and vault over the water. No wonder vaulting with a pole used to be one of the popular sports on the Queen's Birthday and at the Fall Fair. Though the girls did not take part in the public exhibitions, I am assured that in the depths of the forest they often showed themselves just as expert as their brothers. Careful people when going on a journey of any length through the woods in the spring-time took with them a strong, slender pole that they could use for balancing themselves when making their way through the swamps on fallen logs or to vault with when necessary. Another favourite way of crossing the old creeks was on logs, and as it was seldom that anyone took the trouble to flatten them, considerable skill was needed by those who attempted a passage. And that reminds me of a story. One spring many years ago two young men were paying court to the same girl. Both had to cross the creek that wound before her home, and one of them had a bright idea. As soon as it was dark he hurried to the creek, carrying a pail of soft soap. Straddling the log, he worked his way backwards across and spread the slippery soap lavishly on the little bridge over which his rival was to follow. He then washed his hands and went to the house to press his suit. About an hour later he was quietly gratified to hear a loud splash in the swollen stream. This put so much courage in him that he pleaded his cause with complete success. Some time about midnight he tore himself away from his future bride and was so exultingly happy that he forgot all about the soaped log. There is no need telling you what happened.

Another thing that made the old-time late spring a disaster was the need of clearing the land. It was during the winter that most of the chopping was done, and in the spring the brush and log heaps had to be burned off before any crop could be put in among the stumps. If the spring was late it was often hard to get the seed in the ground early enough.

About the only relaxation of those spring days when settlers were imprisoned on their islands was that of yelling. The young fellows, when they started out to "browse" their cattle in the morning, would let out a lusty whoop just to tell their neighbours that they were alive. Others would answer them and the "Good-morning" yell would pass through a settlement in much the same way that cock-crowing does now. You know how that goes if you ever happen to be awake early enough. First you hear a faint crowing away to the east. A few seconds later you hear it a little nearer, and almost

before you realise what is going on your own pet Leghorns are hard at it. Then the crowing comes from the nearest barnyard to the west, and presently the noise dies away faintly in that direction. Possibly the cocks are telling one another that all is well, just as the settlers did.



THE PIONEERS

Our fathers toiled, but in a glorious fight,
The God of nations led them by the hand,
With pillared smoke by day and fire by night
They wrought like heroes in their Promised Land,
The wilderness was conquered by their might,
They made for God the marvel he had planned—
A land of homes where toil could make men free,
The final masterpiece of Destiny.

How can I rest when they will not be still?
When every wind is vocal and their sighs
Breathe to my ear from every funeral hill
And from each field where one forgotten lies?
They haunt my steps and burden me until
I plead with hands outstretched and streaming eyes:
"I am not worthy! Let my lips be dumb!
The mighty song and singer yet shall come!"

The well-greaved Greeks and Priam's savage brood
Were not more worthy of immortal song
Than these in homespun, who alone withstood
Hunger and Fear to make our Freedom strong;
But till the singer comes, at least the good
They wrought we must from age to age prolong:
Learning from them, let this our watchword be:
Free from all tyrants from yourselves be free!

LAND OF GOOD NEIGHBOURS

Land of Good Neighbours! How will that do as a descriptive title for Canada? We have heard much of the "Land o' Cakes" and something overmuch of the "Land of the Free and Home of the Brave." Why should we not have a title of our own that is at once descriptive and true? Canada is, above everything else, a land of good neighbours. If the pioneers had not been good neighbours the country would never have been settled and cleared. The almost superhuman work of clearing away the forests was not done by individuals, but by neighbourhoods. Every field was the scene of a logging bee, where good neighbours helped to roll the logs into heaps for the burning. No man could do such work unaided, so all worked together. Not only did this accomplish needed work, but it led to much social intercourse, mutual helpfulness, and enduring friendships. No one who has burrowed in the history of pioneer days or listened to the stories of the few and scattered survivors can help being struck by the neighbourly spirit that evidently existed everywhere. Was anyone sick, the neighbours gathered and put in his crops for him or reaped them, as the case might be. Was a new-comer in need of seed grain, a neighbour would lend it and wait till harvest for his pay. Before the introduction of labour-saving machinery practically all heavy work was done by bees. They had logging bees, reaping bees, threshing bees, sewing bees, spinning bees, quilting bees, and bees for every kind of work. Both the men and the women helped one another in this way. Circumstances forced the pioneers to be good neighbours, and the results they achieved showed that they did their duty by one another.

What men they were—the pioneers!
So stout of heart—and able!
They bore themselves like men of might
At work—and at the table!
They chopped and burned—and cheered their souls
With many a deep potation!
They bore themselves by day and night
Like builders of a nation.

Chorus—

They worked their will and ate their fill.
And rested from their labours.
God bless them all, both great and small.
Who made our Land of Good Neighbours!

Was one too weak—they'd give a lift!
Was seed grain lacked—they'd lend it
Was there a row—the minister
Would lecture them and end it.
In summer heat and winter cold
They did their duty roundly;
They lived and died like men of faith.
And now they're sleeping soundly.

Chorus.

Let those who reap the fields they sowed,
The softer generations,
Pay homage to the brawny men
Who laid the first foundations!
Just now we're full of youth and pride,
But maybe when we're older
We'll honour those who made our land
With shoulder set to shoulder.

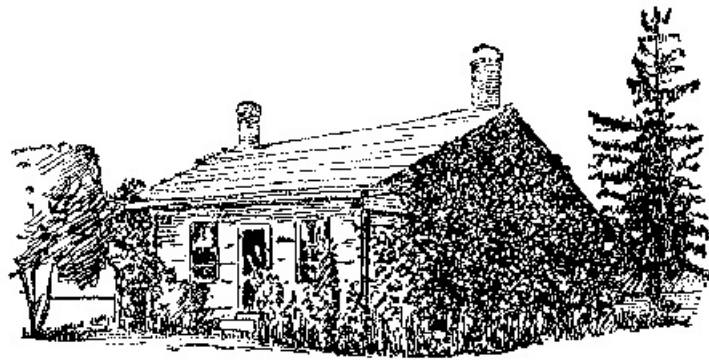
Chorus.

One thing that made for a good neighbourly spirit in pioneer days was the fact that the struggle of life placed everyone on an equal footing. It was like a battle where the officers are compelled to dig in the trenches with the men. Gentleman's son and peasant worked side by side, and it often happened that the peasant succeeded best because he was more fitted to endure hardships. With the increase of prosperity and the introduction of labour-saving machinery the neighbourly spirit sank to the level it holds in other countries. As the country was cleared logging bees were no longer necessary, and the introduction of the reaper did away with the reaping bees. Woollen mills did away with wool picking, carding, and spinning bees, and similar changes took place all along the line. The threshing bee is practically the only survivor of the old forms of neighbourhood work, and it is only a shadow of what it was. Improved threshing machines with steam power enable five men to do in a day the work that was formerly done in three days by five teams and fifteen men. Prosperity also brought social cleavage, and I have been assured that the introduction of the first organs did much to break up the neighbourly spirit. The girl who got an organ put on airs which provoked much envy and heart-burning. Then prosperous farmers could hire the help they needed and became independent of neighbourly help. Because of these things the neighbourly spirit of the pioneers died away in the second generations.

In spite of all this the neighbourly spirit is far from being dead in the country. Indeed it seems to be enjoying a new lease of life, and all because of the introduction of the rural telephone. It is now so easy to call up a neighbour and have a chat, to arrange for an evening together, a little party or a dance to help pass the long winter, that social life is becoming livelier than ever before. This new neighbourly spirit is social rather than helpful, and extends itself over a wider range of territory. The telephone makes neighbours of people who are living miles apart, and it is possible for those of congenial tastes to keep in touch as never before. Many people who are in every way admirable do not get along well as neighbours. Emerson and Thoreau were both admirable men, but it is more than suspected that as neighbours they were not a success. There is a story of doubtful authenticity in which Emerson is reported as saying of Thoreau: "We all love Henry, but we don't like him." The world is full of people whom we are forced to admire for their abilities and love for their good qualities, but with whom we should not enjoy sustaining the relationship of neighbours. Others are not fitted to be good neighbours. There was once a trapper who had his hut on a mountain side where he could overlook the whole surrounding country. He may have been an excellent man, but he lacked the neighbourly spirit, for when he saw a prairie schooner passing within ten miles of him he moved back farther into the wilderness, because, he complained, the place was getting too crowded for him.

It used to be said of some people that they saved money all summer so that they could go to law with their neighbours in the winter. Such people are not so much in evidence now, as all the line-fence disputes have long since been threshed out and settled by careful surveys. Perhaps the worst type of neighbour to be found at the present time is the man who is all the time hunting for "snaps"—the man who is continually on the look-out for chances to drive hard bargains with neighbours who may be pressed for money and obliged to sell stock or produce at a sacrifice. The man who adds trading to his work as farmer is seldom a good neighbour. His sharp dealings can set a whole community by the ears. In the country people seem to have long memories, and a piece of sharp practice is often remembered and resented by the second and third generations. Still, if one can look at the matter philosophically, even bad neighbours have their usefulness. Shakespeare says:

There is some soul of goodness in things evil,
Would men observingly distil it out;
For our bad neighbour makes us early stirrers,
Which is both healthful and good husbandry:
Besides, they are our outward consciences,
And preachers to us all, admonishing
That we should dress us fairly for our end.
Thus may we gather honey from the weed,
And make a moral of the devil himself.



THE RAISING^[1]

"Are you going to the raising?"

If not, you will miss the best entertainment the country affords. A properly-conducted barn-raising contains the excitement of a fire, the sociability of a garden party, and the sentimental delights of a summer resort "hop." The young men are given a chance to show their agility and prowess and the girls are enabled to shine as hostesses. Although it is especially a function for young people, there are always enough old folks on hand to give the occasion historical colour and perspective with their reminiscences of past raisings—some of them going back to the days of log barns and houses. In "the heroic period" the best man was the one who was competent to build a corner, and anyone who examines one of the primitive buildings cannot but marvel at the skilful dovetailing done by the old-time cornerer. The modern framer, with all his tools, would find it hard to equal their work. In the traditions of those days there are stories of men who could run along a log and jump the opening left for the barn door—about fourteen feet—with a bottle of whiskey in each hand. Nowadays we have other men and other manners.

For explanations of technical terms used in connection with this essay see Note at the end of this chapter.

The preliminary work of a barn-raising is done in the winter months, when the timber for the frame is felled and squared. As the old-time broadaxe men who could hew to the line and turn out a stick of square timber that looked as if it had been planed have practically vanished from the earth, the posts, plates, beams, sills, girths, and girders are now squared at the sawmills. After the timber has been assembled where the barn is to be built, the framers cut it to the required lengths and make the necessary joints, mortises, tenons, braces, and rafters. The invitations for the raising are then issued, and the housewife, usually helped by her friends, begins to cook for a multitude. The best that the country affords is prepared lavishly, for a raising is always followed by a great feast.

On the day of the raising a gang of men working under the directions of the framers put together the bents and sills. The latter are usually laid on cement foundations, as most modern barns have a basement stable for horses and cows. The bents, usually four in number, consist of the posts, beams, girths, and braces. They are put together, with all joints strongly pinned and laid overlapping one another on the foundation, with the tenons on the foot of each post ready to be entered into the mortises in the sills. Early in the afternoon the crowd begins to gather. When all who are expected have put in an appearance, captains are selected, who proceed to choose sides. Then is the anxious moment for the country beau who can feel holes burning in the back of his duck shirt because of

A pair
Of blue eyes sot upon it.

To be chosen first or to be among the first half-dozen is an honour you could appreciate more fully if in your youth you had been chosen second man. I admit it was only second, but I was young then, and I left the country before I reached my growth. As each man is chosen, he leaves the crowd and joins the growing group about his captain. Not even "Casey" of baseball fame could make that short walk with more "ease and pride" than some of the country boys, and not a few of them prepare their hands for the coming fray, as he did when

Ten thousand eyes admired him
As he rubbed his hands with dirt;
Five thousand throats applauded
As he wiped them on his shirt.

When everyone has been chosen down to such riff-raff as visiting journalists and politicians, who can only be expected to help with the grunting when the lifting is being done, the real work of the raising begins. Although the rivals take opposite sides of the barn, they work together in putting up the main framework. "Ye-ho! Hee-eeve! All together now! Ye-ho! Hee-eeve!"

Slowly the first bent is lifted and shored up until the pike-poles can be brought into play.

"Ye-ho! Hee-eeve!"

Men with handspikes hold back the foot of each post so that the tenons may not slip past the mortises as the huge beams are being pushed up into the air.

"Ye-ho! Hee-eeve!"

At last the tenons slip home and the first bent is stay-lathed in place. The girths that connect with the next bent are put in place, braced, and stayed. Then another bent is heaved up and the extending girths fitted, braced, and pinned. So to the last bent. As it swings up the excitement becomes furious. While the bent is still at a dangerous angle, men clamber up to the collar beams and begin tugging at ropes attached to the heavy plates that are being hoisted against the frame. By the time the last posts have snapped into place the ends of the plates are already on the collar beams.

"Ye-ho! Hee-eeve! Ye-ho! Hee-eeve! Ye-ho! Hee-eeve!" The race is on!

The slanting plates are rapidly pushed high above the building. Sometimes they are liberally soaped to make them slip over the beams more easily. Now comes the spectacular act of the exciting performance. While the end of the plate is high in the air venturesome young men, anxious to make a reputation for reckless daring, shin up to the top so that they may "break" it more quickly. No sooner has it been brought down to the collar beams than it is pushed along the full length of the building. Now it must be lifted into place on the tenons at the tops of the posts.

"Ye-ho! Hee-eeve!"

The cheering suddenly changes to sharp calls and commands.

"Where's that brace?"

"Throw me a commander!"

"Throw me a pin!"

Bang! Bang! Bang! The pins are driven home.

The main plates are pinned into place and the lighter purlines are already lying on the beams with posts fitted in and braced. Now they must be hoisted.

"Ye-ho! Hee-eeve!"

"Where's that strut?"

Now for the rafters! They are already leaning against the main plates, with one end on the ground. Hand over hand they are pulled up, fitted into their places in the plate and laid across the rising purlines. This is the breathless end of the race. The purline is up! The rafters in place!

"All down!"

The winners spill down from the building as if they would break their necks.

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!"

The race is over; the winners rush for the tables that are spread on the lawn, and the laughter of girls and women takes the place of the hoarse yelling and cheering of the men. Under a shower of compliments the winners wash up and range around the tables, where they are waited on by the girls. The losers, who may have been only a few rafters behind, are forced to wait for "the second tables." Under the influence of the feasting the excitement soon dies down and both winners and losers share in the general good humour.

Sometimes the contending sides indulge in a game of baseball if there is still time and they feel like exerting themselves after their full meal. Not infrequently the day ends with a dance—not old-fashioned square dances, but up-to-date waltzes with music provided by a graduate of some ladies' college presiding at one of those grand pianos that appear like mushrooms after a season of good crops. The old fiddler rasping out "The Irish Washerwoman" has gone "glimmering down the dust of days that were," with so many other country institutions.

Then comes the drive home through the moonlight along the country roads and past the sweet-smelling clover fields. As the young men are always heroic and the girls bewitching on these occasions, there is no telling how many romances take definite form at barn-raising. What have the cities to offer in comparison with this for excitement, fun, and sentiment? Nothing—absolutely nothing!

NOTE

Posts are the upright end timbers in the frame of a building. Plates are horizontal timbers which support the feet of the rafters. Beams are the principal horizontal timbers in the framework. Girths are small horizontal braces, and girders are horizontal beams spanning openings such as doors, to carry the weight. Braces are short timbers used to fit diagonally between two timbers to distribute pressure more evenly. Rafters are sloping timbers which make a support for the roof. Sills are horizontal timbers supporting the lower part of the frame. A bent is a partially constructed portion of the framework, ready to be pushed up into place.

Timber joints are made by cutting a "mortise" into the end of one timber, into which fits the end of the other timber. The end that fits in is called a "tenon."



FARM POSSESSIONS

How many farmers know the full extent of their possessions? Most of them know how many acres they own and the probable value of their crops, stock, and investments, but that is only a small part of their heritage. The laws of property deal only with such things as can be handled and trafficked in, but the farmer is rich in many things besides these. His powers of enjoyment are not "fobbed with the rusty curb of old Father Antic, the law." Every sense is catered to by things that are as free to him as the air. The sunshine, the cooling breeze, the odour of flowers and the music of birds have no regard for line fences, however carefully they may be surveyed, and the view from the hill-top that takes in a score of farms and the little village with its church spires belongs to him as surely as if he had a deed for it properly registered. The ownership of his senses extends beyond the boundaries of his farm in every direction. The ancient philosopher who thanked the rich man for sharing his wealth with him when he showed him his stores of gold and jewels uttered a truth whose full significance we should all try to appreciate. The farmer who has a beautiful clump of trees by his house or a well-cared-for piece of woodland shares it with everyone whose eye it pleases. The country girl who has a garden of flowers confers a favour on everyone who passes that way, whether friend or stranger. In the same way the man who has an untidy farm with tumbled-down buildings and ragged fences does an injury to the whole countryside. He maintains an eyesore that offends everyone of taste who is forced to see it.

The man does not really own his farm who does not know all its pleasant places and its possibilities of enjoyment. He should know the shadiest tree under which to read a book or spend an hour in day-dreaming. It would do him no harm to know where the hepaticas bloom first and what green aisles of the woods are heavy with the incense of phlox. He should be acquainted with the robins that return to the same nest year after year, and should be familiar with every view worth pausing to look at when driving about the country attending to his affairs. They all belong to him, and it is his own fault if he does not enjoy them. The greatest advantage of owning a farm is that it gives a man the freedom of the whole country. The "no trespass" signs have no terrors for the eye that is open to beauty, and the enjoying mind takes its own wherever it finds it. It is all very well to have everything on your farm as it should be, so that you will get the best results from your labour, but if you value the piece of ground that you own merely for the crops it will yield, you should not be encumbering it, but, as Mark Twain said, "should be under it, inspiring the cabbages."

EARTHBORN

Hurled back, defeated, like a child I sought
The loving shelter of my native fields,
Where Fancy still her magic sceptre wields,
And still the miracles of youth are wrought.
'Twas here that first my eager spirit caught
The rapture that relentless conflict yields,
And, scorning peace and the content that shields,
Took life's wild way, unguarded and untaught.
Dear Mother Nature, not in vain we ask
Of thee for strength! The visioned victories
Revive my heart, and golden honours gleam:
For here, once more, while in thy love I bask,
My soul puts forth her rapid argosies
To the uncharted ports of summer dream.



A LITTLE WALK

One spring morning four, or perhaps five, years ago, the youngest boy and I took a little walk that may leave its record on the farm for more years than anything that has been accomplished on it since the original clearing of the land. He had found some sprouting acorns under the big white oak near the house, and he brought them to me. As it was an idle morning we decided at once that the acorns should be given a chance. We filled our pockets with them and went out to the wood-lot. There we rambled about, stopping every few rods to plant one of our sprouted acorns. Then we forgot all about our little adventure in reforestation. As oak trees make a slow growth, the results of our plantings were hidden by thousands of faster-growing sugar maples and the pines, chestnuts and other trees that had been planted some years earlier. But one day last week I happened to notice a thrifty little oak growing on a little knoll beside one of the few small boulders on the place. At once I remembered distinctly that we had planted an acorn on that spot. By an effort of memory I recalled other spots where we had planted acorns, and on visiting them found lusty little oaks. While I found it impossible to retrace all our steps on that spring morning, because the undergrowth was too thick, I found a number of little oaks that were undoubtedly of that planting. Although it will be many years before they become noticeable among the faster-growing trees, the "many-centuried oaks," if undisturbed, will outlast all the others. As the years pass the course of our morning ramble will become definitely marked with noble trees. Future generations will perhaps wonder how this particular wood-lot happened to have so generous a supply of white oaks, and in examining the giant trees may retrace the steps of our morning walk. Who knows but taking that morning walk with our pockets full of acorns may prove to be the most enduring thing that either of us will have done? In any case, we did something worth while.



ORCHARD STRATEGY

Everything that has been done in the orchard by the expert from the Department of Agriculture has been wonderfully interesting, but the third spraying was a revelation. When he began "squirting Death through a hose" at the blossoms, I regarded the operation as part of the ordinary routine, and little suspected that back of the work lay one of those romances of science that are lost in commonplace reports, instead of glowing on the pages of a poet. As usual, a chance question brought out the wonderful fact that kindled my imagination. A teacher had asked the nature student to bring to school a specimen of the codling moth, and when I tried to help him, and looked up the literature on the subject, I found that the codling moth flies by night, and that many experienced orchardists have never seen one. Then I asked if it would be possible to capture a codling moth at this time of the year.

"No. They do not begin to lay their eggs until about the end of June."

Instantly I became a living interrogation mark, and during the next few minutes learned a story that illustrates better than anything I have yet found the patient work that is being done by our scientists, and the wonderful skill with which they adapt their methods to the processes of Nature in order to accomplish results. Here is a case where they meet Nature on her own ground, and conquer her by a subtlety equal to her own. It is a triumph of science that should be observed by Faber and described by Maeterlinck. Having studied out the processes of an apple's development and the codling worm's method of attack, they prepare a death-trap for an insect that is as yet unborn. While the calyx of the blossom is open, they saturate it with a spray of arsenate of lead. As the young apple develops, the calyx closes and folds within itself the charge of poison where it cannot be washed out by the rain. Weeks later the young codling worm is hatched from the egg deposited on some near-by twig by the moth, and, obeying a compelling instinct, crawls up the stem of the little apple, makes its way to the calyx, and begins to eat its way into the fruit. Then it meets with the lurking death that has been placed in its path by the ingenuity of man. Could anything be more skilful or more carefully thought out? The orchardist makes Nature herself "commend the ingredients of the poisoned chalice" to the lips of her destroying creatures. Here is something that surpasses the craft of the poisoners of the Dark Ages. It is fabled that they could administer their death-dealing "Aqua Tofana" in the perfume of a rose, and that Cæsar Borgia could destroy an enemy by poisoning one side of a knife, dividing a peach with it, and then eating his own half with relish, while his unsuspecting guest took certain death from the other. But the Borgias, de Medicis, and Brinvilliers were clumsy poisoners when compared with the scientists who protect the bounties of Nature from the ravages of her prodigal hordes. Poisoning the blossom for the unborn insect that would prey on the fruit is surely the masterpiece of protective science. In my excitement, I forgot to ask if it is known who devised this plan, but probably it was developed bit by bit, scientist after scientist adding his portion, until the scheme was perfect. This marvel is now one of the commonplaces of farm work. I wonder how many more stories just like it are back of the methods and formulas by which man is slowly learning to control the forces of Nature for his profit.



INTERESTING NEIGHBOURS

Now that I have pitched my working tent in the wood-lot I am beginning to get acquainted with my neighbours. I found a ground sparrow's nest at the edge of the woods with five mottled eggs in it. I am glad that it had not been discovered by a cow-bird, for these parasites are getting altogether too plentiful. Yesterday, after I had been sitting quietly in the tent for an hour or so, I saw a crow descend swiftly and quietly into a clump of little pine trees a few rods away. Knowing just what that meant, I rushed out, but I was not quick enough. The crow rose with a wild fluttering that was very different from its descent. On the ground beside one of the little pine trees I found a broken robin's egg, and soon found that robin's nest. The black thief had probably visited it before, for he went straight to it and wasted no time in robbing it. What surprised me was that there was not a sound from the robins. Perhaps the crow had watched until they had disappeared on some food-hunting expedition or some other necessary work of the bird world. While examining the nest I felt proud that it was located in a tree of my own planting, though I regretted that it was not large enough to give better shelter. And then the storm broke. The pair of robins came home and found me at their nest. I do not blame them for being indignant, and I have no doubt that they have laid the destruction of their egg at my door. The circumstantial evidence is all against me—and is just about as reliable as that kind of evidence usually is. When I started back to my tent the incident took a surprising turn. The crow had circled to the top of a tall maple by my tent, and he started to proclaim to all the woods that there was a human about.

I have no doubt he called me a thief and a nest-robber, and blackened my character in every way he could. But he wasn't simply trying to throw on me the blame for stealing the robin's egg. I soon discovered his own nest in a beech tree only a short distance from my tent. He was genuinely alarmed about the fate of his own prospective family. As in the case of human beings, it made a great deal of difference who was in danger of being injured. It was all in the day's work for him to rob the robin's nest, but that a big, hulking human being should even approach his nest was intolerable. He made a great disturbance about it until I clapped my hands, and he hurried away as if he had heard a gunshot. While I am not particularly pleased at having a crow for so close a neighbour, I am delighted that an oriole is whistling near by. And I think I heard a few notes that could have come only from a brown thrasher. A pair of mourning doves add a touch of melancholy to my surroundings, and occasionally some killedeers, that evidently have nests in a near-by oatfield, wheel around and make a lot of noise. I suspect that two of the big maples not far off are the homes of families of black squirrels, for I have seen the old squirrels stealing about quietly in the branches. They have not scolded at me or made any outcry. Their sole purpose seemed to be to keep out of sight—which is pretty good evidence that they are hiding nests that they do not want me to find. As yet I have seen no sign of woodcock, though a family was raised last summer in a near-by swale. From all this you will see that I have a lot of interesting neighbours, and I am hopeful that we will get through the summer without having any rows.



WISDOM

I heard, within my chamber pent,
The dawn's reveille blown;
I rose and found the world intent
On business of its own.
The birds were singing as they wrought,
The south wind was astir,
With spring's light-hearted gossip fraught
I heard the buds confer.

No hand had sown the lavish seed
That clothed the earth with green;
And who had taught the trees their need
Of such a leafy screen?
Before man came with conquering stride
This wondrous work began,
And haply these again shall hide
The proudest works of man.

The wisdom I have sought is here
And with no seeking found;
It journeys with the fruitful year
In an eternal round.
And while the changing seasons pass
I'll watch them ebb and flow,
And when God whispers to the grass,
I, too, shall learn to grow.

THE LONESOME CALF

"Blaa-aa-aa-aa-umph!"

That is something like it, but not exactly. I am afraid it is not possible to express with type the discontent, impatience, and disgust with life that the red calf gets into her bawling. Still, if you went out behind the barn and practised for a while, you might be able to make sounds that would give you an idea of what I mean. Her bawl begins in a tone of savage impatience and ends with a grumble of bitter pessimism. She seems to be saying:

"Where is that skim milk? If you can't let me have anything better, you might at least let me have that on time."

"Blaa-aa-aa-aa-umph!"

I suppose all calves are more or less alike, but this one has certainly had much to sour her on life. Since the day of her birth she has been an Ishmaelite. Even her own mother has been against her. And that brings me to a piece of proverbial wisdom that I haven't seen quoted in the reports of the Dairymen's Association. There is a Gaelic proverb which most people will find about as hard to pronounce as the bawling of the calf:

"Gu dheamhar a gabhais bo ri a laoig na ha gul aiche do ar gamhain."

For the benefit of Gaelic scholars who may read this, I wish to explain that my Gaelic is a mixture of Argyllshire and Inverness, with a touch of bad spelling added. The interpretation of this proverb is:

"How can a cow take to her calf when she is still in love with her yearling?"

Well, that was exactly the state of affairs that met the red calf when she came into the world. Her mother was still in love with the yearling that had been allowed to run with her in the pasture in the previous summer. She had no welcome for the new-comer; in fact, she never looked at it from the hour when it was born, and to this day the unnatural mother has to be kept away with a club when her neglected offspring is being fed. If the poor little thing gets an apple and tries to eat it, her own mother is the first to bunt her aside and take it away from her. At the same time that cow goes frantic if her yearling gets out of her sight. They are seldom a rod apart in the pasture field, and they invariably get into mischief together. I use the same club on both of them when they find a gate open and get into the orchard.

About the only creature on the farm that pays any attention to the calf is Sheppy, the collie dog. He stands in front of her by the hour, growling and barking, while she keeps her little sprouts of horns towards him and goes on feeding. I wish I could understand dog language well enough to know what Sheppy is saying to her, for he seems to be dreadfully in earnest, even though he never ventures near enough to give her a nip. As a matter of fact, Sheppy is cow-shy, and it is all due to the capable mother of this calf. When he was in the puppy stage, and beginning bravely to learn his work in the world, she reached him with a swinging kick that knocked him heels over head across the barn yard, and took all the spunk out of him as far as cows are concerned. He will drive a horse or pigs, and the turkey-gobblers have no terrors for him, but I can't make him go after the cows. She taught him a lesson that he hasn't forgotten. Possibly that is why he snarls so much at her calf. If he knew how to quote Shelley, he would probably be saying:

Loathed image of thy mother,
Thy milky meek face makes me sick with hate.

In spite of all this bluster, Sheppy is thoroughly afraid of the calf. One day, when I was watching them, the calf coughed unexpectedly, and Sheppy fell over backwards in his hurry to get out of the way. He evidently thought that she was going to bite him. She knows that he is afraid of her, for after she has listened to all the barking she thinks she can stand, she shakes her head at him, and he makes off instantly with his tail between his legs.

I sometimes wonder if our scientists have observed the calf as carefully as they should. Everyone who has fed calves knows their tendency to bunt unexpectedly when feeding. They do the same when feeding from the cow, and it is just possible that there is light and leading in this fact for our inventors of milking machines. It is well known that incubators were a failure until someone noticed that sitting hens always turn their eggs at regular intervals. This hint led him to turn the eggs in the incubator in the same way as the hen does, and from that hour dates the success of artificial incubation. Perhaps, if someone would invent a milking machine that would bunt the cow at regular intervals, it would be a complete success. It is worth thinking about. Possibly, also, if we studied calves a little, the job of feeding them would not be so trying on the temper and damaging to our clothes. I have noticed that, when it is feeding, a calf always wiggles its tail, and it has occurred to me that there may be some connection between this and its bunting. Mark Twain once showed that

a donkey couldn't bray if it couldn't lift its tail at the same time. He tied a brick to the tail of one that was serenading him, and it stopped at once. Perhaps if one tied a brick to a calf's tail, it wouldn't bunt over the pail when learning to feed by itself. The co-ordination of actions is one of the mysteries of nature. Someone who has a young calf might try it and report the result. The calf I have under observation is too far advanced to be experimented on in this way. It is passing from the milk stage, and now has a preference for harness straps, and it seems to positively relish a yard or two of night-shirt when it can get near the clothes-line.

A couple of weeks ago, the red cow and her yearling got on the road and started off to see the world. Of course, it was the wettest day of the season, but that didn't matter. I had to hitch up and hunt for them. It was then I realised for the first time how complex is our system of roads. Within a radius of two miles there were no less than eighteen turns they might have taken. If they went farther than that, the roads that might invite them were almost beyond computation. I hadn't the faintest hint of the direction they had taken, and the search was bewildering. I splashed through the rain around a couple of blocks, stopping at every farmhouse that was near the road to ask if anyone had been pestered by a red cow and a yearling that were cheeky enough to go on the front lawn without wiping their feet, and that wouldn't hesitate to help themselves from the swill-barrel. No one had seen them. I also questioned everyone who was fool enough to be out on the road in such weather, but could get no trace of them. At last, when I was about to give up in despair, and was thinking of advertising in the "Lost, Strayed, or Stolen" column of the local paper, I remembered that on the previous night I had dreamed of an old schoolmate who was living a couple of miles away. Possibly that was an omen. Anyway, I couldn't think of anything better to do, so I headed in that direction. Sure enough, I found the cow and her yearling. She was in the field, and the yearling on the road. How she got into the field I cannot imagine, for it was well fenced, and I had to let the fence down to the last rail before I could get her out. She probably found some spot where she poked through with her usual impudence. Of course, I don't want to put myself on record as believing that the dream had anything to do with my finding the cow. All I want to point out is that when a cow has gone astray, a dream is just as likely to lead you to her as anything else. But I am not going to act as if I had found an infallible method of finding a stray cow. No, indeed. Instead of doing that, I have fixed the fence where she got out.

When I got home in the rain with the stray cows, the lonesome calf was standing humped up under the drip of the granary. "Blaa-aa-aa-umph!"



STORMS AT SUNRISE

Yesterday and to-day we had thunderstorms at sunrise. When the first one roused us we deserted the tent and scurried to the house. But this morning the thunder began to rumble in the distance about four o'clock, and when I got up to see if a storm was really coming I noticed that the children were sound asleep. So I decided that we would be brave and stay in our tent. Closing the flaps, I went back to bed and awaited developments. Presently there was a sharp flash of lightning and a smashing peal of thunder. A tousled head popped up from a bed, took a look to see that I was still in the tent, and then disappeared under the bed-clothes. A moment later another head went through the same performance, and we settled down to enjoy the storm, each in his own way. There were a few gusts of high wind that broke down an old apple tree a few rods away, and made me feel uncomfortable about the prospects for the tent, but it was properly staked and it stood the test. Then the rain came—and came and came. The tent filled with a fine mist, but it was not until the storm was about over that water began to drip. It was the heaviest rain of the season, and the tent turned it wonderfully. By the time it was past it was time to be stirring for breakfast, and as we talked it over we decided that sleeping in a tent during a thunderstorm is a great adventure. When the lightning flashed the whole tent seemed to be bathed in flame. The light, that for some reason showed a pinkish tinge, seemed to come from every direction. In a way it seemed more disquieting than when observed in the open or in a house. Of course, these observations are all my own. All that the people under the clothes were able to observe was that going through a storm in a tent is a somewhat suffocating experience. But after the storm we are having a glorious day. The world has been wind-lashed and rain-soaked and thunder-shaken. And after the riot of the elements

Pan lies drunk among the reeds,
Sleeping off his evil deeds.

To-day I am haunted by a quotation that is very sentimental, though I am not feeling a bit sentimental. Quite the contrary. But the last line of the stanza has a thought that seems wonderfully appropriate to this season, and as I do not like to spoil a literary gem by reducing it to fragments, I repeat it entire, just as my memory gives it back to me. Here it is, but please remember that the last line is the only one that appeals to me:

I trusted in the smile her pure face wore,
I lingered o'er the music of her words,
And could have doubted of her love no more
Than summer could have doubted of her birds.

Summer, or rather Nature, never doubts. Her wonderful work goes on without stay and without hesitation, although almost every part depends on some other part for its perfection. The apple trees put out their wonderful profusion of bloom, never doubting that at the right season the bees will appear to gather nectar and fertilise the blossoms with pollen. And the bees rear their broods in the early spring, never doubting that there will be plenty of flowers to feed them later on. All nature is incredibly interdependent. Special flowers must be visited by special insects, and in many cases these insects must have a special conformation before they can inadvertently perform the proper functions for the waiting blossoms. But in spite of this strange and apparently haphazard complexity Nature never doubts. She goes on producing the different parts of her plan with a perfect faith that somehow the different parts will come together at the right time, so that all forms of life may survive and multiply. And I may as well note in passing that the same law applies to her pests and blights. The onion worms seem to know that I will plant onions, and the cabbage worms that I will plant cabbages. And the curculio and the codling moth never doubt that there will be plums and apples for their unhallowed progeny. In fact, nature seems to be bound together by an amazing faith that envelops all things—except man.

Man does not seem to get it through his head that seed-time and harvest will come every year, or else he rushes away to the city, where he will have nothing to do with them and with their burdensome toil. He alone seems unable to understand that the wealth of the world will be reproduced every season, and he wears himself out trying to "save oop." Being without faith he is continually building towers of Babel, though he now does it with more skill than was shown by the inhabitants of the plain of Shinar. A modern great fortune is nothing more than a financial tower of Babel, built by someone who hopes to escape disaster through the power of wealth. He fondly hopes that he and his family will survive,

whether the seed-time and harvest come or not. And in our financial tower-building we have a great advantage over the ancients in the material we use. There is no danger of a confusion of tongues, because money talks in all languages. But in spite of the success that attends our modern tower-building, it is every bit as futile as the monumental folly of the ancients. Most of the great fortunes of a generation ago are already as completely scattered as the bricks of Babel or the wealth of Cræsus. In spite of their imposing magnificence they are no more substantial than

The unbuilt Romes and Karnaks of my mind.

And it is because men doubt and are without the faith that floods all nature that they waste their lives in this futile tower of fortune-building.

THE SOLITUDE OF RAIN

Being something of an amateur in solitude, I always enjoy discovering a new kind. I have enjoyed the solitude of open fields, of deep woods, of a mountain-top—or at least of a great hill, for I am no mountain climber—of a starry winter night, of a midsummer dawn, of a mountain lake, and even the depressing solitude of an alien crowd. And yesterday I enjoyed the solitude of a great rain. All morning I had been working in my tent in the woods and for some hours had been so still that the trees had forgotten I was there. Even the black squirrel that has built his summer nest of leaves in the nearest maple, about twenty feet above my head, was hopping about grubbing for his dinner without giving me a thought. Then the rain came—a still summer downpour without wind or thunder and lightning. I looked up from my work—and then found that I could not return to it. The woods seemed to be suddenly alive with a life with which I was not familiar. The beating of the rain on the leaves sounded like the murmur of innumerable voices speaking a language I did not know. The falling rain broke into a mist or gathered on the leaves and fell in great drops. As I listened the conviction grew that the trees and shrubs and flowers and weeds were expanding to enjoy the solitude. They felt safe from intrusion and espial, for no human creature would be about in such a storm. Suddenly I realised that I was an alien in the midst of a timorous life that had a capacity to enjoy, even more than I, the communion of nature. I realised more than ever the conceit which makes man regard the world as centred around himself. With his limited intelligence he dares to think that his life is the only one that matters in a world where all things are alive—or rather where life is continuous and takes on many forms, of which man is only one. Why should not the trees be the central and most important life form, for certainly they are more imposing in appearance and infinitely more numerous than men? In the solitude of the rain I felt that I was the only living thing that was self-centred and alone. When the rain passed all things resumed their shy reticence.



CORN-PLANTING

The earth is awake and the birds have come,
There is life in the beat of the breeze,
And the basswood tops are alive with the hum
And the flash of the hungry bees;
The frogs in the swale in concert croak,
And the glow of the spring is here,
For the bursting leaves on the rough old oak
Are as big as a red squirrel's ear.

From the ridge-pole dry the corn we pluck,
Ears ripe and yellow and sound,
That were saved apart, with a red for luck,
The best that the huskers found;
We will shell them now, for the Indian folk
Say, "Plant your corn without fear
When the bursting leaves on the rough old oak
Are as big as a red squirrel's ear."

No crow will pull and no frost will blight,
Nor grub cut the tender sprout,
No rust will burn and no leaves turn white,
But the stalks will be tall and stout;
And never a weed will have power to choke,
Or blasting wind to sear,
The corn that we plant when the leaves of the oak
Are as big as a red squirrel's ear.

DUCKS

It was all a mistake about those ducks. I might have studied them and written them up any time since they came out of the shell, but I got an idea into my head that ducks are so active that I should have to be feeling particularly fit and to be prepared to take a day off for the job. Now that I have looked into the matter I find that the old hen that hatched them misled me entirely. She kept up such a continual clacking and scolding because those ducks didn't act like chickens that I got to thinking that they must be unusually trying creatures. And all the while those young ducks were probably living their duck lives in a quiet, contented way, and there was no reason in the world why they should be reformed into chickens. Fortunately, the old hen finally gave up in despair, and after loudly prophesying that the whole place was going to the dogs just because those ducks couldn't be taught to roost in an apple tree, and because they were all the time getting their feet wet, she went back to laying eggs, and the last I heard of her she was in solitary confinement, because she wanted to start hatching again at this time of the year. All of which goes to show that there is a great deal of unnecessary fussing going on in this world, and that it is possible for well-meaning people to make a nuisance of themselves. The old hen meant well, but she had tackled an entirely unnecessary job.

This morning I hunted up the ducks for the purpose of trying to get a sympathetic understanding of their view of life. I had no trouble finding them. Ever since the oats have been hauled in they haven't wandered very far from the stack. Besides getting all the heads that were exposed within reach, they rob the hens whenever they manage to scratch loose a few grains. As the wet weather has filled all the puddles around the barnyard they do not have to go far for water, and I would give something to be as contented with my lot as they are. I found them lying under the granary with their heads tucked under their wings, and the first thing that struck me about them was the satisfying way in which they lie down. They seem to be built for just that kind of restfulness. When a duck lies down it does it in a whole-souled way that leaves nothing to be desired. It touches the ground from its crop to its tail and gives an exhibition of perfect rest that is worthy of a poem. Come to think of it, there is nothing surprising about this. Ducks are water birds, and the attitude of swimming is the one that they naturally take. Nature intended them to lie at full length in their own element, and now that they have been civilised into living on land, out of their element, they keep to the old habit. If the ground had not been so wet I would have sprawled down at full length to watch them, and would have shown them that when it comes to taking a rest they have nothing on me. When the conditions are right I can assume a restful attitude and rest as completely as anything in nature. But some people do not regard this as resting. They have another unpleasant word to describe it.

To begin with, I shooed the ducks from under the granary. Though I was loth to disturb them, duty must be done. The whole flock rose with a simultaneous "quack" and squattered through a near-by puddle. "Squattered" is exactly the right word, and I have the authority of Burns for using it:

Awa' ye squattered like a drake
On whistling wings.

The word seems to describe both their appearance and the sounds they make. As soon as they reached a place of safety they all stopped and began wiggling their tails. Then I saw a great light. Duck language is not expressed with the tongue, but with the tail. There is a sameness about the sounds they utter that would make it impossible for them to carry on a connected conversation. With their tails it is different. They seem able to give an infinite variety to the way in which they wiggle them. They can express joy, satisfaction, contempt, surprise, or any other emotion, by the simple wiggling of their tails. Did you ever see a duck dive into water in such a way as to leave only its tail exposed? If you have you could never fail to tell when it managed to get a good juicy root or a snail by the happy way it would wiggle its tail. Sometimes when they are very happy they can wiggle their tails so fast that all the eye can catch is a sort of hazy blur. At other times, when they are attending to their toilet and rubbing themselves down with the backs of their heads, they will give their tails a little flirt that is just as proud as proud. I think if I set myself to it I could write a bulletin on the language of duck tails. After I had disturbed them they stood and wiggled their tails at one another in a way that seemed to be entirely disrespectful to me. They seemed to be saying, "Humph! I wonder what he thinks he wants now. Did you ever see such a looking creature? How on earth does he manage to balance himself up on end in that way when every duck knows that the true, graceful position for a creature's body is to be hung between two legs horizontally! I wonder how he manages to convey his ideas, if he has any, without having a gaudy little bunch of feathers to wiggle the same as we have. Those sounds he makes with his mouth when the children are around can't have any more meaning than our quacking. It must be terrible to be a poor dumb creature like that." Then they all said "Quack" and gave their tails a most superior wiggle. At this point an unwary cricket started to move past about ten feet away, and instantly every neck in the flock was stretched

out full length and every tail wig-wagged: "My meat!" I don't know which one got it, though I think it must have been the brown drake from the contented way he wiggled his tail for some minutes afterwards.

Now don't be offended, but there are really lessons to be learned from the ducks. Their faculty for flocking together is something that farmers might study with profit. Whether sleeping or feeding it would be possible almost at any time to cover the whole flock with a tablecloth, and when they make up their minds to travel they move in Indian file behind a chosen leader like a band of Iroquois braves. And yet it is possible for the poison of class distinction to find its way even among ducks. I remember that one day when I was moving a pile of boards I uncovered a fair-sized frog. Instantly the ducks swooped down on it, and before I had time to interfere the frog had gone headfirst to his doom. He must have made just about as satisfactory a meal as that duck had ever had. And what was the result? While the other ducks went foraging around for crickets and angle-worms, the one that had swallowed the frog squatted on the shady side of the stable and crooned to itself and wiggled its tail as if it were the most superior duck in the country. It was easy to see that it felt itself above all the others. (Wiggle.) It was made of finer clay. (Wiggle—Wiggle—Wiggle.) It was really disgraceful the way those common ducks squattered around after grubs and such refuse as collects in the bottom of puddles. (Wiggle—Wiggle.) All afternoon it lay there meditating and digesting and refusing to associate with common ducks. And yet—and yet—even that superior duck will probably figure at a Christmas dinner just like the others. It is a strange world. Even the most gifted ducks cannot long maintain a superior position.



A MORAL TALE

I have had a chance to do some excellent moralising, but missed it, because I couldn't keep from laughing. To moralise properly a man must be very solemn. He must look wise, so that the things he is saying will seem wise. Although I do not often indulge in moralising, I have done enough of it to know that its chief value lies in the satisfaction it gives to the moralist rather than in any good it does to his hearers. That is why I am sorry I missed my chance yesterday. It isn't often that I get a chance to feel wise and self-righteous. But I couldn't keep from laughing, and that spoiled everything.

We were waiting for the horses to finish their dinner before returning to the cornfield, when one of the boys threw a crust of bread among the hens. They all made a dive for it and a moment later a nimble Leghorn broke out of the scrimmage with the crust in her beak. It was too big to be swallowed at a gulp, and she had to find some quiet place where she could peck it to pieces and swallow it bit by bit. But to get the necessary quiet and leisure was the problem. Half a dozen other hens pursued her across the barnyard snatching at the crust. With neck outstretched, and a look of vested right in her eye, she ducked under the granary still pressed by her relentless pursuers. A moment later she appeared at the other side, and as they say in the old-fashioned novels, "The villains still pursued her." Back she came across the yard a neck ahead of her tormentors. Occasionally one of her pursuers would drop out of the race, but her place would be taken at once by a fresh plunderer. The chase disappeared around the corner of the stable only to appear a few seconds later around the other side. Try as she would, she could not shake off her pursuers. Her steps began to show signs of weariness, but to stop meant to lose her prize. She started towards the house, but her pursuers, fresh ones that had just joined the chase, were just at her shoulder. Her steps began to wobble, for she was about winded, and at last she had to open her beak to pant. The crust fell to the ground, where it was immediately picked up by one of her pursuers. But the new owner was no better off than the one that had been robbed. The change of ownership seemed to increase the energy of the other hens, and the run continued. Back they came to the granary, passed under it, across the yard, around the stable and hen-house and into the orchard, where a new bunch of hens took up the chase. While we continued to watch the crust changed ownership three times, and not a morsel of it had been eaten. At one time or another every hen in the flock had taken part in the fruitless pursuit. When we started for the field the crust was being carried by a long-legged Andalusian, but though gifted with more speed she was faring no better than the others, for there was a fresh hen at every turn ready to take up the chase. Now, if you stop to consider the matter, could you possibly get a better example of the embarrassment of riches? Just like a man who has acquired a fortune, the hen in possession had to spend all her energy in protecting it and could not take time to enjoy it. And just like wealth, it was constantly changing hands—or beaks. What finally became of the crust we did not learn, as we could not spend the whole afternoon in watching, but at the last glimpse we got the Andalusian was still running strong. Probably the chase was kept up until roosting time. But though I missed the chance to moralise because I could not keep from laughing at the plight of the hen in possession, I may be permitted to score a point with poultry raisers. I understand that to do record laying hens must have plenty of exercise. From what I saw yesterday I learned that a whole flock of hens can be made to exercise to the point of falling from exhaustion by one crust of bread. Here is a scheme for giving hens exercise that beats the usual one of giving them their grain in chaff or straw so that they will have to scratch. One durable crust would keep a flock in motion for a whole day. So you see I learned something even though I missed the chance to enjoy the pleasure of moralising.

A BERRY-PICKER'S CONSCIENCE

To pick berries successfully, one must have a berry-picker's conscience. People who lack it are all the time catching sight of more luscious and bigger berries farther on in the patch and trampling down the canes in an attempt to reach them. And when they reach them they find they are no better than those they trampled under foot. But they are sure to see some loaded bushes a little farther on, and they continue their destructive trampling. And in the end they have only a skimpy scattering of berries in the bottom of their basket. On the other hand, the person with a well-developed berry-picker's conscience picks every berry in reach before moving on. Little ones must be picked as well as big ones before the conscience is satisfied. Picking in this way is highly efficient, and after about an hour of it you will be surprised at the fine mess of berries you have. But above all, you will be surprised at the enjoyment you will get from the berries you pick yourself. As a human being with an appetite that craves epicurean delights, I freely own that I derive more gustatory satisfaction from natural luxuries that I gather for myself than from anything else that comes to the table—whether it be at home or in high-class restaurants. If you want to know all the flavour there is in wild raspberries, go out to the wilds and pick them for yourself and sugar them to your own taste. If you let other people pick them for you, they never taste the same. Tame raspberries are good enough for tame people, but those who hear the call of the wild want wild raspberries that they pick for themselves. And if they pick them conscientiously, without wasting any by trampling and carelessness, they will enjoy them even more.



BERRY-PICKING

Berry-pickers! Berry-pickers!
Rising with the sun,
Think that you are working, don't you?
I just think it fun!
Every briar is black with berries,
Loaded, bending down;
I will race you for a pailful!
Then away to town.

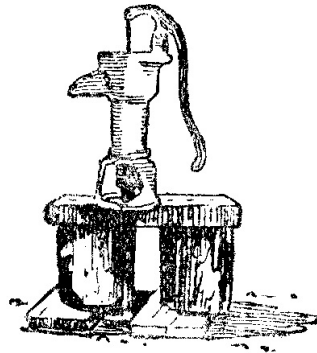
Pretty faces, bonnet-shaded,
Brightly-glowing cheeks,
Crimsoned lips that tell of eating,
Hands with ruddy streaks!
Where have all the children wandered?
"Ho, yo-ho, o-ho!"
There they answer, shouting, laughing,
Through the patch they go.

Hot and weary, richly laden
With delicious spoil,
At the spring we bathe our faces,
Drink, and rest from toil.
Who will buy our fresh, ripe berries?
If you haggle—well,
We may change our minds and keep them;
They're too good to sell.

SURVIVAL OF INSTINCT

Yesterday I saw an interesting case of the survival of instinct in domesticated animals. No one would expect pure-bred Yorkshire pigs with generations and probably centuries of domesticity behind them to show even a shadowy reminiscence of the wild state. But I was driving along the road and slowed up to admire a litter of sucklings that were nosing around in the long grass of an orchard. One of them must have noticed me, for there was a quick snort or grunt and every one of the youngsters dropped flat on its belly at the same instant and flattened itself on the ground so as to be almost invisible. They didn't wiggle a tail or stir a bristle until after I had passed them. The sound I had heard was evidently a primitive cry of warning that they all understood. Their obedience to it was automatic, for they all dropped as nearly as possible out of sight at the same instant. I have never read about wild pigs doing this, but I have seen a flock of quail or a covey of young partridge disappear in the same way, so I suppose it is natural to wild families of other kinds. It had all the appearance of a protective action that was hereditary, though one would not have expected to find it in pigs of high breeding.

While on the same drive I had a chance to make a further study of pigs—one that shows how pigs that have been reared in captivity have degenerated. A couple of boys who were driving an old sow along the road had come to a railroad, and the stubborn brute had come to a stop. Apparently she regarded the steel rails as a trap of some kind, and refused to be forced into it. When I came along she was giving a fine imitation of a wild boar at bay. With her tail toward the rails, she was standing with lowered head and an evil glint in her eyes. Any attempt to drive her would simply result in a squealing rush that no boy could stop, and she would return at full speed along the way she had come. Having in mind occasions when I had helped to lift pigs bodily over a railway track, I waited to see what would happen. But the boys evidently understood degenerate pig nature. One of them crossed the tracks and took a rosy apple from his pocket. Calling to the pig in his most alluring feeding-time accents, he placed the apple between the rails. The sow saw it from the tail of her eye, and turned at once. The boy backed away, and the sow stepped over the first rail and picked up the apple. The boy dropped another apple a few feet beyond the tracks and walked away. The pig finished the first apple, and, seeing the other one, walked across the other rail to get it. The trick was turned without any clubbing, fighting or trouble of any kind. An appeal to her reason would have done no good. She could not even be scared into crossing the tracks. But an appeal to her stomach worked like a charm. I guess pigs deserve all that is said about their greediness.



AN ANIMATED BAROMETER

I find that we have an animated barometer on the place that is probably just as reliable as the most up-to-date scientific instrument that we could buy. It is also due to a natural instinct that must have been acquired during the long process of evolution. If we want to get a line on the weather for the following morning all we have to do is to observe the doings of our lordly turkey gobbler and his devoted spouse. In mild, settled weather they prefer to roost on the windswept ridge-board of the stable, and evidently the exposure does them no harm. They must thrive on it, for the Christmas turkey we saved when the others were sold habitually slept on the roof, but when she came to the table she proved to be the tenderest and "fattest ever." They seem to choose a windswept roost by preference, and with their heads tucked under their wings, they come through all right when a hen or rooster would have a frozen comb. But when a cold snap is coming, or a severe storm, the turkeys go to the hen-house and roost with the hens. Some instinct makes them seek shelter when there is nothing that an ordinary human being can notice that indicates a change. And the gobbler goes to roost in a way that never fails to attract attention. He waits until all the hens are settled for the night, and then proceeds to prepare for the night in a way that is worthy of the Kaiser—of whom he reminds us by his autocratic habits. The roosts in the hen-house are arranged like a wide ladder, sloping from the floor to the roof. When the gobbler makes up his mind that it is time to retire he hops up on the lowest roost at the end nearest the door. Instead of settling down on his wishbone and apologising to the hens for intruding on their quarters, he promptly starts to shuffle along the roost, pecking at the hens with his strong beak until he drives them squawking to the floor. As soon as he reaches the far end of the roost he steps up to the next one and works his way to the other end, knocking off the hens in the same way. In this way he works up to the top roost and does not stop until he has driven off every hen. Having made all the hens thoroughly uncomfortable, he settles down for the night and allows them to clamber back, though they all keep at a respectful distance from him. When we hear the racket going on in the hen-house we know that we are due to have an uncomfortable change in the weather before morning, no matter how fair it may look. It is a signal that all doors and windows about the buildings must be closed. So, although the gobbler is something of a nuisance on account of the way he treats the hens, he has a distinct value as a barometer.

A CANADIAN GARDEN

This is a wonderful year for roses. In the early morning when they are drenched with dew every bush looks like a fairy fountain where the universal life force is bubbling up in beauty of form and colour and perfume. And the roses are not alone. All the other old-fashioned flowers, the marigolds, petunias, larkspurs, poppies, and hyacinths, are sending up their jets of tremulous loveliness. As I look at them with eyes refreshed by sleep I realise the truth of that verse in the Koran which says:

If I had but one loaf of bread I would sell half of it and buy hyacinths, for beauty is food for the soul.

Not even the fabled

Beds of amaranth and moly,
Where soft winds lull us breathing lowly,

can surpass a Canadian garden, brimming with the old-fashioned flowers beloved in childhood. As I linger among them the years fall from me like an "envious shadow." I press the delicate blooms to my face, inhale their fragrance, and let my whole being vibrate with the joy of life until my heart joins in the morning chorus of the birds. And then the great sun swings up and the day's work begins.

WHEN THE RAIN CAME

When the rain came! How shall I write or say or sing or in any way tell what joy there was in our little world when the rain came? For weeks the sun had been pouring down intolerable heat, and the springs went dry and the grass withered and all signs failed. It was in vain that we studied the sunsets of gold and cinnabar and dawns of pearl and chrysopease. The fountains of the deep were sealed. The noonday was a furnace and there was no relief in the night. Never before in the memory of man had there been such heat and drought, and the farmers themselves began to look as if they would dry up and blow away, they were so tanned and sunburned and heat-scorched by work in the hayfields. The cattle panted under the shrivelling shade trees and scarcely lifted their heads when little whirlwinds sucked up the dust from the burned pastures. The birds sang, but their music was almost an irritation in that fever and swelter. Heat, heat, nothing but sunshine and heat through the long insufferable day, and still heat in the sleepless, dewless night. Surely the land had been forgotten or a curse had been put upon it. And then the rain came!

What do the people who live in cities know of the infinite blessing of rain? A passing watercart or a squirting garden hose satisfies their shrivelled needs. But with us in the country it is different. When we need rain we need rivers and oceans of it, and this time we needed it as never before. And just as hope was beginning to fail, thunderheads began to push up along the horizon. But the rain did not come. Time and again storms gathered in the west, but those who were watching reported drearily: "Gone to the north," or "Gone to the south." Sometimes a wide-winged storm would cast its shadow over us and sprinkle us with a few big drops and a cool wind would blow from it, but there is little satisfaction in being cooled with the wind from other people's rain.

After some days of this teasing a storm came that somehow could not slip off to the north or to the south. It came at us squarely with a front like Niagara and a great rushing wind before it. It crackled with thunder and blazed with lightning, and the first downpour was mingled with hail. It lasted for only a few minutes, but while it lasted it was a veritable cloud-burst. The spouting eaves could not carry all their treasure, but overflowed in splashing and tinkling rivulets. And the murmur we heard was not all of the falling rain. It was full of the thanksgiving of the grass and of the leaves that were held up like cupped palms to catch the reviving shower. When the cloud passed and the sun came out a great sigh of relief seemed to go up from all nature and once more the music of the birds was grateful and sweet to hear.

But though the first shower was good it was but a sup to the thirsty earth. An hour after it had fallen there was not even a puddle left for the children to paddle in with bare feet, but the corn-leaves had uncurled and were shining with tender green. The next day was hot, but early in the afternoon great clouds began to pile in the sky and storms began to pass to the north and south. Presently one came to us, and when it had passed the children saw for the first time in their lives a perfect rainbow. It arched the sky magnificently, but we rejected its promise of fair weather. We wanted more rain, and realised as never before the wisdom of the words that Agur, the son of Jakeh, spake unto Ithiel, even unto Ithiel and Ucal: "There are three things that are never satisfied—yea, four things that say not. It is enough." And one of these four things is "the earth that is not filled with water." Fortunately our hope was not disappointed. The rainbow as a sign of fair weather proved as false as all the signs that had failed us when it was dry. The next day came hot and steamy, with thunder rumbling in the distance and a curtain of clouds overhead. All day it continued to get darker and at last a still rain came from the south. It was one of those satisfying downpours that soak in as they fall, and it brought peace and healing and renewed life. And we knew that the land had not been forgotten and that there was not a curse upon it.

While sitting listening to the rain I felt that I, too, was being refreshed and revived. Scraps of poetry floated through my memory, murmurous and melodious, and when the wind stirred it brought memories of the sea—not of the sea when tempestuous and plangent, but of the soothing hours when

The sea with its soft susurrus

Comes up through the ivory gate.

One poem above all others seemed to fit my mood, and I began to piece it together as line by line it came back to me. It was Henry Kendall's wonderful poem which I had clipped from a paper years ago and had unconsciously committed to memory through many readings:

The song that once I dreamt about,
The tender, touching thing,
As radiant as the rose without—
The love of wind and wing—
The perfect verses to the tune
Of woodland music set,
As beautiful as afternoon,
Remain unwritten yet.

At first I could not understand why this particular poem was haunting me, but presently I understood. It is interwoven with the imagery of the rain. Listen to this:

It is too late to write them now,
The ancient fire is cold,
No ardent lights illumine the brow
As in the days of old.
I cannot dream the dream again,
But when the happy birds
Are singing in the sunny rain
I think I hear its words.

I think I hear the echo still
Of long-forgotten tones,
When evening winds are on the hill
And sunset fires the cones.
But only in the hours supreme,
With songs of land and sea,
The lyrics of the leaf and stream,
This echo comes to me.

No longer doth the earth reveal
Her gracious green and gold;
I sit where youth was once and feel
That I am growing old.
The lustre from the face of things
Is wearing all away;
Like one who beats with tired wings,
I rest and muse to-day.

But in the night and when the rain
The troubled torrent fills,
I often think I see again
The river in the hills.
And when the day is very near,
And birds are on the wing,
My spirit fancies it can hear
The song I cannot sing.

The night closed in with the warm rain pouring from the chambers of the south, and when I went to bed in the tent I could

hear it beating over me. It was a good sound, a sleepy sound, and more soothing than "poppies and mandragora and all the drowsy sirops of the world." In the morning the rain-drenched earth was glistening with moisture, and I went to the cornfield to cultivate. It was a joy to work the ground in the condition it was in, and I went at it with a will. Although the corn is no better than it should be after the long dry spell, I have broken up the "capillaries" and have a "dust mulch" in that field that scientific farmers would come miles to see if they knew about it. The weather is cool, and it looks as if the rain were over for a while, but we have had enough for the present, and already the drought is almost forgotten. It was terrible while it lasted, but everything was filled with new life "when the rain came."



THE END OF THE DROUGHT

Last night we marked the twinkling stars,
This morn no dew revived the grass,
And oft across the parching fields
We see the dusty eddies pass;
The eager hawk forgets to swing
And scream across the burning sky,
And from the oak's slow-dying crest
Sends forth a strange and plaintive cry.

The geese on unaccustomed wings
Flap wildly in ungainly flight,
The peacock's fierce defiant scream
Scatters the fowls in wild affright,
The crows are barking in the woods,
The maple leaves their silver show,
The cattle sniff the coming storm,
Then toss their heads and softly low.

And now along the hazy west
The swiftly building clouds uprear;
High overhead the winds are loud,
The thunder rolls and grumbles near;
The housewife trims the leaky eaves,
The farmer frets of lodging grain,
Till all the world, rejoicing, drinks
The long-denied, long-prayed-for rain.

A LONESOME SQUIRREL

One wet morning recently I happened to be passing through the wood-lot, when I heard the squawking of a black squirrel. I rejoiced to think that perhaps the squirrels were coming back, but investigation revealed only one lone specimen, and, judging by its size and actions, it had wandered far from its mother. It was crying from pure lonesomeness, and it didn't care who heard it. At the best the cry of a black squirrel is about the saddest thing in nature, but to hear it when the trees are dripping and the woods gloomy it is the last note of sorrow and pessimism. I have never seen an attempt to render this sound in letters, but what of that? We shall try it now. As nearly as I can arrive at it, the sound should be represented somewhat as follows:

Ku-ku-kwanh-h-h!

The last syllable is long drawn out in a most desolating manner. Come to look at it, this attempt to render the cry of the black squirrel has a sort of pluperfect look, and I have no doubt that a skilled philologist could trace it back to an Aryan root—but I digress. Anyway, my squirrel was squawking and bawling in the universal language of childhood. In the words of the poet, he had "no language but a cry." After spying him I began to edge closer to observe his actions. He frisked about as I approached, and whenever I stood still he began to cry again. When crying he always clung to the tree, with his head downwards, and with every syllable he gave his tail a little jerk. I might say that he was scolding at me, if it were not for the plaintiveness of the noise he was making. Every few minutes I took a few steps nearer, until at last I was within twenty feet of the half-dead maple from which he was pouring his woe. Although I was quite evidently "viewed with alarm" in the most approved editorial manner, he shifted his feet a little from time to time and kept up his wailing. Finally I sat down under the shelter of a tree trunk and continued to watch him. He scolded and squawked and then began to come down the tree, inch by inch, precariously moving headforemost. I kept perfectly still for some minutes—keeping a position of absolute rest is about the easiest thing I do—and inch by inch he slipped down the tree until he was so close that I could see his beady black eyes and see half-way down his throat when he opened his mouth to squawk. At last he got as far down as he cared to come, and continued to tell me about his troubles. I was sorry that I couldn't think of anything to say or do that would assuage his lonesomeness and grief, but when I heard the call for dinner at the house, and knew that I should be stirring, I flung a little parody at him:

"Is it weakness of intellect, Blackie?" I cried,
"Or a rather tough nut in your little inside?"
With a shake of his poor little head he replied,
"Ku-ku-kwanh! Ku-ku-kwanh!"

When I rose to my feet he rushed headlong into a near-by hole. But let no one imagine that my time was wasted while sitting watching that squirrel. Although he was unable to say anything of importance to me, and I was unable to say anything of importance to him, you may note that the interview was good for one extra long paragraph. I could have gone out and interviewed some eminent human without getting any more copy than I did from my lonesome little black squirrel.



LITTLE PIGS

There are eight little pigs in one pen, little white beauties, and from time to time it falls to my lot to feed them. I always undertake the task cheerfully, because I like to look at them. They are still at the tender age of the little pigs we sometimes see in restaurant windows with apples in their mouths and "their vests unbuttoned." Not one of them but deserves the description of Charles Lamb:

"I speak not of your grown porkers—things between pig and pork—those hobbledehoy—but a young and tender suckling—guiltless as yet of the sty; his childish voice as yet not broken, but something between a childish treble and a grumble—the mild forerunner or præludium of a grunt."

When I went to visit them this morning, they were all lying in the sun, in the little plot of pasture that has been fenced off for them. I did not blame them in the least for their indolence, for these are the days when everybody loves to lie in the sunshine, though, of course, it is a dreadful waste of time, except on Sunday afternoons, after church. I approached them quietly, and while I stood admiring their white plumpness, delicately touched with pink, I was glad to notice that Mother Goose was a true observer. She sang joyously:

The little pigs sleep with their tails curled up.

Their eight little tails were twisted into eight curls so tight that I felt sure another twist would have lifted their hind feet off the ground. An unguarded step roused them, and then what excitement there was! Eight little voices were at once raised in protest at my slowness. Carefully spilling a little of the skim-milk "mash" into one end of the trough, I stepped back hastily and distributed the remainder evenly along the rest of it. The taste I had given them, however, was enough to get them all into action and reveal their characters. Really, one can't help liking little pigs. They are so human. For a moment I imagined myself a Professor Garner, and felt that I understood their language.

"Whee! whee! Willie got more than I did! Whee! Whee!"

"Make Susie take her elbows—I mean, feet—out of my part of the trough!"

One little bully who did not like the table manners of his next neighbour jumped at him, and started to chew his ear. It was all a hurried scramble, and then a couple of them discovered that they were at the wrong end of the trough. Without a sound, they started to gobble the feed, while the others were still quarrelling and fighting. Right there I realised that I was not the first to observe the habit of pigs. There is a world of truth in the old saying we so often apply to men: "It is the still pig that gets the swill." Fortunately, the others soon noticed what was going on, and stopped squabbling to get their share. What pushing and gobbling there was then! They took no more interest in me than children do in their hostess at a birthday party after the ice-cream has been served, the human little rascals.

I never think of pigs without remembering a dark night, many years ago, when they used to run half-wild, instead of being penned and fed scientifically. I was coming home late, and took a short cut through the dark woods. I was whistling to keep my courage up, for even though I knew that there were no wolves or bears, there was something uncanny about the deep shadows. At last I came to a huge elm tree that had been cut down for a coon in the brave days when the coon-skin was worth more than a tree three feet in diameter and the labour it took to chop it down. It was late in the fall, and there were deep drifts of leaves beside every log. Climbing to the top of the fallen giant, I jumped down into a great drift—and then yelled with terror. The earth seemed to spring up under me and around me, as a drove of half-grown pigs that had taken shelter from the cold in the dry leaves began to scatter, squealing and "whoofing." They were every bit as scared as I was, and as they rushed about blindly they bowled me off my feet. My first thought was of wolves and bears, about which I had heard so much in my boyhood, but I soon realised what the trouble was. And yet, in the few seconds when I didn't know what I had tumbled into, I got a scare that made me wear my hair *à la pompadour* for weeks afterwards. Since then I have at different times tripped over a sleeping pig at night when walking past a straw stack, but I never got such a scare as I did in the woods. Perhaps that is because these modern pigs haven't so much steam in them as the grunTERS we had when the saying "root, hog, or die" had an actual application. They had to root for their livings, and I have no doubt that there are still neighbourhoods that keep up feuds that were started by the predatory pigs of the early settlers. It was no easy matter to make rail-fences "horse-high and hog-tight," when they had to be built over cradle-holes, and those eager, hungry pigs could be depended on to find a hole if there was one; and if there wasn't, they were not beyond making one. Those pigs didn't pose before cameras and get their pictures in the agricultural papers, but if an acorn fell within half a mile of them, they would hear it, and get to it in time to catch it on the first bounce. We shall

never see their like again.

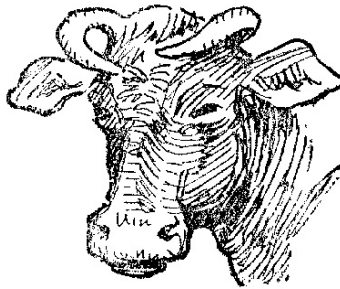
And now to come back to our eight—did you ever see anything more contented-looking? Every one of them looks as snug as the cat after he has eaten the canary, and even a cat couldn't put more contentment into his purring than they do into their grunting. A couple of them are lying sprawled on their stomachs in the sun in an attitude which I would not hesitate to condemn as unnatural if I saw it in a picture. One is chewing a blade of grass, and no doubt meditating on the weather and the prospects of the food supply for the winter. Others are doing their best to do a little rooting in the baked ground, no doubt in the hope of getting a place to wallow in. Vain hope! Just look at the little fellow scratching himself against the end of the trough. He positively looks to be smiling, and the tone of his grunting tells clearly that he agrees with Josh Billings, who said: "The discomfort of itching is more than half made up by the pleasure of scratching." Taken altogether, these little pigs make as interesting and pretty a picture as the farm affords. And looking at them from a practical point of view, is there anything about the place that will better repay feeding and attention, with pork at the present price? But don't let us think of that. It is too tragic to think of these happy little fellows being turned into Wiltshire bacon. Let them enjoy the swill and sunshine and other good things of life while they may. It would not be such a bad thing if some of the rest of us could do the same.

COCKING HAY

Cocking hay has always been an evening job, and now it is a Saturday evening job. Since the introduction of hay-loaders most of the hay is gathered direct from the windrows, even though the best authorities on hay-making agree that hay that has been allowed to sweat in the field for a few days is best. But with all the improved implements a farmer sometimes reaches Saturday evening with more hay down than he can possibly haul in, and it has to be cocked up, for fear of a Sunday storm and to keep it from bleaching too much in the sunshine.

Possibly there are farmers who do this kind of work in the middle of the day, but I do not remember having seen them at it. My earliest recollections go back to dim figures moving in the twilight and heaping the new-mown hay in nicely rounded piles. Of course there is a good reason why cocking hay should be an evening job. After being cut the grass needs several hours of sunshine to dry it properly, and as a rule it is evening before what has been cut is fit to be gathered.

In the pioneer days gathering hay was picturesque enough to tempt the brush of a Millet, though I cannot remember at this moment any great picture dealing with the subject. After the mowers had laid down the field with their scythes the rakers began to follow them with the old wooden hand-rakes. This task often fell to the lot of the children, and they went at it in an orderly way, according to their size and strength. The youngest and weakest would take the first swath and move along raking it across on to the second. The one who followed would have to take these two swaths and rake them across on to the third. The strongest raker would take the last swath farther along to make the windrow. They would then return in the same order on the opposite side of the windrow, and so complete it. After them the men would come along with their forks and make the coils or cocks. This work was usually done by the mowers, as an evening chore after they had put in a full day with the scythes. Raking a heavy crop of hay with the hand-rakes was a heavy task, and there is still a tradition in this district of a stout Scotch girl who always took charge of the work on her father's farm. She would take her place on the middle swath, with her youngest sister on the first swath and the hired man on the last. All the way across the field she would keep her gang moving by shouting "Gries ort" (Hurry up) to her sister, and "Cum suas" (Keep up) to the hired man. But sulky rakes and hay-loaders have robbed hay-making of its most picturesque qualities, though I cannot help thinking that it would be worth while for some artist to reassemble the pioneer scene on account of its historical as well as artistic value. As the work was always at its height about sunset he need not lack for colour to give his picture due charm.



AN OCTOBER WALK

After much coaxing I consented to go for a walk. My own choice was to lie in the sunshine with a book, but in an indiscreet moment I had told the nature student where late butterflies could be found, and the little people would not be denied. So, with the four-year-old acting as pace-maker, we started for a ramble in the fields and woods. It was the most perfect day of the fall and everything was in keeping. There was a bag of hickory nuts by the kitchen door and five bags of walnuts by the gate. There was a cornfield near by with khaki-coloured shocks and big yellow pumpkins. The sun was shining through a smoky haze and giving everything a dreamy and lazy look. But in spite of the haze there seemed to be more light in the world than at any other time of the year, for the brown fields and yellow leaves seemed to reflect it back to us. And it was a warm, golden, mellow light that charmed the air to a wonderful stillness. It glimmered on the ripe apples in the orchard and revealed inviting spots everywhere that one could lie down in and dream in and be content. It glittered on trailing spider-webs on which I have been assured that little spiders travel through the air and on the silver-white balloons of the milkweed that went drifting over. There were a few sparrows chattering among the corn shocks and one crow cawing in the woods. Once in a while we heard a bluejay squawk in the woods, and a solitary hawk circled in the sky for a little while and then "stretched its wings to the south." Because four-year-old legs are short, our pace-maker had to be lifted across ditches and carried occasionally, so that our progress was such as befitted a dreamy day. No one was in a hurry, but still there was always a straggler calling, "Wait for me!"

In the pasture field the young cattle came racing up to us, looking for salt, and the driver came nosing for an apple. Unfortunately we were not provided and had to disappoint them. There were yellow cabbage moths fluttering everywhere, despised of the nature student, but he occasionally did wild work with his butterfly net when chasing tiger butterflies. A few feeble grasshoppers made short jumps to get out of our way, and once I heard a lonely cricket rasping out his stridulous song. There was excitement when the first mushroom was found—their season is about over—and there was an immediate scattering to find more. Handkerchiefs were knotted to make bags, and all likely corners were investigated, while the pace-maker and I moved steadily toward the golden woods. Presently we were trampling the crisp leaves and watching the flecks of colour that floated down through the still air. Even the woods were soaked with the warm sunshine, and every log that we came to offered a seat that we could not help stopping to enjoy. What was the use of being in a hurry when we were not going anywhere in particular and even great Nature herself seemed to be loafing? We were disappointed in not seeing any squirrels or birds, but perhaps that made us feel that everything belonged to us and that the woods had put their bravery on for us alone. There were many informal councils which resulted in wandering expeditions to especially bright trees and shrubs. And everywhere we found the warm, dreamy, flooding sunshine.

There was no excitement to be found in the first wood-lot we visited, so we decided to move farther afield. Someone had heard that there were big puffballs beside a Government drain in a field by the railroad. We decided to investigate, and if we found fresh ones to sample them. We already had a mess of mushrooms and had no need to hunt for something else, but puffballs would be a novelty, and we would at least be able to say that we had tried them. At last we had a definite object in view, but that did not hurry us much. On coming out of the woods we found that the haze had lifted, and the sunlight seemed higher and warmer. Coats were taken off and carried on shoulders or dragged by one sleeve while we swept that field in open formation, looking for those puffballs. It was reported that the man who had seen them had said they were so large he had mistaken them for sheep. But evidently, like sheep, they had gone astray. We couldn't find a trace of them. They were probably picked by some predatory mycologist, of whom there are many in the country just now. Being disappointed in our hunt, we crossed the Government drain, in which water is once more flowing, after months during which it was dry as summer dust. Our pace-maker marched sturdily ahead of us into a wood-lot where we were especially interested to find a few blue-beech trees. This enabled me to give an improving lecture on blue-beech tea, which used to be very popular with the teachers of a past generation. It was brewed by making a blue-beech gad about a yard long and as thick as a man's finger and applying it vigorously to the writhing person of an unruly boy. It was generally supposed to be an excellent moral and mental tonic, and the boys to whom it was administered in liberal doses afterwards became shining lights in the ministry or in politics. To be able to handle a blue-beech gad successfully in a country school during the winter months, when boys and girls of eighteen or twenty attended, was one of the chief qualifications of those old-time teachers. But we live in gentler times, and blue-beech tea is now but a memory of sterner days. I also remember that blue-beech clubs were to old-time bullies what a sprig o' shillelagh was to an Irishman. The popular recipe for a fighting cudgel was to get a straight blue-beech about an inch and a half thick and cut a piece about two feet long. After the ends were properly trimmed and rounded it was buried in a manure pile that was heating and left for some months. This was supposed to add to its weight and toughness, though why either should be added to is

something of a mystery, for in its natural state a blue-beech cudgel is about as heavy and tough as a rod of iron. I remember getting a blue-beech and burying it, but I have no recollection of digging it up. Probably I forgot all about it, or the fighting mood left me. Anyway, I never got into trouble for using it. In fact I don't think I ever heard of one being used, and I suppose they never had any existence, except in the fervid imaginations of that period of youth when the human child arms himself with a discarded gun-barrel and goes out back of the barn to fight Indians.

The lecture on blue-beech, delivered from a sunlit spot of a mossy log, got me so thoroughly rested that I hated to get up, but the pace-maker was off in the woods somewhere, and I had to follow. We found a rotting root that was covered with dry puffballs that smoked when squeezed and when tramped on puffed up a greenish-black cloud that hung in the air for some minutes. After this we found a thorn tree, and the ground under it was red with haws. These we tried to eat, but it was hard to find one that was not wormy. I shouldn't be surprised if these berries serve as breeding places for some of our injurious insects, though I have not seen them mentioned in any of the bulletins of the Agricultural Department. And while I think of it, I have seen nothing about the destructive mushroom worms. They either exist in the ground waiting for the mushrooms or they develop in a few hours. I have found fresh pink mushrooms that could not have been more than a day old that were filled with worms. But the day was too lazy and dreamy for a serious investigation of this kind, so I contented myself with wondering idly about them. The haws, which were not very palatable, reminded us that dinner must be about ready, and the pace-maker was headed for home. He led us out of the woods into the big sunlight of the fields, where little puffs of wind came now from one direction, now from another and purred across our ears. We passed through clouds of little flies that were drifting about aimlessly like the milkweed-downs and spider-webs. By this time the sunshine was positively hot, and that made us lazier than ever. Somehow we reached the road and crawled along to the orchard, where we found a few ripe fall pippins that had been missed by the pickers. These we knocked down with a pole, and while munching them dawdled along to the house, where we found that dinner had been ready for an hour and everything was cold and—and—and, but you know yourself what was said to us. After dinner I got the book and a sunny place to lie and read, and life was very good.

BIRDS OF PASSAGE

When the maples flame with crimson
And the nights are still with frost,
Ere the summer's luring beauty
Is in autumn glory lost,
Through the marshes and the forests
An imperious summons flies,
And from all the dreaming north-land
The wild birds flock and rise.

From streams no oar hath rippled
And lakes that waft no sail,
From reaches vast and lonely
That know no hunter's trail,
The clamour of their calling
And the whistling of their flight
Fill all the day with marvel,
And with mystery the night.

As ebb along the ocean
The great obedient tides,
So wave on wave they journey
Where an ancient wisdom guides;
A-through the haze of autumn
They vanish down the wind,
With the summer world before them
And the crowding storms behind.

AUTUMN BEAUTY

The days of beauty have come again. Already the maples have been touched with colour, ranging from light yellow to crimson. But they have been only touched. The great mass of foliage is still green and serves as an admirable setting for the vivid touches that announce the approach of autumn. The rains have revived the pasture-fields to their natural colour and the stalky wigwams of the corn-fields show the lingering richness of harvest. The pumpkins give little dabs of orange, but the long drought was cruel to them, and we miss their usual profusion and splendour among the corn shocks. The ivy on the houses reveals every shade of red known to Nature's palette. In the orchard the apples are unusually brilliant. The Kings, McIntosh Reds and Ben Davises are enough to make the mouths of passing automobilists water, but the more knowing will find a greater appeal in the light gold of the fall pippins. There are asters, zinnias and gladioli in the garden that have made a wonderful recovery since the drought passed. They rival the goldenrod in neglected corners of the fields, and the display of colour has just begun. If the weather continues favourable we should have an autumn to remember. In this description it would never do to forget the milky-white splotches of the mushrooms in the pasture-field, even though white is an absence of colour. If the theory that mushrooms come before rain is true, we should have rain within a few hours, for to-day's gathering of mushrooms was unusually fresh and fine. And I must not forget the rich brown of the wheat-fields, where the drill is at work while I write. All the colours that Nature is lavishing for our delight show differently in the warm sunlight at different hours of the day. The sun sets red and the moon rises golden before the last rays of the sun have disappeared. Altogether, everything is so beautiful that one feels like adding a human roar to the shrill music of the crickets.

Although there is no question about the delight of spending a perfect October day afoot in the fields and woods, it must be admitted that other forms of travel have their merits. Travel in buggies would be delightful if the automobiles were not so plentiful, and travel in automobiles might be praised if they were not so speedy. My experience has been with the quiet glide of a varnished parlour-car, and a day of travel in this way has filled my memory with a whole gallery of pictures. The amount of beauty spread on the landscape between Ottawa and Toronto would be bewildering, if it were not so soothing and restful. Hillsides covered with flaming red of sumach—marshes of dark green cedar—the yellow of birches and poplars and the scarlet of maples whirl past the wide windows in a never-ending panorama. The blue of the sky and the occasional blue of water give further variety to the passing picture, and occasional long, swinging flocks of blackbirds give a decorative touch that adds a further charm. Here and there an apple orchard shows the colour of fruit and heaped barrels, and over all is the glorious October sunlight. No poet needs to think that he is being original and emphatic when he says that the world is still as beautiful as in the dawn of time. It is more beautiful, for we have had to learn how to enjoy beauty, just as we have had to learn how to develop and enjoy all the other good things of life. The world is more beautiful to-day than it was to those who viewed it from a "Cro-Magnon squatting place," for we have learned how to see and enjoy beauty. And a beautiful day in October is the best of all.

^[2]I think I have written enough about the beauty of autumn foliage, but this morning I saw one little touch so marvellous that it is worth special mention. I happened to be up and about just as the sun was rising. There were wisps and occasional banks of fog scattered over the fields and against the woods. When the sun rose with his full glory of light I happened to look toward the west. Between me and the multi-coloured foliage of the wood-lot there was a dense bank of fog, which suddenly became luminous with the light of the sun and the colour of the autumn leaves. It was more beautiful than any sunset I have seen. The fog and the heavy dew both seemed to freshen and intensify the effects of the light and the foliage. The scene lasted only a few minutes, but it marked the supreme point of my enjoyment of the autumn.

From Peter McArthur's last published article before the operation which preceded his death.



IN PRAISE OF HICKORY NUTS

The Canadian hickory nut I sing. It may have a hard shell that resists the ordinary nutcracker, and you may find it hard to get at the precious kernel without mashing a thumb or mashing the nut into a mess of kernel and shell, but if you have the skill to get the meat to your teeth and then pass it luxuriously along your palate you will find that it surpasses all praise. No nut of the lot, from the lofty cocoanut that matures like the Stylite, high in the air, to the lowly peanut—"the mute companion of the murky mole"—can compare with it in deliciousness of flavour. The nuts of other lands may be easy to get at, but the best-flavoured Canadian nuts—the walnut, butternut and hickory nut—are at the bottom of that popular phrase, "a hard nut to crack." Some of them would almost defy a safe-breaker or yeggman. Nature has protected their treasures with a worthy shell. To crack them properly requires no ordinary skill. You must hold them on end and then deal them a sharp stroke that is still as delicately adjusted as the stroke of those huge steam hammers that can be made to crack an eggshell with a blow of twenty—or is it a hundred?—tons. If you hit too hard you will make both the nut and your fingers a total loss, but with the right blow the shell will crack and come apart so that the meat can be picked out in pieces that give the palate something to rejoice over. This morning I came along when some hickory nuts were being cracked and helped myself. At once I was back in imagination on the hearth of an old open fireplace, cracking hickory nuts on the granite hearth-stone with a corner of the family smoothing-iron and then picking out the meat with the family darning-needle. I was glad to find that a well-seasoned hickory nut tastes just as good to-day as it did in those far days. When people say that bacon tastes as "sweet as a nut" they do not mean that it is in any way saccharine. They mean that its flavour reminds them of the perfect flavour of our native Canadian hickory nut. I am glad that most of our Christmas supply of nuts is of home picking, for I know that, besides the pleasure of eating them, they carry memories of picking them on perfect autumn days. Among my most precious memories are memories of days spent in the mellow autumn woods gathering our own native nuts. The imported nuts that are bought in grocery stores have no such glamour attending them. They may be easier to deal with and better for cooking and candy purposes, but for me there is more in one taste of a hickory nut than in a bushel of the commercial nuts. The hickory nut rouses my imagination and teases my appetite. I know that if I tried to make a meal of them I would probably starve to death while laboriously cracking them and picking out the meat. But I would get exercise and at the same time renew my youth. Wherefore I most inadequately sing the Canadian hard-shelled hickory nut.



AN INDIAN WIND SONG

The wolf of the winter wind is swift,
And hearts are still and cheeks are pale
When we hear his howl in the ghostly drift,
As he rushes past on a phantom trail;
And all the night we huddle and fear,
For we know that his path is the path of Death,
And the flames burn low when his steps are near,
And the dim hut reeks with his grave-cold breath.

The fawn of the wind of the spring is shy,
Her light feet rustle the sere, white grass,
The trees are roused as she races by,
In the pattering rain we hear her pass;
And the bow unstrung we cast aside,
While we winnow the golden, hoarded maize,
And the earth awakes with a thrill of pride
To deck her beauty for festal days.

The hawk of the summer wind is proud,
She circles high at the throne of the sun;
When the storm is fierce her scream is loud,
And the scorching glance of her eye we shun;
And oftentimes, when the sun is bright,
A silence falls on the choirs of song,
And the partridge shrinks in a wild affright,
Where a searching shadow swings along.

The hound of the autumn wind is slow,
He loves to bask in the heat and sleep,
When the sun through the drowsy haze bends low,
And frosts from the hills through the starlight creep;
But oftentimes he starts in his dreams,
When the howl of the winter wolf draws nigh,
Then lazily rolls in the gold-warm beams,
While the flocking birds to the south drift by.



ROUNDING UP THE TURKEYS

The turkeys in Appin district are not wild, but their owners are. This is the season of the annual round-up, and if it were not that Canadians are a peaceable and law-abiding people the results might be disastrous. The confusion is equal to that of a round-up of wild cattle in Texas in the old evil days. Flocks are inextricably mixed. It is true that some of the tough stringy old gobblers and hens are marked with bits of gaudy rags tied on their wings, but the young, plump, edible birds are unbranded. Hence the confusion and heart-burnings.

Turkeys are native here, and they do not seem to understand that the world has become civilised since the time when their ancestors roamed through the woods in mighty flocks. They are the only important survivors of the wild life of other days, and they still retain many of their wild instincts. Although they are hatched out in the barns or poultry houses, they take to the woods as soon as they have the use of their legs, and live the wild life until full grown.

The great trouble is that, like the Indians, they are unable to understand property rights in land. Line fences mean nothing to them, and they will range wherever food is plentiful. Flocks sometimes wander miles from home in quest of grasshoppers in the summer time, and of beech-nuts in the fall. While the weather is mild the flocks keep apart, but when a cold snap comes on they rush together, and then the trouble begins.

"My turkeys were hatched early in June," says one farmer's wife.

Sixty gobblers gobble together as at a signal, while an equal number of hens stretch their necks and look worried.

"Mine were July birds, but they are of a big breed, and fast growers." The gobblers comment on this statement with a clamorous, simultaneous gobble.

"Mine were July birds, too, but I fed them on oatmeal for a couple of weeks, and that gave them a good start."

Once more the gobblers in convention assembled gobble furiously.

Here you have all the elements of a neighbourhood row. Each woman is convinced in her own soul that all the really big turkeys belong to her by rights, and that the runts that have pulled through an attack of roup or blackhead belong to someone else.

"When my hens were setting I noticed that all their eggs were sharp-pointed, and I've heard it said that gobblers always hatch out of that kind."

After this remark the gobblers gobbled their worst. They seem to have a mania for gobbling after every remark made by people who are viewing them. At the same time the other two women sniffed, for they knew just what the remark about sharp-pointed eggs and gobblers means. It means that the speaker thinks she should come out of the round-up with a flock wholly composed of gobblers. They would like to do the same, but it is manifestly impossible. There are fully fifty hens, and they must belong to somebody.

At last, in desperation, it is suggested that each owner drive out her own marked old hens and turkeys and see if the young ones will follow their parents. Only people who have tried to drive turkeys know what this means. Make a pass at a gobbler with a switch and he sidesteps out of range. Then he stands to await further developments. As no two turkeys by any possibility sidestep in the same direction, the progress that can be made in driving them is evident. It is asserted on good authority that the more people know about turkeys the better they like geese.

In order to facilitate the division of the flocks the owners make wild rushes at them, each trying to cut out towards her own nucleus the finest-looking birds. Full of a sense of the wrongs they are enduring, they keep at it until each has the number of birds in her original flock. Then each makes her way home to tell her husband how she was imposed upon and cheated, and each vows she will never speak to either of her greedy and over-reaching neighbours as long as she lives—no, never.

The turkeys are then fed on grain for a few days and rushed to the Christmas market. The only good turkey is a dead one, but it is so very good that much may be forgiven.

A WINTER NIGHT

One night when it was too beautiful for one to be indoors there was a walk across the still fields to visit a neighbour. The full moon was swinging up in the east, and there were more stars sparkling underfoot than overhead. The snow was so light that it was kicked aside at every step without being felt. The light wind that was stirring from the west was so cold that it made the nostrils sting and frost gathered even on our eyelashes. Though the fields were white and the moon was shining, the shadows under the trees and behind every tuft of grass or weed were dead black. Sleigh-bells could be heard in the distance, and every now and then a gust of laughter and young voices singing would be wafted to our ears. An owl was hooting dismally in the woods, and the sound echoed away until it was lost in the distance. After a brisk walk we were soon warming ourselves beside a roaring wood fire, and the talk began about pioneer days. "A sad tale's best for winter," and there is always sadness in the stories of the old days. As I listened, the impression that grew on me was of heart-breaking isolation and home-sickness, and the stifling, imprisoning wilderness. Though the pioneers hewed out homes for themselves, Canada was never their home. Their true homes were in the lands from which they came and to which they never returned. To us who were born to inherit what they won Canada is a true home, and it is hard for us to realise what they felt in the long years it took to transform the wilderness to one of the garden spots of the world. The struggles and weariness and heartache of the pioneers are to me a tale of never-ending interest. They toiled and walked apart from the world, fretted over the past and hoped for the future, but—

This, all this, was in the olden
Time long ago.

While the talk progressed there were apples and winter pears to eat, and then came the walk home through the frosty moonlight, with the snow crunching faintly underfoot. On the road we met others who had been lured away to neighbourly visits by the beauty of the night, and it was good to feel that, instead of killing sociability, the winter weather had really aroused it to more activity. Winter weather and winter pleasures at their best are very good.

A FROZEN FAIRYLAND

As if not satisfied with giving us perfect winter weather, Nature started in yesterday afternoon to show what she can do, when in the mood, to make the world bewilderingly beautiful. Early in the afternoon, wisps of fog began to float across the field and the raw cold proved the truth of the old doggerel:

A winter fog
Will freeze a dog.

As the fog floated past, a fine hoar-frost began to settle everywhere and the sun went down red as in Indian summer. The straggling fog-banks on the horizon began to glow, and we saw

The low, red rim
Of a winter's twilight, crisp and dim.

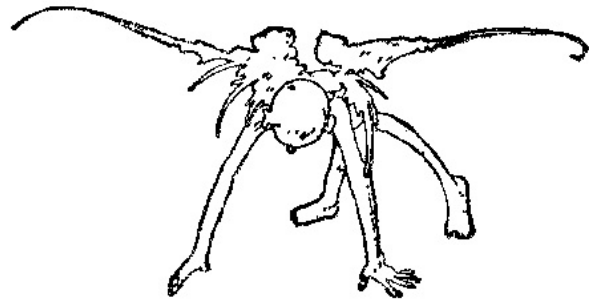
Then came an hour of darkness, and when the full moon rose it lighted a fairyland. Every twig, weed, and exposed blade of grass was frosted to three times its usual thickness with feathery hoar-frost of dazzling whiteness. Only the trunks and larger limbs of the trees remained black. As the stars were blotted out by the light, all except the larger ones and a planet that hung in the west like a drop of liquid silver, the snow began to light up with infinite constellations. There was moonlight and snow "fur's you cud look or listen." Not a breath of air disturbed the tense stillness. Presently, an owl—who, no doubt, "for all his feathers, was a-cold"—hooted in the ghostly woods and the sound boomed and echoed weirdly.

"Whoo-hoo-hoo-whoo-hoo!"

It seemed the only sound that would be appropriate in that frozen stillness. As the moon rose higher a perfect storm circle that almost broke into rainbow colours formed around it. All night the spectacle lasted, but the wind that came with the dawn scattered the light frost flakes and mingled them with the drifting snow. But all who loved beauty had a chance to see the matchless artistry of

The goblins of the Northland
That teach the gulls to scream,
That dance the autumn into dust,
The ages into dream.

It is worth while to take a trip along the side roads where they still have rail fences to see the snow-drifts. The briars and withered goldenrod stalks form shelters where the drifts can form and be carved into wonderful shapes by the driving wind. Along the main roads where wire fences are in use the drifts do not have a chance, but on the side-lines they can gather and lie undisturbed, save for the tracking of the wild creatures that now more than at any other season "do seek their meat from God." Sprawling rabbit-tracks abound everywhere, and here and there the loosely-woven lacework of quail-tracks may be seen. Where the briars and weeds are thick they bend down under the weight of the drifts, but hold them up sufficiently to provide hiding-places for the rabbits and quail, and shelter them from the cold. Occasionally one sees the jumping track of a weasel or mink that finds in the drifts an ideal hunting ground. Everywhere flocks of snow-birds swoop down among the weeds to feed, and add their tiny tracks to the strangely-written history of the winter struggle for existence.



A THAW

The farmhouse fire is dull and black,
The trailing smoke rolls white and low
Along the fields till by the wood
It banks and floats unshaken, slow;
The scattering sounds seem near and loud,
The rising sun is clear and white,
And in the air a mystery stirs
Of wintry hosts in coward flight.

Anon the south wind breathes across
The frozen earth its bonds to break,
Till at the call of life returned
It softly stirs but half awake.
The cattle clamour in their stalls,
The house-dog barks, he knows not why,
The cock crows by the stable door,
The snow-birds, sombre-hued, go by.

The busy housewife on the snow
To bleach lays out her linen store,
And scolds because with careless feet
The children track the spotless floor.
With nightfall comes the slow warm rain,
The purl of waters fills the air,
And save where roll the gleaming drifts
The fields lie sullen, black and bare.

OPENING THE APPLE-PIT

We are a hopelessly unromantic people. We go about even the most delightful of our affairs in a sadly humdrum way. Take the opening of an apple-pit in winter, for instance. If the "well-greaved Greeks" had anything like this in their lives they would have approached the task with appropriate songs and ceremonial dances. They would have done justice to the winter-ripened apple,

That hath been
Cooled a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance and Provençal song and sunburnt mirth.

Now notice how prosaically the Canadian farmer undertakes the work. After the women folks have been nagging him for a couple of weeks he begins to feel apple-hungry himself, and some fine morning he takes the long-handled shovel and an old axe and proceeds to open the pit. The snow is first carefully shovelled away from the little treasure-house of autumn fruitfulness and then the covering of frozen earth is chopped away. This uncovers the protecting layer of straw, which is removed, laying bare the apples. What a gush of perfume burdens the frosty air! Spies, Baldwins, Russets, and Pippins give their savour aright, and if a man had a touch of poetry in his soul he would begin at once to fashion lyrics. But there is no poetry. He simply remarks to himself that they have kept well, fills a bag, stuffs back the straw and piles on the earth and snow to keep out the frost. He then carries the bag to the kitchen and announces that he expects to have "apple-sass" for dinner. Possibly he wipes an apple on his sleeve and eats it while going to the barn to finish his chores, but on the whole he treats the event as if it were an ordinary part of the day's work.

Although our Canadian apples are good at all times, they are now at their best. There is a flavour to a winter-ripened apple that surpasses praise. It has a fullness and tang that provoke the appetite more than it satisfies. A winter evening spent around a roaring fire, with a plateful of well-polished apples within reach, and old friends to talk with, is something to cheer even the soul of a pessimist. As for the children, their delight is twofold when the apple-pit has been opened. Not only do they gorge themselves, but they dream of the affluence they will enjoy by bartering apples at school. The school price of apples varies, but yesterday a sound, rosy Spy was disposed of for two empty rifle cartridges (thirty-two long), the stub of a lead-pencil, and a copper harness rivet without a washer. From this you can figure out how much boy bric-à-brac a bushel would buy.

THE FOX HUNT

We have had a fox hunt. When we first heard of a fox in the neighbourhood, I mourned my lack of enthusiasm, and glanced back with regret to the days when I would have pursued it to the death. When in that philosophical mood I made the usual mistake of overlooking one important factor of the problem. It did not occur to me that the enthusiasm and faith that I had lost might still be burning in the heart of youth. Although I had no intention of hunting the fox, I had promptings of the old hunting spirit, and almost every time I crossed a track in the woods I would follow it as long as it did not wander too far from the direction in which I was going. One of these little tracking expeditions led me to a hollow oak stump, which the fox evidently used for a den from time to time. I looked into the hollow to see if Mr. Fox was at home, but he was not. But I found evidence of his recent occupancy in the half-eaten body of a rabbit. This dispelled the last lingering doubt that the tracks were those of a fox, and when I told about my find the fat was in the fire. The boys were at once at a fever heat, and I had to promise that we would go after the fox the first thing in the morning. After that was settled they began to dispute about what they would buy with the price of the skin. As I think it over now I know I should have improved the occasion by telling them the story of the man who sold the lion's skin while the lion was still wearing it, and was eaten by the lion when he came to get it, but it did not occur to me. Somehow I never think of improving lectures at the proper time.

In the morning I was surprised to have the alarm clock go off while I was still sound asleep. I usually wake up a few minutes before it is time to get up, and simply use the alarm clock to confirm my suspicions. It is easier to have it tinkle a little than to get up and light a match to see the time. Though I felt in my bones that there was something wrong, I got up and found that the alarm clock had been tampered with. In their eagerness to get a proper start the boys had set it half an hour earlier. Being up I decided to make no protest, but to get even in another way. It was only necessary to whisper "fox" to the boys to get them out of bed and into their clothes, with a haste that would have been absolutely impossible on a school morning. Before starting we had to do the chores, and I got even about the alarm clock by slipping in a few extra chores that had been hanging over my head for a couple of weeks, and they were all done without complaint. This taught me a little lesson about getting things done that I shall probably make use of later on. When there is a bunch of work that I want to get finished quickly and uncomplainingly I shall organise a whale-spearing expedition to the Government drain, or a wild-cat hunt among the little trees that we planted in the woods last spring. As we live we learn, and it is sometimes a great help to learn a few of the things we have forgotten about boy nature.

When the dawn became bright enough for us to be able to see the sights on the rifle, we started across the fields to the woods. There were sparrows at the stable, but we did not bother with them. We were after big game, and sparrows did not interest us.

Passing through a patch of withered weeds we saw a lot of rabbit tracks and that made us pause, for rabbits are not to be despised, especially when you haven't managed to get one in a long time. We spent a few minutes in trying to disentangle the tracks, but were finally forced to the conclusion that the rabbits had all gone home to sleep. There was a moment of excitement when we saw a red squirrel, but as it was the only one that had been seen in the neighbourhood for over a year, I would not allow it to be molested. Anyway, he was a pretty wise red squirrel, for he got himself under cover within about ten seconds, and in that way settled the argument in my favour. Although red squirrels are usually impudent and saucy, this one was not taking any chances with human beings who were out so early carrying a gun. After leaving the red squirrel, we plodded straight to the woods, where we found the little covering of snow full of tracks of many kinds. There were places where the black squirrels had been hunting for beech-nuts so industriously that it looked as if a drove of pigs had been rooting around. Overhead in the trees a flock of bluejays were scolding and squawking, and as I could not remember whether bluejays are of the beneficial birds that should be protected we gave them the benefit of the doubt, and did not shoot at them, although they frequently offered tempting targets. A big hawk sailed out of the top of a tree before we were within range, and, anyway, we would not have shot at him, for hawks now have an excellent reputation on account of the work they do in killing mice. We had not gone far before we found the tracks of the fox, and then the real hunt began. It might have been much more exciting had it not been for a slight thaw on a previous afternoon which enabled us to see that all the fox tracks were at least a day old. Still they were fox tracks, and we scouted about hunting for new ones, but without success. Beside a fence near a briar patch we found a rabbits' playground. There was a little space about a rod in diameter where the snow was beaten hard by their little feet. We remembered that in one of his nature stories Charles G. D. Roberts tells how the rabbits come to such places on moonlight nights, and jump around and slap the snow with their flat hind feet in the progress of some strange games that are popular with rabbits. Only a couple of times before have I come across playgrounds of this kind. They seem to be about as rare as the dancing floors of the

elephants. But we were after the fox, and did not stay to study the exhibition. As we were unable to find fresh tracks I led the way to the hollow stump referred to above, and we held an inquest on the remains of the rabbit. The work was unquestionably that of a fox, but where was he? In feverish haste we crossed and recrossed the little patch of woods, investigating every stump and hollow log that might give shelter to a fox. Although there were tracks everywhere, they did not seem to lead anywhere. At one log we found skunk tracks, but after a careful consultation decided not to visit the little housekeepers. We would just make a purely formal call, and not try to establish either friendly or unfriendly relations. None of us felt inclined to take the risk of being forced to live as a hermit—the usual fate of an inexperienced hunter who tries conclusions with a specimen of "Mephitica," sub-family "Mustelidae." We called him his scientific name and let it go at that.

When we came to the tree where the chicken-killing hawks have had their nest for years, and persist in keeping it, although we shoot them up every summer, we were interested to find that the tree was dead, and that last summer the hawks had fooled us by building a new nest in the bushy top of a big tree near by. It seems that hawks never nest in a dead tree, possibly because it does not give them sufficient cover, or because there is a danger of the dead limbs breaking and letting the nest tumble to the ground. By this time we had been forced to the conclusion that we were not going to find the fox, and the comments of the bluejays were so insulting that it was hard to keep from taking a shot at them. And then, and then—we headed straight for the house, and all burst through the door together asking in eager tones, "Is dinner ready?" If we didn't find the fox we found a fox's appetite.

Now there may be some people who will be so short-sighted as to think that we did not have a fox hunt at all. That is all wrong. One of the greatest truths of philosophy is that the reward is all in pursuit, and not in the achievement. Men who win success invariably tell us that it is as disappointing as the apples of Sodom, but the struggle for success is always stimulating and develops character. The fact that we did not get the fox greatly improved the philosophic value of our hunt. When they grow older I shall explain this to the boys, but at present they are too much disappointed at not getting the fox to appreciate the lesson.

THE WEATHER-PROPHET

The old man cocks his weather-eye
And takes a squint at the cloudless sky,
And says, as he samples a whiff of the breeze,
"It looks to me like it's goin' to freeze."
Oh, then you should hear the children shout!
And before you can wink their skates are out!
They oil the straps and they polish the rust,
And the old man files them, because he must.
"We're going to have skating!" they shout with glee,
And then they rush to the pond to see.
Such joy can be found in words like these:
"It looks to me like it's goin' to freeze."

When the old man comes from his chores at night,
He opens the door and blinks in the light,
Pulls off his mitts, and says, "I dunno,
But it looks to me like it's goin' to snow."
Then the children shout and rush to the shed,
And soon they are back with the battered sled,
The runners are warped and are all askew,
But the old man works till he gets them true,
And soon with their joy the roof-tree shakes
When down through the night come the first big flakes.
Such joy there is in the words: "I dunno,
But it looks to me like it's goin' to snow."

The old man stands by the open door
And takes a squint at the sky once more,
And then he says, and his words are law,
"It looks to me like it's goin' to thaw."
Oh, then what sport there is in sight!
The snowman, the fort and the snowball fight!
And the old man whittles a little boat—
Not much to look at, but still it will float.
The children will shout and the dog will bark
When there's water to float the clumsy ark,
And by noon they know that his words were law:
"It looks to me like it's goin' to thaw."



BUSHEL FOR BUSHEL

This is the story of Neil McAlpine of Fingal, the pioneer patriot, who saved the Talbot settlement when it was threatened by famine. It was my privilege to hear it told by Neil McAlpine's grandson, my friend Dr. Hugh A. McCallum. It was told in a pioneer house such as Neil McAlpine knew, and I only wish that I could tell it to-day so that it would thrill you as it thrilled me. My version is only an echo of that splendid telling, but I am giving it because the hope of Canada and the Empire, and possibly of humanity, lies in such men as Neil McAlpine....

Neil McAlpine was one of the early settlers in the neighbourhood of Fingal. Being a man of means he farmed somewhat extensively for those days, and when market prices did not suit him he was in a position to hold his products until another season. One year the frost killed all the wheat in the Talbot settlement. Neil McAlpine had three thousand bushels in his granaries. At first he exulted in the prospect of selling the wheat profitably, but one day when he was in St. Thomas he suddenly saw matters in a new light. Word was brought to him that the local miller wished to see him. When McAlpine went to the mill, the miller said:

"You have some wheat, haven't you?"

"I have three thousand bushels."

The miller made him an offer which startled McAlpine.

"Why!" he exclaimed, "that is more than you can get for it after it has been ground into flour. What are you going to do with the wheat?"

"I am going to sell it for seed grain to the settlers."

It dawned on Neil McAlpine what that would mean, and as he told about it afterwards he said that the cold sweat broke out on him. His grain might be used to extort blood-money from the struggling settlers who were threatened by the menace of famine. His mind was made up at once. He hurried home and developed his plan. The next day being the Sabbath, and he being an elder of the Kirk, he dressed and went to church early. Standing beside the gate, he whispered to each pioneer as he passed through:

"You can get seed grain at my place—bushel for bushel. For each bushel you take at seed-time you will bring me back a bushel after harvest."

He made this offer to every member of the Presbyterian Church. When he went home after the service he remembered that he had made his offer only to the Presbyterians. In the settlement there were many people belonging to other churches, so he put his sons on horseback and sent them to the others—the Baptists, Anglicans, Roman Catholics, and Methodists. A young man stood by the gate of each church and whispered to the worshippers as they entered:

"You can get seed grain from my father—bushel for bushel. For each bushel you take now you will bring back a bushel after harvest."

On Monday morning the settlers thronged to Neil McAlpine's. The boys were in the granary measuring out the wheat and filling the bags, and as each settler with his precious store of seed grain came past the house, Neil McAlpine (he was called Captain Storms) would hold up his cane and ask:

"How many bushels?"

When they told him the amount he would add:

"Remember now, bushel for bushel! For every bushel you are taking you are to bring me back a bushel after harvest."

For three days the procession passed Neil McAlpine's door to the granary and back until all the grain was distributed and every family in the settlement had seed wheat. This great-souled act accomplished the good man's purpose, and to this day there are old people in the neighbourhood of Fingal who are saying:

"It happened so many years before or after Neil McAlpine saved the settlement...."

Some years ago Dr. Hugh McCallum was called to Shedden, a village in the Talbot settlement, on a consultation. When returning home he was walking up and down on the railway platform waiting for the train, when he noticed a little old man keeping step with him and looking at him curiously. The big doctor stopped and said kindly:

"Is there anything I can do for you?"

The little old man shook his head, then exclaimed in a brogue which I shall not attempt to reproduce:

"If I didn't know that he was dead, I would think that you was Captain Storms."

"You mean Neil McAlpine," replied the doctor. "Well, I am his grandson, and they say that I resemble him."

"You are the dead spit of him."

It then occurred to the doctor that he had a chance to hear the story of how Neil McAlpine saved the settlement from one who was alive at the time, so he asked him:

"Do you remember the time when Neil McAlpine saved the settlement?"

"I do that."

"Come and sit down and tell me all about it."

The old man then told how his father had come from Ireland with a large family of young children and took a farm in the wilderness. The first year he was only able to clear a small piece of land in which he planted turnips, and all the following winter his family had nothing to eat but turnips. The old man who was telling the story was a young boy at the time and he remembered well how his father got the seed grain from McAlpine. When he got home with it he had also a bag of flour that Neil McAlpine had given him so that his children might have bread.

He also had a jug of buttermilk that Neil McAlpine's wife had given him so that their mother might make scones, and a jug of molasses for the children to eat with the scones. The old man told how his mother baked at once, and he added:

"I ate so much that I was so sick at four o'clock in the morning that they gave me a dose of castor-oil. Oh, I will never forget the time when Neil McAlpine saved the settlement."

He also went on to tell that on the next day the priest came to their house in the wilderness. His mother was a proud woman when she was able to place before him the wheaten bread. When the priest saw it, he exclaimed:

"Woman, woman! where did you get the wheaten bread?"

She told him how Neil McAlpine had given them the seed grain and the flour. As the priest seated himself at the table he crossed himself and said reverently:

"God bless that old heretic, Neil McAlpine!"

This remark struck Dr. McCallum, and he said to the man:

"You were Catholics, were you not?"

"We were."

"But Neil McAlpine was a Presbyterian."

Drawing himself up to his full height, the little old man exclaimed:

"On Sundays he was a Presbyterian, but on weekdays he was a neighbour."



WHY I STICK TO THE FARM

"Why do I stick to the farm?"

You might as well ask a woodchuck why he sticks to his hole.

This comparison has more foundation in fact than you perhaps imagine, for whenever I come home from a little visit to the outer world I always turn into the lane with a joyous chuckle that is much like the chuckle that a woodchuck chuckles when he dives into his tunnel. The farm is a place of peace, a place of refuge and a home. This is a point on which the woodchuck and I are entirely agreed.

The farm means all these things to me because I was born on it and have learned to realise something of its possibilities. All my memories of childhood and boyhood are bound up with it. To be born on a farm is the greatest good that can befall a human being. To live on a farm and enjoy all that it has to offer is the greatest good that can be attained by a poet or a philosopher.

To make it clear why I harbour these convictions it is necessary to sweep away some mistaken notions about farming. To do this perhaps I cannot do better than explain just how this particular farm came to be hewn from the wilderness. The work of clearing the land and bringing it under cultivation was done by men and women who had only one purpose in life—to establish a home where they and their children might be free. They made their home self-sustaining—winning their food, clothing and shelter from the land and its products, by the labour of their own hands. The home was their ideal. All the farm work was undertaken to provide for its needs, and when the home was supplied they rested. Their ambition was satisfied.

Brought up in this home I missed learning too young the lessons that destroy so many homes. To begin with I had only the vaguest ideas of personal ownership. The home belonged to all of us and our work went to keep it up and pay expenses. It is true that contact with the world finally educated the children to ideas of personal property and roused our ambitions. Driven by these generally accepted ideas we went our way, but somehow the farm that had been started right stayed in the backs of our minds as home. Although I have lived in far countries and great cities, no place ever was my home except this farm. And in due time I came back to try to carry on the home tradition that had been established by a pioneer father and mother.

I stick to the farm because it is the most satisfactory thing in the world to stick to. It is solid, right down to the centre of the earth. It stays right where it is through depressions, panics, wars and every other kind of human foolishness. Even an earthquake could only joggle it, and this is not an earthquake region.

Moreover, you can't speed up the farm. It is timed to the sun and the seasons. Airships may pass over it at the rate of one hundred and fifty miles an hour, but the thistledowns that rise from my fields go at the rate of the prevailing wind, just as they did when they rose from the Garden of Eden. You can't hurry the farm and you can't hurry me. The grass grows and the leaves come out when spring comes dawdling back from the south, and not one minute before.

I stick to the farm because it is the only thing I have ever found that is entirely dependable. The seed-time and the harvest come to it every year with easy-going and unworried certainty. They never come twice at exactly the same time nor bring the same bounties, but they never fail to come. They may fail to bring wheat, but if they do they will bring abundant corn:

Cold and dry for wheat and rye,
Wet and warm for Indian corn.

The farm means *safety first* with the safety guaranteed by all-embracing Nature—and the labour of your own hands. It is well not to forget the labour of your own hands.

To get the fullest enjoyment out of the farm you must do things for it with your own hands. A farm is like a friend. The more you do for a friend the better you like him, and the more you do for a farm the dearer it becomes to you.

Although I am friends with all the trees on the farm, the ones I like best are those that I planted myself. The shade trees that I planted myself seem to throw a more generous shade than any other, and no apple tastes as good as one from a tree that I planted, fertilised, pruned, sprayed and looked after myself. I have planted thousands of trees in the wood-lot, and no artist ever got such a thrill from looking at his finished masterpiece as I get whenever I visit my plantation and see how much the trees have grown since my last visit. To get the most out of a farm you must put yourself into it—do things for it that will be permanent—do them with your own hands.

Of course, farming means hard work. That side of it has been harped on until even a lot of farmers think it means nothing else. That tale has been told since the beginning until it has become exactly what Tennyson has called it:

A tale of little meaning
Although its words are strong.

But even the hardest-working farmer can afford to devote an occasional few minutes to enjoyment—especially at meal-times. Let us give some consideration to this more frivolous side of farming. Let us begin with the spring. When the warm winds and the rain begin to sweep away the snow and to unbind the shackles of frost, just draw a deep breath and realise that you are more alive than anything else on earth. The farmer's work is with the very elements of life, and he should enjoy life to the full. Even the cattle begin to bawl and show an interest in life as soon as the grass shows green beyond the barnyard fence. You do not even have to stop your work to hear the first notes of the song sparrow or the honking of the wild geese passing overhead. The sun is busier than you are, bringing warmth and growth to every seed, bud and root—to wildflowers and weeds as well as to your precious wheat—and see how serene he is about it all. He can even take time to jocularly burn a blister on the back of your neck on his busiest day.

The tulips and the daffodils in the garden need only a glance to give you their message of beauty, and if you happen to be hurrying through the wood-lot you can surely pause long enough to see the anemones and spring beauties at your feet.

On this particular farm the opening rite of spring is tapping the sugar-bush. But I will not dwell on the joys of making sugar, for all farms are not blessed with sugar-maples.

But my delight in maple syrup is hardly over before I begin paying furtive visits to the asparagus bed. I planted that asparagus myself, and I like to be on hand the first morning that a thick, fat shoot pushes up through the ground. After the asparagus come strawberries, raspberries, new potatoes—a list that becomes more crowded as the seasons pass until we have picked the last apples and pitted the potatoes in the fall. Spring, summer and autumn are all linked together with beauties and luxuries and delights.

And even the winter has its charms. As the animals are more dependent on us they become more friendly. Horses, cows, sheep, pigs, hens, all greet us in their own characteristic way when we visit them in the morning. And what is more exhilarating than the days spent in the wood-lot, with the snow crunching underfoot and the axe rousing the frosty echoes? The farmer prepares his year's supply of fuel without thought of strikes or soaring prices.

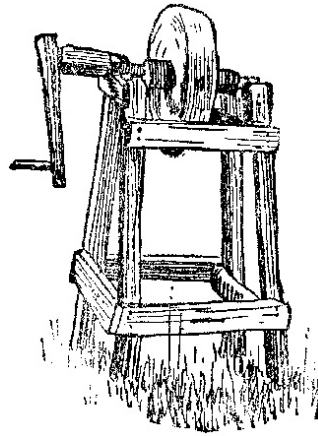
Of course, if you estimate everything in terms of dollars you can never understand why I stick to the farm. Dollars enter very little into the question. If you wish you may quote me a price for the basket of new potatoes I bring in from the garden, but what price can you put on the satisfaction I get from digging potatoes of my own planting and tending? Can you put a price on the joy of turning up a hill of big ones that might have taken the prize at the fall fair and knowing that all this is due to my practical partnership with Nature in producing them? The potatoes themselves may satisfy bodily hunger, but the joy of producing them satisfies the soul's hunger for creation, and it is priceless.

While meditating on this aspect of farm life I went for a ramble in the pasture-field to hunt for mushrooms. For half an hour—while picking up beauties—I canvassed my memory to see if I could remember the price I had got for anything I had ever sold off the farm. Although I have lived on this farm most of my life and have sold all kinds of farm stock and produce, I could not remember the exact price I got for one item. But I remembered how beautiful the apples were the first year we pruned and sprayed the old orchard. I could remember how fine the oats looked the year we had them in the field back of the root-house. I remembered litters of little pigs that were as plump as sausages and as cunning as kittens. I remembered calves that I had fed to admired sleekness and hogs that I had stuffed to fatness, but the prices they fetched I could not remember.

And that was not because I did not need the money—I have always needed the money and sometimes needed it bitterly—but the cash crop was not the crop that satisfied. As I let my memory wander over the past, hunting for prices that had failed to make a record, I remembered climbing the pear tree to get a big pear that had lodged in a fork and had ripened lusciously in the sun. I remembered tramping through a wet pasture gathering mushrooms and how a little moist hand stole into mine because a little maiden was afraid of a cow we were passing. I remembered coasting with a home-made sled on a little bank beside the creek, and also remembered seeing my children coasting on that same bank on sleds of their own making. I could see in the perspective of memory great piles of apples under the trees, shining fields of corn, colts scampering in the pastures, lambs playing king of the castle on anthills—a crowding, joyous film of homely pictures that brought happy tears to my eyes—and there was not a dollar mark on one of them. The dollars are necessary,

of course—very necessary—but you can earn dollars digging in a sewer, or get them by sharp practices in business. But where else but on the farm can you get the needful dollars and forget them in the joy of your surroundings?

These are a few of the reasons why I stick to the farm, and I feel sure that the woodchuck would endorse every word I have written.



A FARMER'S DEFENCE

The world is full of deeds of praise,
But what is that to me?
I work my fields and do my chores,
Nor care what deeds they be.
Year in, year out, with glare and gold,
The wonder world goes by,
And all my fellows of the fields
As little care as I.

But oh, it seems another world,
Out there where things are done,
Where glories worth a king's desire
We see so bravely won.
But something clutches at my heart
When I would rise and go—
Who wins the most shall lose the most!
The world is ordered so.

The children crowd about my knee
And question till I tell
About the golden wonder world
Where all their heroes dwell.
Their eager voices thrill my heart,
I see their eyes ashine,
And would not change for wonder worlds
This little world of mine.

So unashamed I stand with those
Who do no deeds of praise;
We work our fields and do our chores,
Unhonoured all our days.
We may not set the world on fire,
And yet we do our share!
Without our toil your wonder world
Would hungry go and bare.



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