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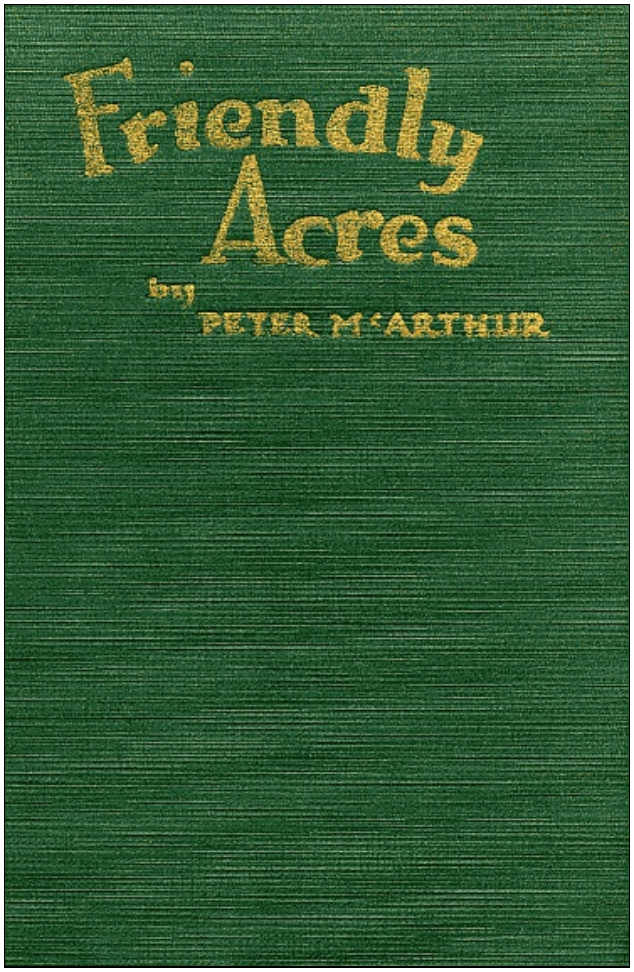


Friendly Acres

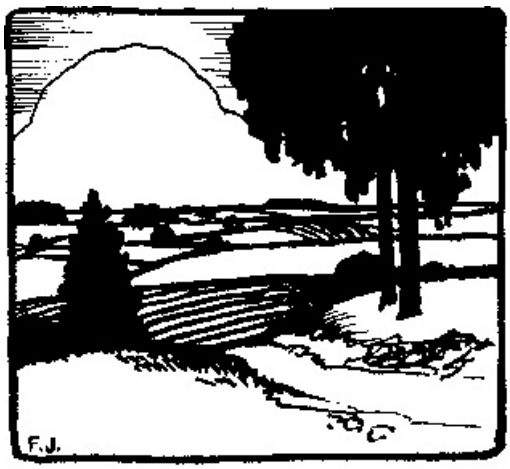
by

Peter McArthur

Author of "Around Home"

With Decorations by

***FRANZ JOHNSTON*, A.R.C.A.**



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Introduction

I am very glad indeed that it has been decided to publish an additional volume of Peter McArthur's Letters. It would be his wish that these, his letters, should rest at last in the hands of those for whom they were first written and it is due to his memory that his best work be rescued from the current and not be permitted to perish.

For many years McArthur maintained what was practically a continuous university extension course in the Science and Art of Complete Living. He knew deeply the conditions of life on a Canadian farm. It consisted chiefly in hard work, religion and politics—listed in that order. Except for their religious and political faiths, the soil that they tilled asserted its dominion over its owners and fixed the boundaries of their interests and their thoughts. Literature, Poetry and the Drama, History, Music and Art, the Sciences, Economics and Philosophy had housed themselves apart each in a temple of its own. Through these, week by week and year after year, by his contributions to the daily press, McArthur drove a long corridor that connected them with each other and opened on thousands of Canadian homes. It was a great task, but he had great personal resources—the reading of Johnson, the wit of Sheridan, the poetry of Ariel, the mischief of Puck, the practical sense and philosophic temper of Franklin, the patience of Penn and the faith and courage of a Crusader; and the work that he has accomplished testifies that he gave all and withheld nothing. Men have achieved immortality by compiling a single Magnum Opus—a work that deals exhaustively with a single subject and may never be seen except on the shelves of a library. It was the Magnum Opus of McArthur to place in Canadian homes a row of books which might serve as Travellers' Guides to a new philosophy of Life.

There is a relation between the permanence and prosperity of a nation and the permanence and prosperity of the national system of agriculture. It will also be found that in a country where agriculture is able to maintain itself, solve its own problems and adapt itself to new conditions, a large number of the leading men of the nation in each generation have manifested an active interest in farming. This is best illustrated perhaps in the history of Rome or in the history of England. In both of these countries and in almost all stages of their history many men who were eminent as statesmen, generals, or men of letters are found in the second line to have been practical farmers. I have in mind a well known Englishman who visited us during the war, who was a great Greek scholar, an authority in finance, and an expert gardener. In his case the scope and diversity of his interests seemed to lend additional strength to his personality and influence. Greatness of the nation as of the individual has its roots in the earth and will not long survive if these roots are permitted to wither and die. Unless Canada and the United States can grow men of the type represented by our English visitor and Peter McArthur it does not make much difference what other plans for our national safety we may decide to adopt.

Nor is it well to assume at the outset that because McArthur wrote hurriedly and at high pressure his work has little artistic value and is not likely to last. It is difficult of course to satisfy the representatives of an art. But before reaching a decision in the case of McArthur I venture to suggest this one small experiment and test. Only a few writers have attempted to depict in words the features of the seasons of the year or the months of the year. We remember chiefly Hesiod, Virgil, Varro, Tusser, Thomson and Franklin. Compare if you will McArthur's pictures of the seasons or of the months with those of Thomson. Perhaps you will decide that they are not comparable because the pictures of Thomson resemble lovely landscapes and those of McArthur are lifelike portraits, but I think you will not decide that one is superior to the other and perhaps you may decide that even as an artist McArthur has no superior in the field he has selected for himself.

I have read somewhere a description of the island of the McArthurs on the west coast of Scotland. Like rocky Ithaca its soil is "favourable for goats, unfavorable for horses." Both have sent out men of the type of farfaring, much enduring Ulysses of many counsels. From the tombs and records of the old church in the island of the McArthurs it is learned that from the time of the Crusades a McArthur has levelled a lance or lifted a battle axe in all the Scottish wars and in most of the great battles of Europe. It is an easy inference that our own Peter McArthur might have claimed kindred there and had his claim allowed. Perhaps then for the sake of the past a tablet and an inscription should go to distant Scotland, for the church of his ancestors there, but his monument will remain here where he himself has established it.

James A. MacLean.

University of Manitoba,
Winnipeg.


SAP'S RUNNIN'
E.J.

Sap's Runnin'!

Sap's runnin'. Sugar weather is here. The trees have been tapped, and every morning now we get up at dawn and chirp with the robin. And presently the great sun comes smiling up over the horizon, and the work of the world begins. There is no depression in the order of Nature. Life is beginning to stir in the "old eternal way." There are no strikes to settle or failures to be investigated. As the frost yields to the influence of the sun and the south wind, the roots and seeds begin to absorb moisture and heat and prepare themselves for the glory of summer. The activity of spring is beginning, and it is something worth getting in step with. As I start toward the sugar bush I seem to leave the whole nightmare of human affairs behind. The wide sanity of Nature covers everything. The seed-time and the harvest are starting on their eternal round, and the man who is in harmony with life need not trouble his head about reconstruction or deflation or exchange, or any of the other things with which men perplex themselves. The essentials of food and shelter are ready to his hand and if he bestirs himself he can provide for his necessities without going beyond the bounds of his teeming acres. And if he opens his mind to the influences by which he is surrounded he can experience deeper delights than are provided by all the arts and sciences of man. To be in accord with the life that is now beginning to flood the world is better than owning stocks and securities. There is nothing that money can buy or power can command that is equal to the wealth of serene happiness that Nature places within our reach.

A Spring Winter Day

For a few minutes this morning it was a wonderfully beautiful day. When the sun came over the horizon its light was flashed back by millions of facets of hoarfrost. While the fields were white with snow the glistening rime covered the buildings and trees, even to the smallest twigs. A film of cloud that lay across the West turned to a delicate rose. The scene was entirely wintry, but an unexpected touch of spring was given by the musical calls of blackbirds and meadow larks. They seemed to know that when the wind began to blow it would blow from the south. In the meantime the thermometer stood at ten above zero. The glistening crystalline world lasted for about half an hour. Then a raw wind began to blow from the south and the sky became overcast. The thermometer rose twenty-three degrees in the next couple of hours and the snow began to disappear. The wonderful morning had given place to a dreary dark day that seemed colder than when the mercury stood at ten. The sugar weather is coming back and the sap will probably start running again in the afternoon. Most of the trees have not run a drop for the past week, but two trees have apparently kept on running most of the time in spite of the frost. Three days ago I emptied the buckets at these trees and now they are full again. One of these exceptional runners is standing alone in a field, and that might account for its conduct, but the other is in the middle of the woods and no more sheltered or exposed to the sun than other trees.

I am inclined to suspect that the standard of living does not depend on necessary things, or even on the frills. It depends on the amount of the services of others that we are able to command. We have developed something royal in our dispositions that makes us want to be waited on. For instance, if I go to the sugar-bush and gather sap and boil it down and make a gallon of syrup for our own use, our standard of living is not as high as that of the man who goes to the grocer and royally orders a gallon at three or four dollars a gallon. If I kill a fat hen and prepare her for the pot, our standard of living is not as high as that of the people who call up the grocer by telephone and order a cold-storage hen. It is true that both the syrup and the hen we get are fresher and of better quality, but we have missed the royal touch in ordering the services of other people. Not being troubled with these royal aspirations, I consider the true standard of living the one that can be maintained with the least possible amount of worry. It would not profit me to be able to command the services of thousands if I had to worry to earn the money with which to pay for their services. People who are willing to depend on their own services can enjoy many good things, though they may be denied the royal attitude toward life which is becoming so popular in our democracy. A few mornings ago I found the schoolboys preparing themselves a new breakfast delicacy made of whipped Jersey cream and maple syrup. After meditating on what that would cost in a modern caravansery, with all kinds of service added to it, I took a helping. It tasted better than it digested, and I date my gloomy outlook on the standard of living from that hour.

Gobbler Troubles

Last night when we were milking there was a sudden racket on the roof of the cow-stable that scared the cows so that they stopped giving down. You would think that a man with a wooden leg was having a fit on the shingles right over our heads. The pounding, flopping and scratching on the hollow roof made the stable resound like the big drum in an Orange parade. I couldn't imagine what on earth was happening, but it only took a step to get out doors and then the cause of the trouble was plain. The old turkey gobbler had decided to roost on the ridge-board of the stable and he was having the time of his life getting up the roof. He was using his wings and his tail to balance himself as he clawed for a toe-hold, and he showed none of the stately gracefulness that marks his movements when he is strutting around the barnyard and proclaiming his overlordship. When he reached the ridge and caught his balance with a final flip-flap of his broad tail he stretched his neck and looked around to see if any of the young gobblers were grinning at him. They were already quietly at roost with the mother hen at the far end of the roof, and the noisy approach of their lord and king made them huddle together in squeaking terror. Seeing that their attitude was respectful he settled down on his wishbone for the night. Being young and light they had flown gracefully to their chosen roost and doubtless could not understand what was ailing him when he sprawled around like that. I could sympathise with him better than they could, for when a man gets heavy and gets chalky deposits in his joints the climbing stunts he did as a boy become impossible. Time was when I could have walked up that roof as jauntily as if I were on parade on an asphalt sidewalk, but I suspect that if I tried it now I would make more noise than the old gobbler.

Pure Bred Idiocy

Far be it from me to say anything that might discourage or irritate those good men who are trying to improve the live stock on our Canadian farms. They are doing a great and good work. Let it be distinctly understood that I am convinced of this fact, and that the criticisms I propose to make are in the way of suggestions that might possibly be acted on with profit. To begin with, I wish to inquire if it is absolutely necessary in developing better milk-producing or beef-producing stock to breed the last trace of intelligence out of our cattle. I may have got into contact with a wrong strain, but there is no question that the pure-bred live stock of which I have had experience are of the kind spoken of by a worthy Scotchman, who claimed that his pure-bred Dandy Dinmont terriers were "pure-bred to the point of eedeeocy." Apparently developing a purer strain had a disastrous effect on the intelligence of the breed, and this keen Scotchman had noticed the fact. I want to know if it is not possible to develop the profit-making qualities of our live stock and still retain at least a trace of brains. This mood of exasperation is due to my daily experience with a pure-bred yearling Shorthorn heifer. If there are ten perfectly sane and safe ways of moving from any given point without making a nuisance of herself and if there is only one possible way, and that a difficult one, at blundering into trouble, that congenital idiot will take the one fool way. She is all the time blundering into trouble. If she profited by this sort of thing by getting stolen bits of food I could have more patience with her, but her sporadic bursts of silliness are absolutely purposeless.

In this respect she is in constant contrast with a grade yearling that has a strain of the primitive Red Cow in her blood. The grade is really a better beast than the pure-bred. She is bigger, stronger and better built. Moreover, she is intelligent. She gets into mischief at every chance, but her mischief takes the form of stealing chop feed or an ear of corn or something else that is nourishing. When I suddenly descend on her in the midst of her maraudings she looks up brightly and makes her escape with a gay sideways kick of her heels before punishment can reach her. If the pure-bred happens to blunder into profitable mischief she stands stupidly until I descend on her in my wrath. No doubt she deserves her place in the herd book and will be a profitable cow in due time, but I do wish she had some glimmering of sense. If anyone knows of a strain of pure-breds that have not degenerated mentally I would take a really scientific interest in hearing about them.

There are times when I wonder if over-refinements are not as destructive in human affairs as they seem to be in stock-breeding. At the present moment I could name half a dozen business organizations that are efficient "to the point of eedeeocy." They claim that business is business and do everything from what they regard as a pure-bred business point of view. The result is that much of their conduct is as silly as that of our pure-bred yearling. They make enemies when a mere trifle of courtesy would enable them to make friends. They refuse small concessions on the plea that business is business, and by their refusal lose a great deal of valuable good-will. Some of them flaunt their prosperity before a public that is not unduly prosperous and are arrogant where firmness might well be clothed in gentleness. Of course, this does not apply to business organizations that have not felt it necessary to eliminate all the human feeling from their operations. I know of some where even the remotest office boy cocks his hat at the same carefree angle as the genial President of the company. And just because the President is human enough to do a kind act occasionally every official in his employ is imbued with the idea that courtesy pays. But the advocates of "Business is business" scorn that kind of weakness. They are efficient "to the point of eedeeocy."

The Return of Spring

A few mornings ago I was aroused and humbled by the Red Cow. She noticed a wonderful thing that was happening in the world before I did, and gambolled around and did a cow-tango to express her emotion. We had turned the cattle out to water, and, after the red pirate had rubbed herself against a stack, almost upsetting it, and had taken a peep to see whether the granary door had been left open, she suddenly let out a little bawl—"Buh! uh"—kicked sideways with both hind legs, and began to race around the barnyard. Instantly the whole seven were frolicking and pretending to fight and expressing cow-joy in laughable antics. I do not think there is anything in Nature funnier or more absurd than a happy cow. In the great scheme of things the cow is the symbol of gravity and solemnity, and when she unbends and attempts to be sportive the result is as incongruous as if the "most potent, grave and reverend seignoirs" of the Senate took to playing leap-frog. In the course of her everyday life the Red Cow habitually looks more serious-minded than I do when meditating on the high cost of living and the injustice of special privileges; but on this particular morning she relaxed and let herself go before it dawned on me that there was any special cause for happiness in the world. When the great tides of spring swept over the world she responded instantly, while I had to rid myself of a lot of foolish cares and worries before I felt my pulses beating to the rhythm of renewed life. But before she and her clumsy fellows had finished their sprawling saraband I was awake to the great event, and feeling properly rebuked because the cows had noticed it first.

To explain the above paragraph I must now set forth a personal conviction that will be scorned by material scientists as an hallucination and reproved by churchmen as unpardonable paganism. To me all Nature is as much alive as I am myself and flushed with the same life force. During the winter months this force is dormant, but in the spring it awakens and floods the world like sunshine. I do not investigate it or moralize about it. I accept it as I do the vernal warmth and the perfumed air. With the return of spring I let

> "The great slow joys of being
> Well my heart through as of yore."

The all-pervading life force, recognized by the poets, is as real and powerful and subtle as electricity. It is something

> "Whose secret Presence, through Creation's veins
> Running quicksilver-like eludes your pains;
> Taking all shapes from Mah to Mahi."

When it stirs and moves Nature to mating and growing all life throbs with unreasoning happiness. It is an impalpable flame that inspires instead of consuming. Only man with his egotistic self-consciousness misses its reviving touch. Because he can reason and has will power he attempts to control Nature—and misses the best that Nature has to give. But the children and all child-like spirits are still at one with Nature and share all her gifts. In the spring she touches them as she touches the flowers and they expand and grow. They are as happy as the singing birds and as carefree as the wandering air.

As might be expected, I could not keep out of the sugar-bush "when the sap began to stir." There was something stirring in me and I wanted to be out in the sunshine where I could spend happy hours without thought—simply glad to be alive and aware. And yet I could not help reflecting idly it must have been in the spring of the year that the piping of Orpheus made all Nature follow him. It is a myth, of course, and a pagan myth at that, but with everything about me stirring with life it did not seem so wildly improbable. The pagans had intuitions too noble to be forgotten, for did not one of them write:

> "Earth crammed with Heaven
> And every common bush afire with God."

Out among the trees, with the flowers stirring at my feet, I could realize, the truth of this. The world of men was very far away and unimportant. In the woods there was a companionship and an activity that put to shame the feverish and purposeless life of our cities. The wise and practical may say that I was simply idling when I should have been about the business of the world, and they may wag their heads gravely at the thought of such folly. To such there is no answer to be made. They could not understand—and perhaps even our philosophers could not understand. Novalis says that there is no temple in the world but the human body. That is only a half truth. Everything in which life stirs is a temple, and while I gathered sap with automatic industry I was conscious that myriads of temples were a-building about me. And it was the men who sensed the architecture of that building who shaped the Parthenon and the great cathedrals.

> "The hand that rounded Peter's dome
> And groined the aisles of Christian Rome
> Wrought in a sad sincerity.
> His soul from God he could not free.
> He builded better than he knew,
> The conscious stone to beauty grew."

The growing and building force that pervades all Nature is the compelling inspiration of all art and poetry and beauty. It is a living thing, and to be conscious of it is to live to the full.

Surely there is no one so busy or careworn but he can steal a few hours in the spring to be alone with Nature. And I wish to emphasize that word—alone. Nature seems to be jealous of all other companionship. Or perhaps it is because we cannot let ourselves go in the presence of others. When we go to the woods or the parks with companions someone is sure to keep up a gabble about the affairs of everyday life—the latest get-rich-quick scheme or the last shift in the political kaleidoscope. To enjoy Nature you must leave all these things behind and everything that may suggest them. Go to Nature as a child goes—thoughtless and open-minded. The less you seek the more you will find. Let the new leaves brush against your face and whisper to you, or throw yourself down on the grass and relax as if you were sinking to sleep. Then the searching sunshine will have its will of you, and the little winds will go about their business as if you were not there. The sky, squirrels and birds will come near to you and accept you into the great companionship of things that are free and inspired, and you will soon feel the benign and reviving influence of your pure surroundings. I leave it to others to teach the lessons to be learned from this quiet communion with the great life force. Learn to feel it even as the cattle feel it, or even as the smallest thing that harbours a spark of the fire of life feels it, and you will be ready to learn unspeakable things.

The South Wind

This year the vernal equinox fell on a day that was enough to make any man a sun worshipper. The whole world seemed flooded with the great life force that comes every spring to invite man out to the fields to his yearly tasks. On that perfect day the Great Partner seemed to be standing in the world's market-place seeking those who are to co-operate with him in the work of feeding the world. A south wind was blowing, the sun was unclouded and the heat was flickering on the fences and the housetops. The birds were all back, and even though it was early, it seemed as if the spring had really come, and that the yearly rush was started. But events since that day have made me doubt the insight of the disciples of Zoroaster. They should not have worshipped the sun, but the south wind. We have been having clear sunshine every day since the perfect day of the vernal equinox, but there has been no trace of life. The wind swung to the Northwest and hung there with a persistence that drove the spring back to the south. I don't know whether there was ever a sect of wind worshippers, but I think such a cult would have been justified so far as the south wind is concerned. It is really the south wind that brings the spring. Whether the sun is clouded or not the south wind can bring back the season of growth, but without the south wind the sun is apparently helpless. But whether it be the sun or the south wind that brings back the spring, we have had one taste of it already this season, and are ready for more. After the long winter it came like release from prison to find the great outdoors so warm and inviting.

When working in the sugar bush last week I saw something that I would have considered impossible if anyone had told me about it. I saw a black squirrel fall from a tree and land with a bump that almost stunned it. I did not see how the accident happened, but, judging by the location of the fall, the squirrel tried to jump from the branches of one tree to another and missed the branch it tried for. I was gathering brush for my fire, and, as I happened to be facing toward the spot where the squirrel fell, I saw it coming through the air before it landed. As it fell within a few yards of me, I heard the bump it made, and it was a real one. The squirrel rolled over a couple of times before it was able to get its footing and scamper away. It must have been as much surprised as the coloured man who got hurt when stealing chickens. In telling about it he said: "Ah clumb out on a slim branch to get the chicken, and just then I heard somethin' drap. It wuz me!" I thought the squirrels were so expert on the flying trapeze that they never missed, but now I know that they can make mistakes of judgment just like human beings. Another thing that I noticed about the squirrels in the wood-lot was that not one of them put in an appearance until almost sunset. As I knew that there must be at least a dozen of them in the woods, I wondered where they were keeping themselves. Just as the sun was nearing the horizon they began jumping about in the branches of the trees and occasionally stopping to utter their mournful cry. I noticed that the squirrel that fell had a bare spot on his side, so it is possible that he had been wounded at some time or was sick. Perhaps that helps to account for the accident.

Spring Debauchery

One should not be held responsible for everything he does in the spring. I know that chewing gum is very bad form, but I felt that I simply had to have a "chaw." Just to show you how independent we are of the cities, we have our own gum-trees on the farm. The spruce trees give a supply that has a real tang, though it is so stiff that one feels the need of the "ponderous and marble jaws" of the poet's phrase. I could defend this spring debauch by pointing out that the druggists carry spruce gum as a drug, and that it takes rank as a heart stimulant. But why apologize or defend oneself regarding what is an almost universal practice? Providing gum for the gum chewers is now one of the world's great industries, ranking with the movie shows and Ford cars. I understand that the greatest triumph of the New World in the line of architecture is due to the ceaseless grinding of countless jaws. The home of the chicle trust is a triumph of art, and is said to mark the beginnings of a new ideal in architecture. And the gum chewers have another claim to recognition. The gatherers of chicle have discovered the ruins of an old civilization in Central America, and have given a new impetus to the study of archaeology. And possibly when the historians of the future, those industrious gentlemen who make it their business to keep alive the fires of national hatred, come to add up the cultural and permanent effects of the great war they will find that the one thing worth recording is the introduction of the gum-chewing habit to the effete nations of Europe. Go to, if I have taken to chewing gum who is to blame me? It is possible that I am helping to make history rather than indulging an objectionable habit.

Human Nature in Turkeys

It is a mistake to suppose that any quality, habit, trick, failing, weakness, virtue or other characteristic is peculiar to mankind. The dumb creatures about the place have every one of them. If I were to watch them carefully I feel sure that I could find instances of everything from the Seven Deadly Sins to the Seven Cardinal Virtues, and that without leaving the barnyard. It is all very well for us to talk about getting rid of our animal natures as if that would mark an upward step in our development but what interests me is how to rid the dumb creatures of what can only be described as their human natures. It is always the human things they do that arouse my wrath or make me laugh. For instance, our old gobbler gives every evening one of the most human exhibitions of over-bearing meanness that I have ever witnessed. I thought it was only society people, and a particularly annoying brand of them at that, who had the habit of waiting until other people were comfortably seated at a concert or theatre and then walking in, disturbing every one and perhaps making quite a few get up to make way for them as they progressed towards their seats. I thought this trick was confined to people who wished to show their importance, and new clothes and didn't mind how much they bothered other people. But since watching our gobbler going to roost I have come to the conclusion that this kind of conduct on the part of society people at public entertainments is not due to vanity or a desire to show off but to fundamental cussedness and a wicked delight in causing as much discomfort as possible to other people.

The old gobbler has become expert at ascending the roof of the stable and not only does the trick with ease but puts frills on it. When roosting time comes round each evening, the mother hen and her flock of young gobblers and hens go to roost quietly and circumspectly like ordinary folks. The old gobbler, on the contrary, waits around and picks up grains of oats about the stacks and hunts for crickets and keeps up an air of being busy until it is almost dark and the rest of his tribe are settled for the night—or think they are. When he finally makes up his mind that it is bedtime he stretches his neck a few times, first in one direction and then in another, and takes a look at the top of the stable with one eye and then with the other and at last makes a flying leap or a leaping fly that lands him on the ridge-board. That would be all right if he were satisfied after he got there, but he is not. He insists on roosting on the extreme north end of the ridge-board and he always flies up on the south end. There is no reason why he should not fly up at the north end but he never does it and I am inclined to think from watching his actions that he flies up on the south end on purpose. Anyway, as soon as he gets up and gets his balance he starts to walk towards the north along the ridge-board. As soon as he comes to the first of his offspring he gives a sharp peck with his bill and the youngster gets up squeaking and moves along ahead of him. Presently he has them all huddled on the ridge-board along the north end and the fun begins. The polite thing for him to do would be to step down on the shingles and walk around them, but does he do it? I should say not. He gives the nearest youngster a vicious peck that makes him jump in the air and land sprawling a few feet down on the shingles. In rapid succession he deals with the fourteen youngsters and their mother in the same way and for a few minutes the roof is covered with squeaking, sprawling, protesting turkeys. As he pecks them out of his way he walks along the ridge-board to his chosen roosting place and when he finally reaches it he stretches his neck arrogantly while the others scramble back to the top and settle down for the night. When they have settled down the old bully settles down also with as much dignity as a dowager who has disturbed a whole seat-ful of music lovers at a concert or opera. You needn't tell me that there isn't something human about a gobbler that does such things as that.

Sun Worship

Some of my Celtic ancestors must have been sun and tree worshippers, for when the spring comes back I am conscious of promptings that are not accounted for in my philosophy. I want to see the sun rise and to see it set, and to chum with it all through the day. A few hours of such sunshine as we are having makes me feel as if I had never done anything wrong in my life. And when the trees begin to show signs of rousing from their winter sleep I want to shake hands—or limbs—with them and bid them "welcome to our city." I think that much could be said in favour of my Druidical forefathers. Perhaps there was more that was human than inhuman in their rites. But instead of a grove of many-centuried oaks and a mystic circle of stones, I have a nicely orientated sugar bush and an arch of broken bricks, and instead of a Beltane fire on a mountain top I have a fire under a sheet-iron pan. The poet priest who gives me counsel and comfort while at my work is that glorious modern Pagan St. Kavin, for

> "With his own smile he absolved
> Every sin he ever sinned."

In spite of the frosty nights, the hepaticas are back, and the spring beauties are back, and the birds are back and the grass is showing green everywhere. There is life everywhere and joy everywhere and poetry everywhere until Shakespeare's passionate cry becomes a commonplace of this perfect day.

> "O Helicanus, strike me, honoured sir;
> Give me a gash, put me to present pain,
> Lest this great sea of joys rushing upon me
> O'erbear the shores of my mortality
> And drown me with their sweetness."

Lambs really deserve all the pretty and poetic things that have been said of them. As far as my experience goes they have no bad habits, and their playfulness adds a joy to Nature. No farm should be without a flock of sheep, if for no other reason than to have a little flock of lambs gamboling in the pasture every spring. They play king of the castle like children, and when they have a falling out and bunt one another, it seems like another part of the game. Their fighting is mainly done by pushing with their foreheads, and in this respect they have a charm lacked by some human children. The lambs do not pull their hair and scratch one another when they have a dispute over a game, and they never bawl. And if one of them leaves the game to tell mother that it is not getting fair play, the whole flock is likely to accompany it in a foot race in which the trouble will be forgotten.

There is nothing about them that suggests bad temper or selfishness, and their young lives are entirely devoted to play. In spite of the fact that their legs are too big for them they manage to look graceful, and when they start jumping with all four legs held stiffly, I am full of wonder as to how they manage the trick.

Sheep Surgery

When I got home from the village a couple of evenings ago a bareheaded delegation met me at the road gate with bad news.

"Strafe's leg—was chased by a dog—was broken—and I must set it—Oh, the dog was a stranger—Strafe couldn't——"

At least that is what it sounded like. One thing is certain, and that is that two excited boys can't tell a bit of news as quickly as one. After both had blown off steam at the same time, I questioned them and found that Strafe, one of the twin lambs, had his leg broken. It seems that a stranger dog followed one of the children from the village in the afternoon, and in spite of being told to "Go home, sir," he persisted in following. But he no sooner reached the farm than he began chasing the sheep. To escape him they rushed to the barnyard, and as the gate was only partly opened they got jammed, and poor little Strafe, in spite of his warlike name, had his leg broken. The dog was promptly chased away. None of the family had seen him before, and they did not know who owned him. Evidently he was a stranger. I was distressed to hear the news, for there is something so gentle about lambs that one hates to think of them suffering. In spite of his belligerent name, Strafe is an unusually gentle creature that is ready to stand and be petted whenever any one is in the humour to fuss with him. It almost seemed as if one of the family had been hurt.

My first thought was that the lamb might have to be killed to put him out of his misery. That is what usually happens to a colt that gets his leg broken, and having heard of several that had suffered in this way—or was it that they had a tendon cut on a wire fence?—I began to see the gloomy side of the matter at once. Still, on second thought, I reflected that a lamb with a limp might raise just as much wool and mutton as one with the use of all his legs, but it was quite evident that his prospects of figuring in the blue-ribbon class at the Fall Fair were probably ended. This was quite a calamity in itself, for he is pure-bred and the children had hopes of him. As quickly as possible I got to the sheep-pen and looked over the little patient. He was lying down in a comfortable attitude, though it was easy to see that his leg was broken below the knee, as the crook in it was quite noticeable. He made no objection to having me examine his leg, though it must have hurt to have the broken bone handled. What surprised me was that there was no evidence of swelling, though the bone had been broken for some hours. Another strange thing was that the bones lay so loose. The parts barely touched each other, though in cases of human fracture the bones sometimes get drawn past. It was no comminuted fracture I had to deal with, but a very simple case of simple fracture. Of course, the whole family gathered around to make comments and give advice, and I quickly found that I was expected to play the surgeon and give Strafe a leg that would be as good as new. Though surgery had never come within my experience in the past, I felt that this was no time for false modesty, and prepared for action.

While making inquiries among persons of experience as to the best way to proceed, I brought out the curious bit of information that surgeons use only three splints when setting a human broken leg. My own instinct was to use four, but being assured that the doctors use only three I felt that there might be some mystic reason for it that was beyond the lay mind, and made my preparations accordingly. Strafe had been placed on a bench, where he lay quite composedly while I took his measure for his new set of splints, which I was whittling from a shingle. Apparently he was not a bit frightened or distressed. Judging from his appearance he seemed to think he was coming in for an extra lot of petting from the boy who was holding him, and he seemed to be enjoying himself. Finally, I got my splints ready, packed a bunch of loose wool around the broken leg and then began to wind a cotton bandage around my somewhat clumsy-looking attempt at surgery. A visitor held the bones straight while I was doing this and Strafe did not struggle a particle. Evidently a lamb's sense of pain cannot be as acute as that of a human being. Though I was as gentle as possible I am sure that my touch was clumsy and that a broken bone in the human body if handled so inexpertly would have caused acute suffering. The lamb neither struggled nor protested, but allowed me to move the leg about and do what I liked with it. After it was carefully bandaged he was set down on the ground, and hopped away on three legs to where his anxious mother was waiting for him. Yesterday he was feeding as usual, and as the splints were firmly in place I am hopeful of a perfect cure. By the way, I wonder if they give prizes for animal bone-setting at the Fall Fairs? I must find out.

A Family Row?

There must have been a family row. That is the only explanation we could think of. He must have stayed late at a lodge meeting—or sitting up with a sick friend who had been prescribed for recently—or any other reason why. When he got home he must have found the front door locked and she refused to throw down the latch-key. But you shall hear the facts and decide for yourself. After I had started boiling-in on Saturday I happened to pass under a stunted beech tree that still carries most of its last year's leaves. Suddenly, right above my head, there was a surprised flapping, and out of the thickest clump of leaves flew a little screech owl. It made straight for an elm tree that stood with its feet in the water in a nearby swale. Instead of alighting on a branch it swept around the trunk and disappeared. On investigation I found that there was a small hole in the trunk about twenty-five feet from the ground. The little owl must have disappeared into the hole. When a boy came out to the woods to help me in the afternoon I told him about the little owl. As he was wearing rubber boots he waded around in the swale until he got a fair view of the hole. He protested that he could see feathers, and then there was no holding him. Although the elm stood in the water and a slip from it would mean a soaking as well as a bad fall, he must climb it. Leaning a pole against the trunk so as to get a start toward the first branches he sprawled up. I thought the racket would have frightened the owl into leaving the hole, but it did not. When the boy finally reached a branch from which he could look into the hole he announced that the owl was there. Then followed a discussion as to whether it would be safe to put in his hand and pull out the owl.

Although I had handled screech owls in the past, I couldn't guarantee that they would not rend with beak and claw. Finally he wrapped a handkerchief around his hand and took a chance. After a little struggle he pulled out an owl. After describing it—he said its eyes were green—he looked into the hole to see if it was a nest with eggs. Then there was a yell. There was another owl in the hole. Once more the handkerchief was adjusted, and the second owl was brought out into the light. As it fought viciously and tried to bite and scratch we decided that it was the female of the species, and that she was still in a tantrum. She was not in the humour to receive visitors, either owlish or human. While the boy sat on a branch twenty-five feet from the ground, with an owl in each hand, we enjoyed our nature study. The owls were merely bunches of feathers, neither of them weighing more than a few ounces. The hole was evidently their home, although there were no eggs in sight. By the way, neither of us knew just at what season screech owls do their hatching. I seemed to remember that the horned owls have their families in February and March, but could not be sure about it. Anyway, we were not anxious to break up the housekeeping of this pair, for screech owls are famous mousers and destroyers of house sparrows. So they were finally both put back into their hole, out of the glaring sunlight. But why had one of them roosted in a tree while the other was comfortable in the hole? The only explanation we could think of was that there had been a row. Perhaps some ornithologist could explain.

Spring Bonfires

There is one spring job that is common to city, town and country and to all countries. No matter where we live, we must rake up the lawn and have a bonfire. And if we have no lawn we clean up the fire-escape and have our little blaze in the kitchen range. No matter where we live, this spring rite must be attended to. And I am inclined to think that it has been the same through all the ages since man first learned to use fire.

> Come fill the cup, and in the fire of spring
> Your winter garment of repentance fling;
> The Bird of Time has but a little way
> To flutter—and the Bird is on the Wing.

This unanimity of all men and women, and even children—for the children rake together rubbish and have their bonfires, too—must be something more than an impulse towards tidiness. It is a racial impulse, and in moments of profundity and learning I incline to connect it with the ancient rites of fire-worship. Listen to this from the Century Dictionary:

> "Beltane. The first day of May (old style). An ancient Celtic festival. Bonfires were kindled on all the hills, all domestic fires having been previously extinguished, only to be relighted from the embers of the Beltane fires. This custom is supposed to derive its origin from the worship of the sun, or fire in general, which was formerly in vogue among the Celts as well as among many other heathen nations. The practice still survives in some remote localities."

Doesn't that last sentence show how blind learned men can be? I'll bet a cookie that the scholar who wrote that definition has been having his little bonfire every spring and never realized that he was as much a heathen as the people of the "remote localities" he had in mind.

When all the Beltane fires were burning in the city and country I had a heartfelt wish that I could have a mental spring cleaning-up. For lo! these many years people have been dumping their intellectual tin cans and wastepaper in my mental backyard, and I have even busied myself gathering similar rubbish, because that is the popular thing to do. If it were only possible, I would rake it into a pile and burn all of it that would burn, and then dig a hole and bury the rest. I feel as if my mind were cluttered up with stuff that is as useless as what we raked from the lawn. On these fine spring mornings it seems to me that a man should be able to get as much from an hour on the south side of the strawstack or from the doorstep where he could sit in the sun and be sheltered from the wind as from a course in college. Now is the time to enjoy Bliss Carman at his best. I have probably quoted this before, but no matter. I feel like making a vow to quote it every spring:

> Let me taste the old immortal
> Indolence of life once more;
> Not recalling, nor forseeing,
> Let the great slow joys of being
> Well my heart through as of yore!
> Let me taste the old immortal
> Indolence of life once more!

To realize that stanza fully is to have more than you can get from all the books and all the colleges. It puts us in harmony with the universe. After loafing for an hour or so in the proper environment with these wonderful rhythms beating in my brain I feel that I should like to hark back to an earlier age and face life as lightly equipped mentally and physically as Nimrod, who was "a mighty hunter before the Lord." At such times I feel that we have had something too much of employing our time profitably and that it would be healthy for us to have occasional hours of profitable idleness.

Providing Paragraphs

An act of public justice is required. At various times I have written bitter paragraphs telling about the way the cattle break loose when I am left alone with them. In the past I have regarded this as an evidence of innate perversity. But the truth has at last dawned on me. One day last week I was left alone on the farm, and Fenceviewer II. apparently announced a birthday and proceeded to celebrate it. She began by breaking through the bars of the barnyard and then led the rest of the flock on a romp through the orchard. At the road they found a gate that had been left open, and at once began to gambol up the sideroad toward the railroad. I began to puff across a plowed field to head them off—in the meantime muttering execrations. Then it dawned on me that the cattle were merely living up to the part that they should play for me. When being looked after by other members of the family they content themselves with looking sleek and leisurely when a buyer comes to look them over, or with giving a proper flow of milk at the proper times. But that kind of circumspect conduct when I am around would be unfruitful, and the brutes know it. It is out of the kindness of their hearts that they cut up when left with me. They have sensed the fact that their chief use to me is in the inspiration of newspaper copy, and when they get a chance they never fail to provide me with material for a paragraph. If they behaved themselves I would be obliged to write about ordinary matters, and they would never get their names in the papers. So they just cut loose. I could have written a column about the amount of trouble they gave me before I got them rounded up, and could have abused each one of them personally, but when I realized the purpose of their outbreak I felt so proud of their intelligence that I could not find it in my heart to lambaste them. And, as you will notice, they furnished the copy. The fact that they furnish me with a lot of wrathful exercise was merely incidental.

Three airships in one day, and one of them straight over the house! You never saw or heard such excitement. The hens cackled and squawked and made for cover under the spruce trees and the currant bushes. Bildad, the collie pup, ran around barking and jumping in the air, but he couldn't understand what was causing the racket. Crows were flying across with that swift flapping fly I have noticed when they have been fired at in the cornfield and missed. Human beings were laughing, yelling, rolling over on the ground, and otherwise expressing their excitement. I hear that a man down the road swallowed his false teeth, while looking up at the passing wonders. And what was it all about? I'd be willing to bet that two of the three who went over in such a hurry forgot what they started out for before they reached the end of their journey. It's no use. You can't convince me that any normal human being is ever in enough of a hurry to travel at the rate these things go. It is simply a manifestation of the unrest, the speed-mania that is afflicting the world. We must all be hustling all the time, rushing to win things, and never understanding what the rush is about. We don't know what we are doing, but let us hurry about it. We don't know why we are doing it, but let's hurry about it!

> "And lo! the phantom caravan has reached
> The nothing it set out from—Oh, make haste!"

Country Notes

The wonderful thing about the country is that so little of it ever gets into books. Poets write songs about it, but they do not lead people to go out and enjoy the country as the poet enjoyed it. On the contrary, we admire the music of his words, instead of admiring Nature. The poet may tell us what he finds in Nature, but instead of trying to find in Nature what he did, we study his book and try to find it there. And it is not there. Poems about the beauties of Nature make their appeal to indoor people, but to all who have enjoyed Nature they are always inadequate. Nature appeals to all the senses at once, and no form of art can do that. Even if you could combine poetry, painting and music and offer them in a perfumed hall they would still lack what is best in Nature. Beyond the appeal to the senses, Nature gives a sense of harmony that is beyond all the arts. The more we learn to appreciate Nature—especially in these glorious spring days—the more we feel that the arts are all for indoor people what have lost touch with all that is best in life. The arts build up a new form of life that needs interpreters and a vast overhead of learning and scholarship, but Nature yields her fullness to the simple, as well as to the wise.

The sheep changed their flannels this week and as the weather changed at the same time, I am afraid they are not feeling very comfortable. With wool at present prices, they were given a very thorough clip, and in spite of the pleasant proverb the wind has not been tempered to them. We have had the reliable north wind with which we have become quite familiar this spring, and I was sure they would catch their death of cold. I investigated to see that we had a proper supply of mustard and goose-oil in case I should have to put plasters on their chests and give them the proper dosing. But up to the present writing they seem to be doing very well, though they keep on the lee side of the buildings and of the hedge that runs along the road. They almost look uncanny in their present condition of undress. It is surprising to see what a small sheep emerges from the fleece when the shearing is done. The mother sheep look very little bigger than their lambs. By the way, as those lambs already have noticeable fleeces, I am afraid the warm weather will be rather hard on them. One warm day last week I noticed Mary Belle, with her mouth open, panting after a short run. What will it be like for her in August, when we have real heat? While speaking of the lambs, I am glad to report that my attempt at bone-setting proved fairly satisfactory. Strafe is able to gambol about much as usual, though he limps a little and is thinner for his experience. There is a lump on his leg where the bone knit and those who speak with authority say that although he is a fine lamb he must now be considered in the mutton class. But I am proud of the fact that my efforts preserved his leg for everyday use if not for show purposes.

As this has been the first sheep-shearing we have had on the farm in many years, I was interested to note the improvement. When the boys brought word that the shearers had arrived and were shearing the sheep I hurried to the barn to view the operation. As I approached I heard a sound like that of a cream separator, and was surprised to find that

the shearing was being done by machinery. With these tame, modern sheep, shearing is not the exciting process it used to be. The legs of the creatures were not tied up in a bunch with a hame-strap to keep them quiet. The shearer merely made the sheep sit on her hind-quarters, while he tucked her head under his arm. He had a contrivance that looked like a small mowing machine, and was busily cutting swaths of wool along her sides. It was doubtless a great improvement on the old shears—the kind that memory associates with boyish haircuts. I have always thought of the shears by its Gaelic name, but it is past my power to spell it. It was imitative of the sound made by the shears when in use. If you take a pair of shears, close and open them and then try to pronounce the sound you hear, you will have the Gaelic name. It sounds something like "dwnguist." Pronouncing it is just as hard as it looks. One needs to be born to it. I found that they had an old-fashioned shears with them to clip off spots that the mower could not be put over safely, but it was very little used. I noticed that the new method of shearing leaves the sheep free from ridges that used to be prominent features of old-time shearings—and haircuts. I shouldn't wonder but they could cut hair with these new machines, but as I have never seen anything like them in even the most up-to-date barber shops they cannot be practical for haircutting. But they are certainly the proper caper for sheep-shearing.

A Calf Puzzle

The things that a spirited and energetic calf will do are beyond the power of an ordinary man to foresee or provide for. When the new stable was built the corner came within less than a foot of the corner of the granary. Of course it was intended to nail a board in the opening so as to make a complete shelter for the cattle in the winter, but somehow we never got around to doing it, and in the meantime the opening was handy for the children to squeeze through sideways. No one ever thought that any of the livestock, except the cats, would ever attempt the passage, and that mistaken idea almost cost us a calf. When the cattle were being put in last night one of the calves felt altogether too frisky to go in to be tied, even though the manger was full of choice hay. He ran away into the orchard, and when brought back made a break into the pasture field. When rounded up once more we were all on hand to shoo him through the stable door. A boy had him by the tail to steer him straight, but at the last second he made a jump sideways, dragging the boy with him, and plunged head-first through the opening between the stable and granary. His head and shoulders went through easily, showing that he has the wedge shape valued by breeders, but his hip bones were too wide. When I reached him he had pulled through so that he couldn't be backed up because of his spreading ribs and couldn't go through all the way because of the hip bones. He was as firmly fixed as one of those bass-wood plugs the boys used to force through a board when boiled soft. They used to offer it as a puzzle, and ask you to get out the plug. It had been put in, so why couldn't it be taken out? When I examined that calf I almost made up my mind that he would have to be boiled before he could be taken out. At least he would have to be taken out in sections or we would have to move one of the buildings. Before taking desperate measures, however, I examined things carefully and decided that by prying a couple of the siding boards off the granary there was a bare chance that there would be room to get him through. This was done by the expenditure of much man and boy power, and he got through by a hair's breadth. In fact, I think it was a closer shave than that, for there are hairs on the corners of both buildings. The experience took the foolishness out of him, and as soon as he was free he meekly allowed himself to be driven into the stable. And that reminds me that I haven't nailed a board on that opening yet. I must attend to it at once or one of the bigger animals will be trying the passage, and I shall have real trouble.

Holidaying

If the chief business of taking a holiday is to get a change of air and a change of surroundings, then why travel? You can get your holiday by changing your time instead of changing your space. Now don't get worried and imagine that I am going to try to work off some Einstein stuff on you. All I want to say is that if you get up at an unusual hour you will find everything so different that it will amount to the same thing as a holiday. The air will be different and your surroundings will be different. Of course this doesn't apply to the amusing people who fool themselves into thinking that to save daylight they must push the clock an hour ahead and then get up with the clock. When they get up at what should be an hour earlier their whole tiresome world gets up with them. But if you happen to be living under the old dispensation—I mean under standard time—you will get a taste of the real holiday spirit if you happen to get up at half-past three or four o'clock one of these fine summer mornings. It is really worth while having a sleepless night so as to be awake and astir at dawn. As no sensible person is about at that hour you have the world to yourself, and even in a populous countryside you get the feeling of the wilderness. At that hour the world seems to have reverted back to Nature. The little breezes that are astir at daybreak are moist and cool and wonderfully refreshing. They are not at all like the hot gusts that blow against you when the sun is up and the day's work has begun. And at dawn the birds seem to realize that the world belongs to them. The robins begin a rhythmic chorus and the others join in as they waken. When the music is in full swing you can hear sparrows, meadow larks, blackbirds, kildeers and bobolinks; but the robins are the choirmasters. If you are thoroughly awake and alert you will realize that you couldn't get a more complete change of air and surroundings even if you travelled hundreds of miles. But when the daylight-savers get up and start the old routine again you will find yourself back in the old workaday world.

On the mornings when one is not getting up at daybreak there are occasional petty annoyances that interfere with one's beauty sleep. For instance, one never knows just what direction the gobbler is going on his morning ramble. If he happens to come by the tent where we are sleeping he will stand a few feet away and gobble fiercely until we are all wide awake and grumbling. Yesterday morning, by way of variety, we had a visit from the Plymouth Rock rooster. He is a weighty bird—took the first prize at the school fair last fall—and when he crows he puts the weight of his body back of it. He throws himself into his crowing and hurls defiance to every rooster for miles around. I hoped he would go away and pursue the late worm, but he kept right on crowing. Yelling at him from the inside of the tent only managed to change him from crowing to a loud, surprised cackle that was even more exasperating and sleep-destroying. As the children say, "It's a great life, if you don't weaken."

Cow Troubles

Say, what do you do when a cow swallows a rubber ball? I don't mean one of the hollow kind, but a solid rubber ball about the size of a small Ben Davis apple—one of the kind that used to sting our fingers when we played "Long Injun" with them at the old school. I hadn't seen one for years, but this spring an old one was ploughed up in one of the fields, and as it still retained its shape and would bounce the children used it to play with. Well, last night one of the boys went to bring up the cows, and when a cow strayed apart from the bunch and stood still he threw the ball at her. He missed her, but as the ball rolled past she ran after it and grabbed it, apparently under the impression that it was an apple or a potato, or something good to eat. I was in the stable when the boy came to tell me about it as a great joke, and I was inclined to think that the joke was on him, for I felt sure that as soon as the cow found that she had been fooled she would drop the ball. But when I went out to the gate to let in the cows I found "Beans," granddaughter of old Fenceviewer, with her head and neck stretched out, doing her best to chew and swallow something that was stuck in her throat. She was half choked, for her eyes were popping out, and she was red in the face—or at least had the same expression that a human being has when red in the face. With my customary presence of mind I rushed to her side and began to slap her on the back the same as we do to the children when they choke on something or when something "goes down the wrong way." But it did no good, and the slapping made her bolt to her stall in the stable. I immediately began to feel her throat, and was not long in discovering a lump that seemed about the size of the missing rubber ball. I then followed my usual practice when in real trouble. I sent for a neighbour.

By the time my neighbour had arrived the cow had stopped her frantic swallowing, and I had become suspicious that the lump I had been feeling in her throat was not a lodged rubber ball, but the end of her wind-pipe. My neighbour confirmed this suspicion, but he could not suggest what I should do under the circumstances. That is the trouble with my cattle. They are all the time doing things that are outside of the common fund of experience. Other people's cattle seem to confine themselves to ailments that can be treated according to recipes given in the Veterinary Guide, or in the back numbers of the farm papers, but mine are all the time doing something unexpected. Still, I got a line on what was an entirely new wrinkle to me. A person of experience brought me a beetle ring and told me that the way to dislodge a substance from a cow's throat was to open her mouth and keep it open with the beetle ring. Then I could slip my hand through the ring and remove the obstruction with my fingers, or take a piece of rubber hose and poke it down her throat. That sounds to me like a very plausible method, but as the little cow had stopped gagging and had commenced chewing her cud, it was considered unnecessary to try the operation. And speaking of her cud—she should not be in any danger of "losing her cud" in the near future. That rubber ball should provide her with just about the most serviceable cud that a cow ever had. Whenever the pasture gets short she can bring up her reserve rubber cud and keep herself contented with it until the pasture grows. Seeing that most of our young people seem to find it necessary to provide themselves with cuds of durable, rubbery gum on which they chew during most of their waking hours, isn't it just possible that our cows would be more contented and give more milk if we provided them with rubber cuds? If I could only get scientific endorsement for the scheme I would have no trouble in promoting a company to supply rubber cuds for cows. Anyway, "Beans" seems to have suffered no inconvenience from having swallowed that indurated knob of gutta percha. When I was driving her back to the field after milking she hastily picked up a nice clean corn-cob and put it down as dessert to the rubber ball—all of which leads me to believe that she inherits her grandmother's digestion as well as her appetite. I am willing to bet that a post mortem on Fenceviewer would reveal a collection of junk that would give impaction of the rumen to an ostrich. Still, if any authority on cows thinks that having a rubber ball in her midst may be injurious to "Beans," I wish he would write and tell me what I should do.

And now having asked for help, there should be no objection if I offered a couple of suggestions that seem to me to be valuable. Of course, they may be quite well known, but there are sure to be a few backward farmers like myself who will be glad to be enlightened. The first deals with the value of the old-style wire fences when feeding calves. The most annoying thing about feeding calves in a pen is that when trying to teach a new calf to feed without the finger a man usually has to step inside. While he is wrestling with the beginner other calves will try to get into the pail or to get

nourishment from his coat-tail, occasionally administering a bunt to express dissatisfaction with the taste of the cheap dyes they now use in cloth. If you have the right kind of wire fence around your calf pasture you can keep on your side of it and let the calf stick his head through. As his head is the part you really have to deal with you can gradually teach him to take his milk without inhaling too much, and at the same time you have less trouble in slapping interfering calves on the nose. The wire fence has robbed calf-feeding of half of its terrors for me. So much for that suggestion. The other has to do with greedy horses. One of our horses usually tries to get all her oats in one mouthful, and, when she tries to chew them she scatters them all over her manger and stall. On advice, we have put several corn cobs in her feeding box, and now when she is given her oats she has to take reasonably sized mouthfuls and there is no waste.

"That Tired Feeling"

Have you ever been tired? I don't mean that kind of tiredness that makes you fretful and makes you ask your wife not to let the baby bother you. I mean real tiredness, when you are done up, tuckered out and feel so sore and stiff that you don't care whether school keeps or not. If you have been that tired, you probably had a good reason for it. You had done a big day's work at splitting wood, ditching or something of that sort. Well, do you know that a beginner can get just about that tired these spring days without having anything to show for it? Mending a bit of chicken fence, transplanting a briar bush, raking up the backyard, splitting a few sticks for the kitchen stove—not a decent sized chore in the lot, and yet when night comes round you are so tired you doubt if you will ever be rested again. At bedtime you rub yourself gently and wonder if there is any part of you that isn't too sore to lie down on. But when you do get to bed and sleep comes crowding in on you from every direction at once, you realize that that kind of tiredness makes an ordinary mattress feel as good as "beds of amaranth and moly." And when you waken in the morning you are in the mood to rival Dugald Dalgetty at the breakfast table. The beauty of the whole thing is that you are ready to start in after breakfast and get just as tired as you were the night before.

In spite of the fact that I am opposed to gambling in all its forms, I am going to take a chance on musk-melons. I know that it is a form of gambling that leads to many bitter disappointments. No devotee of the roulette wheel ever licked his fevered lips with more strained anticipation as the whirring ball dropped to rest in a numbered compartment than does the amateur gardener when a musk-melon is being cut. Will it prove full-fleshed and richly flavoured—a dainty fit "for Juno when she banquets"—or will it resemble nothing so much as a weak, dispirited cucumber? It is a nerve-racking gamble, but if you win once in a season the winning makes up for all the disappointments—especially if you happen to have the right friend with you to enjoy the triumph. Speaking of having the right friend at hand to share one's triumphs reminds me that while sowing the lettuce a thought came to me that seems worth recording. Success at gardening seems to depend almost entirely on the spirit in which the work is done. If it is done with no thought but the enjoyment to be had later, it seems as if it could not fail. The garden that is meant to serve the needs of a home, where time and labour are not counted, always succeeds. I have seen many and none of them failed. The failures come when the garden is regarded as a money-making institution. The best it produces must go to the market, and in competition with the professional market gardener the amateur is almost bound to fail, unless he keeps at it until he becomes a professional himself. By sending the best to the market he and his family get nothing of value from the garden. Interest in it wanes and it sinks into neglect. This thought has a broader application and is capable of a much more notable illustration. It had long been a source of wonder to me how the fishermen, sailors, shepherds and men of all occupations but farming succeeded as pioneers in the new world. Without knowledge of forestry or farming they cleared the land, made homes and brought up their families. The explanation is simple: they had only one purpose in life; they were bound to get homes; all their energies were directed to that end; they did not consume themselves in an attempt to make money and get rich; they did not scrimp themselves and sacrifice everything in their rage for dollars; they were therefore able to make homes. To have no ambition beyond providing permanently for food, shelter and clothing of the simplest kind hardly seems a worthy

ambition in this age of strenuous effort and startling successes. And yet it was on just that humble ambition that Canada as a nation was founded. Of course many of the descendants of the home-seekers have developed all kinds of ambitions, but it is still possible to find those of the second and third generation who, having this one ambition gratified, are therewith content. They are most restful people to associate with, and are the best of neighbours. They regard life with a homely philosophy, slightly tinged with wonder. They look out on the stir and bustle of the world as something in which they have no part. Such people are a joy to the home-returned traveller, who has seen "the anthropophagi and men whose heads do grow between their shoulders." They will listen undoubtingly to his tales of wonder, only occasionally winking at one another behind his back. They are the solid citizens of the country, and it will be too bad if they ever become infected with the money lust. But this is wandering far from the garden and the lettuce bed—all of which goes to show that you can raise other things besides vegetables in a garden.

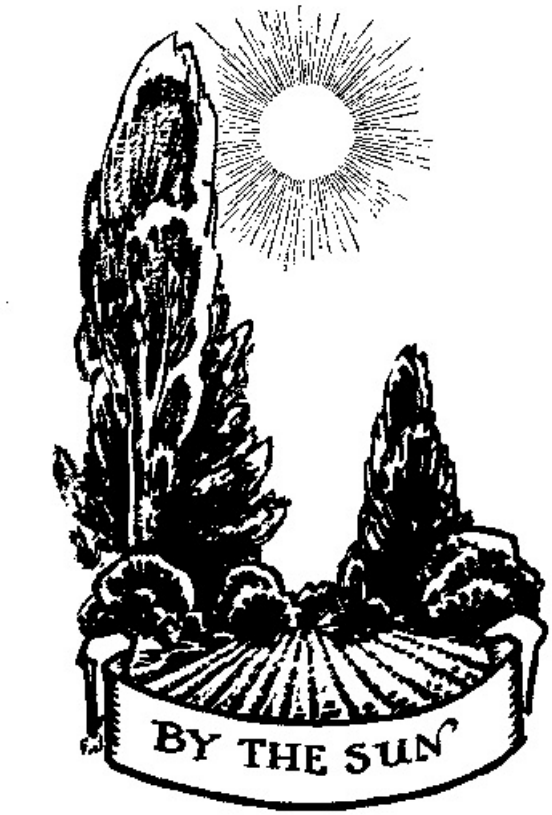
Fishing

What would spring be to a small boy without fishing? At the present writing fishing is at high tide, though we are still living on the same old fare. Although fish-lines and hooks have been bought, fishing-poles trimmed to shape with the butcher-knife and loads of bait dug, I have yet to see an actual fish. I cannot deny that years ago I used to get plump chub in the Government drain, and one year some carp weighing five pounds and over came up with the spring flood, but it is long since I have seen anything bigger than a minnow. Still, the littlest boys know that there were fish in the drain once, so why not now? There is a spot about half a mile away where willows were allowed to grow on the bank and the spring floods scooped out holes in which drift-wood accumulated. In these mysterious depths fish are supposed to hide, and a baited hook will be stripped of its bait in a few minutes. There is no lack of nibbles that appear to give the old-time thrill, but it is no use explaining that minnows less than two inches long, that are too small to be hooked, are the fish most active in this kind of work. I know that they are just as likely to catch a finnan haddie or dried codfish or canned salmon as a fish of any size, but I wouldn't dampen their ardour for anything. As a matter of fact, I am inclined to approve of their enthusiasm, for I find that the chores go through with a rush since the fishing began. All I need to do is to let them wring a reluctant promise from me that if they hurry through the chores they can go fishing. After offering enough opposition to make the favour seem great I give a grudging consent and the chores go through with a rush. And at bedtime a couple of wet and muddy boys come home, very tired and very hungry. Though they bring no fish they have had such monstrous bites that they are sure there are big fish there, only they are too cute to swallow the baited hooks. Some day they are going to catch a whale, and then they will show me. What would youth be without its faith in the possibilities of fishing and such things?

Right here an interruption has occurred. I might have known when I was writing that first paragraph in such a superior way that something would happen, but the truth must be told even though wisdom be confounded. A few minutes ago a boy bulged through the kitchen door waving a string of fish and registering triumph. He found the right fishing-hole at last and caught eight, and one big one—Oh, a beauty—got away. I hadn't a word to say. I examined them and was forced to admit that he had eight as fine chub as I had ever seen taken in this district. The longest measured seven and a half inches and the shortest six inches. Fishing is now on a firm basis and the food outlook has greatly improved. There is a fish banquet being arranged, and the titled cat was so excited at the prospect of getting eight heads to chew at that he had to be put out. But though my predictions have all gone wrong and the faith of the boys has been justified, I am not without compensations. The chores will now be done with more steam than ever and the fishing season may last all summer. If they can only catch a few now and then to keep up their interest, they will not need to be driven to any kind of work. The promise of permission to go fishing as soon as a job is done will be enough to get them to do their best. I hate driving them and it will be a real pleasure to have their minds so set on fishing that they will do their work eagerly so as to win their freedom. I hope the fish supply lasts right through the corn-hoeing season. By the way, I am not sure but it would be a good plan to have the drain stocked with fish so that there would be a sure supply every spring. I must think about it.

In the Woods

After wandering around for a while in the woods on Sunday afternoon, I came to a little glade that was beautifully carpeted with luxuriant grass. It was both shaded from the sun and sheltered from the wind. It was an ideal spot to sit down and rest and listen to the birds. There was a cradle knoll that offered an excellent seat—and I sat down. A pileated woodpecker began calling in the west corner. I wanted to see him, but felt too restful to get up and hunt for him. The wind purred drowsily in the tops of the tall maples. Occasionally a mourning dove sent forth its plaintive note, and a little song sparrow sang his song over and over again with happy persistence. A couple of butterflies danced about over my little glade, and I felt too lazy to turn my head to follow their flight. There was no doubt about it, I was beginning to feel sleepy. I knew I shouldn't lie down on the ground, especially after the heavy rains we had been having. But the grass looked so soft and inviting, and just then I noticed a little ridge of sod that seemed meant for a pillow. I would try it for a few minutes anyway. The air was warm, even if the ground might be cool. It was very comfy and I was feeling so very drowsy. A big buzzing fly found me and investigated my ear until I put my hat over my face. The wind purred in the trees and the little song sparrow sang joyously. Through the corner of one eye I could see "that inverted bowl men call the sky," with an occasional cloud drifting across. The last thing I remember was thinking that I was not so very sleepy after all, and that I had better get up before I caught cold. The next thing I remember was waking with a sudden start and realizing that I had been asleep. When I sat up I realized from the length of the shadows that I had been asleep for quite a while. Then the flyer went by on the railroad, and I knew that I had been asleep for a couple of hours. I felt both refreshed and hungry, and started for home at once. I found that supper was over and they were beginning to wonder what had happened to me.



June Colours

At the present time there is a wonderful transformation in progress. The whole colour scheme of Nature is changing with subtle variations. In the first flush of spring everything was green, though every plant, bush and tree had a distinctive shade of its own. But now the green wheat is heading out, and the wheatfields are showing the first tinge of what will be harvest gold. The cloverfields are turning red as the blossoms open, and in the alfalfa fields there is a tinge of blue. The brown earth of the cornfields is now tufted with green hills that will presently hide the soil with wide leaves that will shimmer in the wind and sunlight. Even the green pasture fields are showing warmer tints over the grass. The grasses are heading out, and showing colours that are often missed by the casual observer. In the flower garden every day brings some new bloom. As the tulips faded the irises came in all their splendour, and now the irises are giving place to Oriental poppies. Yesterday I passed the poppies and wondered when the buds would burst. This morning there was a blossom showing two handbreadths of flaming scarlet. Some time in the night it had opened its wide and gorgeous petals. To-day it gives a touch of colour that overwhelms all other blossoms. Even the roses are dim beside it.

Barnyard Youngsters

Norval is a disappointment. Though a direct descendant of the insurgent and resourceful Red Cow, he doesn't show a trace of that competent strain. When given the freedom of the orchard, after spending the first three months of his life in the calf pen, there was no exhibition of vitality such as you usually see when a well-fed calf is given space and allowed to find out what his legs are for. He simply toddled out in a hesitating way and shied at every clod of burdock that he came to. He kicked sideways a couple of times in a fairly snappy way, but that was all. When he tried to bawl he emitted a woeful "Ah-ah-wah" that had no clarion note of defiance. His yearling brother, Oats, has a bawl that has a cracker on the end of it like that of an old-fashioned black-snake whip. And every day or two he breaks through or over or under a fence to show that he respects the memory of his grandmother, and takes pride in keeping alive the family tradition. I am afraid there will be very little copy in Norval. He seems to be entirely deflated. With his pen mate, Genevieve, the case is more promising. She is a grade Jersey with trim lines and an ambitious eye. When she found that she had been given the franchise—I mean when she was turned loose—she careered around until she bumped against fences that in the past had been beyond her horizon. She ran and kicked and ran and rejoiced in her freedom until she was tired out, and out of breath. Then she came meekly to the gate and bawled for her ration of skim-milk. It is just possible that I may get some copy out of Genevieve.

You needn't tell me that horses have any sense or know how to bring up families. There is Rosie and her new, gangling colt. Last week I saw her wading in the Government drain and pasturing on some juicy grass that was growing at the edge of the water, and there was that young colt walking alongside of her. He had all four feet in the water, and that must be twice as bad as having two feet soaked. I predicted loudly that he would have hives or croup or his death of cold before morning and that she would be whinnering around asking us to telephone for the veterinary, but she went right on eating grass and paid no attention. And yesterday she was at the same trick, and there was the colt getting his feet wet again. And when a colt gets his feet and legs wet he comes near being wet all over. If he doesn't develop adenoids before he is much older I shall be greatly mistaken. But instead of worrying about him, as any mother should, that stupid brute goes on pasturing and occasionally nuzzling her colt as if she thought him the most wonderful thing in the world. And he lies around on the damp ground where the sun can shine on him and takes chances of both catching cold and getting sunstruck. But just you wait! You'll see!

Though all Nature rejoiced in the rain, I suspect that the pigs got more satisfaction out of it than anything else. Luck was with them. In favoured times they had a wallow beside the drive shed. But it had long since gone dry. Still, they continued to root in it hopefully until they had a deep bed of dust, in which they seemed to find some comfort. And when the rain came the drip from the drive shed drained into this dusty wallow and filled it with a smooth fluid mortar. The first one that I caught sight of was the old sow—the Speed-hound. She came around the corner of the stable looking as proud and happy as if she were going on parade in a new Paris toilette. She was plastered with mud from hoof to bristle. She even had mud in her eyelashes. It was rich, adhesive, blue-clay mud, and she knew that she was in the height of fashion. Then came her family. There are twelve of them, that are feeding luxuriously at a self-feeder from which their indignant mother is excluded. They are just about ready to take a trip to Toronto to see if they will class as "selects" or "thick smooths." In their outfit of mud they looked just as natty as their mother, and all of them strolled into the orchard to pick up green apples that had been shaken down by the high wind. They even indulged in races with a fat rocking-horse gait. No matter what happens to them after they get to Toronto, they have had at least one happy day in the height of style.

A snapshot observation that I was able to make during a recent raid on the sheep may convey a valuable hint to the alert agricultural scientists. I found that the lambs had not followed their mothers into the flower beds. They were all on the top or on the sides of the root house and a furious game of King of the Castle was in progress. Tinker Bell and Peter Pan (whose names have been abbreviated to Tink and Pete) were holding the top against all-comers. They were so intent on their game that they didn't notice the departure of their mothers and had to be shooed after them. I was sorry to interrupt their game, but they were out of bounds and the gate had to be closed. After I had driven them out they looked disconsolate, and no wonder. The pasture field is as level as a table and hasn't even an ant hill that makes a game of

King of the Castle possible. I have no doubt that they have been looking enviously at that root house for weeks. Now I am wondering if some such elevation or hillock is not necessary to the proper growth and development of lambs. Who knows but if we put golf bunkers in every sheep pasture we would be able to raise larger and fatter lambs and have more succulent lamb chops. The playful little rascals would take all the exercise they need and in that way grow and increase the profits of the farmer. Besides, it would do the humans on the farm good to take a few minutes off occasionally to watch the lambs at play. I feel quite convinced that it is up to the scientists to investigate this and report on it in an adequate bulletin.

A New View

Sometime ago I suggested that we might get a change of air and change of scene by getting up at a different hour. Our little world presents a different appearance at different times, and if we are at all observant we can readily find much to exhilarate and delight us. A couple of nights ago I discovered that a change of a few feet in space gave me an even more unexpected change of scene than I had found by getting up between three and four in the morning. Ever since we have taken to sleeping in the tent in summer I have had my bed placed where I could look out through the elms near the house. Night after night I have watched the rising moon through the branches and have seen the planets and constellations through the wavering leaves. But a couple of nights ago I had to change my location, so that any outlook was toward the west, instead of to the east. Some time during the previous day there had been an unauthorized wrestling bout on my bed and the rope was broken (it is one of the pioneer kind with a rope foundation instead of slats and springs). I promptly commandeered the other bed. When I had settled for the night I looked out and was startled to find a picture that I did not know existed on the farm. A sliver of a new moon was sinking behind a couple of spruce trees and the scene was such as one might expect to find in the wilderness. This is a land of maples, beeches, elms and oaks, and the few spruces and pines that have been planted for ornamental purposes are hardly noticeable in the daytime. But as I looked out through the opening of the tent only the spruces were sharply illuminated by the moon, which was setting behind them. All other trees were indistinguishable in the faint light and might easily be mistaken for clumps of spruces similar to the ones that I was looking at. The scene was as unfamiliar to me as if I were tenting in a spruce forest. If someone had made a picture of it and shown it to me I would not have recognized it as belonging to the farm.

By changing my location a few yards (of course, the new moon helped), I found myself in a new and unfamiliar world. To add to the illusion we had a fine rainstorm early in the evening and the air was singularly clean and fresh. And the sum of the whole matter is—why travel when there is still so much for you to discover in the limited time and space of your own home? A change of an hour or a few yards in your ordinary routine of living may make a world of difference.

Those Asparagi

Who sent those asparagi? Who took the joy out of life in this lush vernal season and filled me with yearning and envy? Up to last Saturday, when I went out to mow a swath of asparagus I stepped high and swelled out my chest. No asparagus I had ever seen could equal ours for fatness and luscious tenderness. I had been in the habit of speaking disparagingly—I had almost said disasparagingly—of the spindling portions served at the best hotels. But my pride has been punctured, and has collapsed like a toy balloon. The Saturday evening mail brought two stalks of asparagus such as never was on sea or land. They rank with the grapes of Eshcol and the Sequoia of Calaveras among vegetable growths. Each stalk has fully eight inches of alluring succulence, and each is over an inch thick. What adventurer voyaging from the Fortunate Islands or the Gardens of the Hesperides brought home the roots from which shot up these massy pillars of growth? What is the name of this incomparable variety, and where can plants be secured? Our asparagus will only serve as a garnish for these leviathans when we are done using them for show purposes and finally bring them to the table. And in the meantime I shall watch every mail to see if the gardener who produced these asparagi is as merciful as he is great. I acknowledge that I am beaten, and hold forth my hands in pleading. I want to know where I can get the makings of such an asparagus bed as he must have. And I want to know how to feed the shoots to such plumpness. Write soon!

Bildad, the collie pup, is making himself quite at home, and is taking charge of the place. I made a mistake in predicting that he would be called Bill for short. He is receiving his full title, and when he hears the call, "Bildad! the hens!" he knows just what is expected of him. With his tongue waggling at one end and his tail waggling at the other he pursues the hens under the flowering currants and rosebushes until they fly cackling to the barn. He is undisputed master of the lawn, and knows that hens are not to be tolerated. He has made friends with most of the cats, but there is still an occasional row. Dignified cats do not care to be romped with by a pup, and they spit and snarl. But they are learning rapidly that a vicious scratch does not scare off Bildad. The touch of a claw enrages him and he rushes right in to fight at close quarters, and even the proudest of the cats has to turn tail and climb the nearest tree. And when he is getting his meals he acknowledges no friendships. The cats sit at a distance and wait, in the hope that something may be left over. Although Bildad notifies us when an automobile is approaching by barking his little yapping bark, he soon rushes to cover in his kennel or under a bush. But, though he is fulfilling his mission of keeping the hens out of the flower beds, I have heard bitter complaints. I have heard it said in no uncertain tones that he is worse than the hens. A few days ago he took a sudden impulse to catch his tail—perhaps there was a flea biting it—just as he was crossing the tulip bed. Before he was dragged out he had created a wide area of destruction. Nine full-blown flowers were picked up with much lamentation. But Bildad is so joyous and so anxious to play that no one can stay angry with him very long. It looks as if he were going to develop into a useful dog, and when he learns to respect the flowers he will not get so many scoldings.

Toads

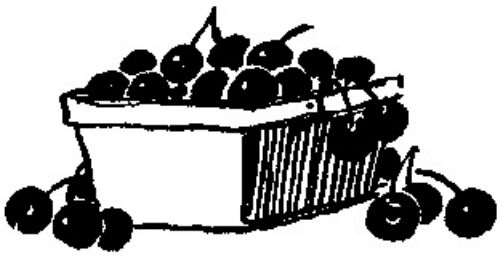
A large warty toad is now claiming squatter rights on our back doorstep. Something should be done about it, but I find it hard to decide what measures I should take. Should I put up a sign, "Keep Off the Toad," or would it be better to post a warning, "Beware of the Toad"? Different people have stubbed their toes on him—to the distress of the toad and of the people. Though I assure all and sundry that he is entirely harmless, there are those who shriek every time he heaves his fat shoulders and makes a little jump in their presence. Youthful nature students who have ventured to take him up in their hands are looked upon with disgust and assured that their hands will soon be covered with warts. Probably no creature in all Nature has been so villainously libelled as the toad. The greatest of poets speak of "the toad, ugly and venomous," and in fairy lore they are regarded as poisonous. So deeply rooted are these erroneous beliefs that no amount of scientific education seems able to eradicate them. The children are taught in school that the toad is not only harmless, but useful as an insect destroyer, and yet little girls will shriek at a toad just like their mothers. The nature student tells us that our toad has beautiful eyes, with gold trimmings, and though his skill in catching insects with his tongue commends him to those who are fond of flowers, I always know when they catch sight of him—if I am anywhere within half a mile. There must have been man-eating toads at some time in the world's history to have established so deep a repugnance to them.

Though the doorstep toad receives the most attention, there is another who makes his home under some of the bushes that border the lawn. The doorstep squatter is marked with dirty yellow splotches and is probably of a different variety from the almost black specimen that haunts the lawn. Both are alike in their slow habits and lack of athletic pep. One day when going into the cellar my foot struck against something soft and heavy, and on looking down I found the big black toad. The impact of my foot had tumbled him heels over head, but when he scrambled into his customary squatted position he made no attempt to get away. On the contrary, he tried to scare me to death by holding his breath and trying to puff himself up to an abnormal size. Lifting him out of the cellar entrance, down whose steps he had foolishly jumped, I set him safely on the ground and expected to see him hop off to some safe shelter. Instead he hunched up his shoulders and kept right on swelling. Just then I happened to see a straw and thought that I had a chance to test the truthfulness of Mark Twain's first popular story. I tickled the toad with the straw, but he refused to jump. He simply leaned back against the straw and continued to puff himself up. I thought I was going to have a real story at the expense of the great humourist—but suddenly I remembered that it was a "jumping frog" that he had written about. My exposure was a dud. Then I gave the puffed up toad a shove that sent him over on his nose. Apparently he decided by this time that he wasn't scaring me very much, and he went away with a rush of little jumps, each about six inches long. Every evening, just as it is getting dark I see the two toads making little excursions across the lawn, evidently hunting for good spots to lie in wait for bugs and flies. Both—in fact, insects of all sorts—are very plentiful this season, and the toads should get fat unless someone inadvertently steps on them in the dark.

Cherries Ripe!

Who says that birds lack intelligence—that they cannot reason? We have a pair of robins on the place that are positively human in their efficiency. Instead of wasting time and energy in carrying cherries to their growing family they have solved the transportation problem by bringing their family to a cherry tree at the door and feeding them there. The young robins sit on the branches and lift their wings and squawk while the old robins pull off cherries and stuff them into the gaping mouths. But while this may be interesting to a nature student, there are others whom it moves to wrath. Every little while those robins are shooed away, with lamentations, but they come back regularly as soon as the coast is clear. It is quite plain that the robins look on cherries as their own particular fruit, for I was surprised yesterday to see the old robins chasing away a couple of red-headed woodpeckers. This is the first pair of red-heads I have seen this season, and they must be fond of cherries when they venture so close to a human habitation to get them. But the robins are just as indignant and clamorous against the woodpeckers as the humans are against them. Between them they are stripping the cherry tree almost as fast as the fruit ripens, and the outlook for canned cherries and cherry pies is not bright. If the robins were not so neighbourly and cheery about the place and so useful at other seasons, I might be inclined to agree with the cherry growers who claim that they should all be shot. But a robin's song from a treetop, after a storm, is something to win much forgiveness for raids on the cherry trees. I wonder if there is any way of frightening them except the inefficient plan of shaking a broom at them and uttering wrathful cries.

At the present time the happiest creature on the farm is a wren. It sings from morning till night and its song is the most hurried thing imaginable. It seems to be hurrying through each burst of song so that it can draw a breath and start over again. Jenny Wren is hatching in a safe nest and her little mate is so happy that he hardly knows what to do with himself. It was not until yesterday that I located the nest. He would never go to it when anyone was about. Yesterday I happened to be at a window and heard the wren singing in a cherry tree nearby. I located him and decided to watch. Presently he flew up to a plank support under the eaves a few feet away from me. With a merry flick of his tail he popped into a crack between the plank and the plate. Then I heard twittering as if he were having a happy conference with his mate. Then he popped out and began to sing again. Or it might have been Jenny that came out while he took charge of the nest. I do not know enough about wrens to know "which from t'other." Anyway the singing began again with renewed haste and vigour. I went out and tried to peep through the crack where he had visited. From a point of vantage on the doorstep I was able to see the makings of a wren's nest. It is in a place that is safe from cats unless they learn the trick of walking on the under side of the eaves like flies. What surprised me is that the wren's nest is only a few inches away from a sparrow's nest. Though they are both pugnacious they appear to be passing through the nesting period without fighting.



Pigs in Clover

This morning it was decided that the twelve little pigs should be turned into a patch of luxuriant red clover to give them the necessary supply of vitamines and take the edge off their appetites. One boy thought he could attend to the chore by himself, for the clover field was just the spot that the pigs might be expected to make for if they broke loose from the close-cropped pasture of the orchard. Five minutes later he was yelling for help. The twelve little lumps of frisky stubbornness had slipped through a wire fence into the cornfield, and were snapping off hills of corn at every jump. Help went to him on the run, and an attempt was made to drive the pigs across the Government drain into the clover. Although there is only a trickle of water in the drain, they'd "a-liefer die" than cross it. They seemed afraid of their lives of getting their feet wet. Time after time they were rounded up, but every attempt to rush them across ended in a wild scattering. At last they were driven to a spot where there are no banks on the drain, and were driven over, two or three at a time. When they finally landed in the clover field, where they almost disappeared among the young blossoms and juicy leaves, it was thought that they would be satisfied, and the boy who was to watch them sat down on the bank of the Government drain to indulge in a nature study of the pollywogs in a puddle. A few minutes later he was yelling for help again. The pigs had left the clover and had wandered into the adjoining pasture field. They were as hard to keep within bounds as the grains of shot in a "pigs-in-clover" puzzle. Probably that puzzle was invented by someone who had tried to pasture pigs in a field of clover. It would seem that they have no taste for clover, except when they have a chance to steal it. To add to the trouble, the cry went up that the "Speed-hound" was in the oatfield. Evidently when she saw her family out of bounds she decided to break loose herself. In consequence the whole troublesome family had to be rounded up in the orchard again, where they have nothing to do but to squeal around and wait for their rations of swill and chop-feed.

Unfortunately the Speed-hound's exhibitions are not a source of unalloyed pleasure. There are times when members of the family are forced to cope with her nimbleness. To do this by mere speed would be impossible. It takes brains to beat her and round her up. One must figure where she is headed for, and then cut corners. At that, it usually takes two or three active people to do it. And she is likely to break out at any time of the day or night. I sympathize entirely with the boy who exclaimed indignantly when he was asked to put on his boots at 10 o'clock at night and help to get her within bounds:

"I wish she would go to bed some time."

But she never seems to sleep. She may be heard grunting and trying the gates the last thing before we go to bed at night, and the first one who wakens in the morning finds her still at the job—unless she has managed to break out in the night and get into mischief. She never seems to sleep. Now I suppose some indignant person who knows nothing about old sows will rise and ask, "Why don't you feed her?" They will think that if she were fed enough she would lie around in a state of repletion and not cause any trouble. In this they would be quite right, but such a course would end her usefulness as a brood sow. Either by nature, or as the result of skilful breeding, a hog's appetite is geared too high to be given free scope. Hogs do not merely eat to live, but eat to get fat. Given all the food they want, of the proper kind, they will get too fat to move. This makes it necessary to superintend their meals and allow them the amount of food to keep them in the form approved by farm economists. Unless they are being fed for bacon, hogs are always hungry and always disagreeable about it. At feeding time, even though they may be getting a ration that keeps them in as fine a condition as a baseball star, they will malign their owner with a shrillness that can be heard over half a township.

Nearing the Harvest

See the country now, when the fields are full of the harvest. Growth has not yet given place to ripeness and all things are exuberant with life. Although the clover is being cut it is in full bloom and flooding the air with perfume. The wheat fields are showing the first touch of gold, and the passing breezes stir a shimmer of silver on the oats. The corn stands in even ranks and the waving of the long leaves gives a feeling that only a word of command is needed to start the hills marching to some land of dreams. In fields and woods and orchards young birds are learning to fly and are gaping and chirping for food. Young squirrels are playing and exploring the wonderful world into which they have been born. Youth and life and happiness are abounding everywhere. Even the pests and blights seems to fit into the general scheme of things. This morning I was passing a wild-plum tree and stopped to see if we are to have any of this full-flavoured native fruit. Although there were many "pocket plums," destroyed by fungus, and although the curculio had taken toll, there were still enough sound green plums to give promise of an abundant harvest. The life force that finds expression in that tree had ensured reproduction by its sheer prodigality. It provided enough for all pests and blights, and even though our harvesting will be the most disastrous of all it is certain that enough ripe plums will be eaten uncooked, and the pits thrown away, to provide future plum trees. Nature has learned nothing of man's efficiency and control. She achieves her ends by reckless wastefulness. But probably that is because Nature has learned nothing of man's sense of personal property and ownership. All things are in common and life surges triumphantly over all obstacles.

In days such as we are having—warm, steamy, with little drifting showers—it seems almost possible to realize the oneness of life from the deep-hidden crystal in the rock to the searching eagle. There are moments when the old myths seem to have an all-embracing meaning. Were the Titans buried under the rocks, and is their life escaping through the universal mystery of growth? There are scientists who claim that even the inorganic world has its low forms of growth that may be detected even in minerals. These minerals of the Titans' prison house have a life that in its disintegration furnishes food to the plants, that in their turn furnish food to insects and creatures that serve as food for higher forms of life. Upward and outward the struggle goes on forever. While I was meditating on this a couple of hawks began to circle up from the woods and went up and up till they passed from sight. Their quest could not be for food. What aspiration guided them in that high flight? Was it the impulse of Titan life to escape from its prison-house? And even when man takes wing and outsoars the eagles is it wholly for the purpose of war? Perhaps even he is yearning for the freedom of outer space, though he is too modern and prosaic to confess the emotions by which he is stirred. Some day a poet less militant than D'Annunzio may seek the upper solitudes and bring us back a song untouched by materialism and sordidness. In hours like these the fable of Prometheus seems very real and the rising tides of life suggest that his bonds have been broken.

Having made a truce with reason let us pursue the whim even farther. Man seems to be the one creature in the living world who is out of touch with the Oneness of life. Has he been betrayed by his intelligence? He has reasoned on his hopes and fears and has built and prepared his defenses until he has little left that is worth defending. He has isolated himself from the wholesome impulses of universal life and created for himself a mechanical world in which he is enslaved. While boasting the conquest of Nature, man's fiercest and most devastating wars are with man. He cannot win control of Nature until he wins self-control. Nature provides lavishly the riches that he may shape for his needs, but his selfishness leads him to plunder his fellows. Instead of striving to learn the great purposes of life he thinks out little purposes of his own and threatens to wreck the world in his efforts to carry them through. He cherishes the narrow intelligence based upon his own purblind experience, instead of opening his mind and his heart to the infinite intelligence that directs the forces against which he makes puny battle. Instead of moving forward on the waves of life to higher intelligence he builds his cockle-shell arks to protect him from disasters that are due to his own mistakes. Catch but one glimpse of the prodigal intelligence that directs all life—an intelligence as prodigal as life—and man and his works are petty and pitiful. He could be borne on to infinite things, but the intelligent little microbe, fussing and fretting, must shape and direct for himself. And he is burying himself under his crushing achievements even more securely than the Titans were buried under the rocks. But life outside the ambitions and futilities of man is very good.

Purposeful Ducks

At the present moment the ducks are about the most interesting creatures on the farm. There are over forty of them, and they seem to have only one purpose in life—to keep their crops filled. Every morning at dawn when I am turning over for another sleep I hear them starting out empty and hungry. As young ducks seem able to swim in a heavy dew they make a noise as if they were enjoying themselves. I am told that before sunrise the flies and insects are usually resting under the leaves of the weeds and the blades of grass just where the ducks can get at them. Judging from the actions of these ducks I am inclined to think that a duck was the original early bird to catch the worm, and that reminds me that a question has been raised as to the moral value of the old saying about the early bird catching the worm. It has been pointed out that there may have been something immoral about the worm being out so late. I remember that one fabulist gave a new version of this bit of folklore wisdom. He told about an early bird that came across a worm that was coming home late from a lodge meeting and was full of benzine, nicotine and other deleterious substances. The early bird swallowed it and received such a shock that he suffered from indigestion for the rest of his life. But, judging from the thrifty condition of these young ducks there are no dissipated worms in their neighbourhood. Every morning they fill their crops and then about breakfast time they come home in single file to get the dessert of dry grain. As yet I have not been up early enough to see them in action in the morning when they are really hungry, but occasionally I see them at work in the daytime. Their actions on land seem to be much the same as on the water. They appear to swim along through the grass, constantly poking their bills among the roots and apparently depending more on the sense of touch than on sight. I seem to have heard that ducks have sensitive nerves at the end of their bills with which they detect worms, slugs, insects and other dainties. When in action they resemble a fleet of torpedo-boat destroyers. Although most of their work is done among the roots of the grass they occasionally get after flies or winged insects, and they go at it with a vigour that would win the prize in a "Swat-the-fly" contest. They have a sort of triple-expansion neck that they can shoot out in a way that must be surprising to the inconsequent fly. Usually, they carry their necks in a Hogarth line of beauty that probably deceives insects regarding the ducks' possible reach. On the whole, I feel that they are worthy of a special study, and as soon as I can take a day off I am going to make it, but I shall have to hurry, for they are growing so fast that broiled young duckling is likely to appear on the bill of fare at any time.

Bildad, the collie pup, is altogether too serious minded. He is such a glutton for work that I feel rebuked by his industry. At his age he should be devoted to eating and play, but what he wants is work. As long as any one is stirring on the farm Bildad is sure to be about and eager for something to do. He even has to be called to his meals, and if when he is eating he hears a whistle or hears some one yelling at the pigs or cows he will leave what remains of his meal to the cats and rush away to make himself useful. And he really manages to be useful. Hens on the lawn or near the house are now a memory. Bildad has educated them to the fact that there is a deadline between the barn and the house that must not be crossed. And on several occasions he has gone clear across the pasture field—fully forty rods—to bring home the cows. He is always taken along when the cows are being brought home, and now he seems to understand pretty well just what is expected of him. One evening when we were working about the barn he started off by himself, without any one issuing orders, and began to round up the cows. Of course, he is always praised when he does anything right, and praise is what he is greedy for. Of course, he comes in for some punishment, too, when he fails to obey orders, and he evidently expects it. One day he was crossing a clover field with one of the boys when he started a little rabbit. Whether he caught it in his mouth or simply reached out for it with his paw, as he does when sparring with the cats, is not known, but the rabbit let out a wild squeal such as only rabbits can utter. Bildad apparently thought he had done something wrong, for he rushed back to the boy and crawled and grovelled at his feet as if he expected to be punished. On the whole he promises to develop into a useful farm dog, but he is too serious for his age. He should scamper around more than he does.

Thoughts on Food

This farm must have been frequented by the Indians before the coming of the white men. Though there is no evidence of an Indian village or permanent camping-place, every plowing brings to light specimens of flint arrowheads, skinning knives, and even battle-axes. Although the land has been under cultivation almost three-quarters of a century, its store of treasures has not yet been exhausted. This spring one of the boys while harrowing found a round stone, which he brought home for my inspection. Although I do not know its proper paleolithic or antiquarian name, I recognized it as a stone used to crush grain or other foods by the original inhabitants of the land. I had seen others like it in museums, but I could not explain to the children just how it was used. I knew it represented to the Indians what the rolling mills and the millers' trust do to us, but that was as far as my knowledge went. As I hefted it in my hand I could not help thinking that in its day it must have been a fairly useful kitchen utensil. As a specimen of graniteware it was probably more adaptable than any we have to-day. It could be used not only to grind corn, but also to drive tent-pegs, to keep the door-flap open, or as a sinker on a catfish line, and on occasion it might be used to sharpen the butcher knife. If a marauding Iroquois surprised the lady of the wigwam by poking his head through the opening and looking at her with an engaging smile, she would doubtless grab the family grist-mill and bounce it off his scalp-lock, in the meantime accompanying the passionate gesture with an appropriate ceremonial war-whoop. The would-be masher would at once see a flock of stars that he would recognize as the light of Algonquin kultur, and when he reassembled his senses in the happy hunting-grounds he would realize that, though Milton had not yet lived to make the observation, "peace hath her victories no less renowned than war."

The present world interest in foods led me to wonder how we would get along if a general cataclysm threw us on our own resources and made it necessary for us to prepare our meals after the manner of primitive man. I am afraid I would be just as helpless if I tried to grind a grist with this Indian stone as if I tried to operate an up-to-date flour mill. If our present highly specialized system of food production were to break down most of us would be helpless with even the simple instruments of the stone age. We would have to revert farther back, to the condition of primitive man, of whom it has been sung that he "lived upon oysters and foes." Come to think of it, the high specialization of our modern civilization would leave us almost absolutely helpless if we were deprived of its services. Few men know how to carry any art through all its processes. Most of them know only how to attend to one machine that performs one operation of a long series. We still have traditions of how the pioneer lived, but I doubt if many of us could duplicate their methods. I have heard a pioneer woman tell of cutting oats with a sickle and leaving the field an hour before dinner time with a sheaf under her arm. When she reached the house she would burn the sheaf, winnow the parched grain in her apron, grind it in a quern or handmill, and have oaten scones ready for the family when they came home for dinner. How many housewives of the present day could provide simple and nourishing meals for their families by such methods? I am afraid there are not many. If we use oats for food, we must have rolled oats, put up in pasteboard cartons. We have become so dependent on others that we have lost our independence.

I have learned from experience that two of the most important things about food are flavours and names, and I am wondering if it would not be possible to accustom us to a balanced ration of scientific excellence by disguising it skillfully. Long experience with menu cards, which are printed in French because the French have given special attention to alluring names and subtle flavours, has convinced me that the thrifty citizens of France paid off the German indemnity by inventing a hundred different names and flavours for hash. I have sampled scores of delicious entrees that a less imaginative people would have served as plain and unpalatable hash. The French alone seem to know how to take a left-over nothing and give it a gastronomic appeal and a name. But sometimes my adventures with menus led to embarrassing consequences. I remember an occasion when I ordered devilled ribs of beef—the name in French I cannot remember. The polite waiter brought me what was left of the skeleton of a cow. It was a helping that attracted attention by its mere size, and while worrying those bones for a meal I felt like a bashful young vulture trying to stay his appetite after the wolves had finished with the carcass. Ever since, I have a whispered interview with the waiter before trying unfamiliar dishes.

By the Sun

One morning while pitching sheaves in the wheatfield I glanced up at the sun to see the time of day. At once I remembered all the homilies I have read about workmen who watch the clock, and felt ashamed. But a moment's reflection made me feel better. The city workman who watches the clock seldom glances at the sun. The man who has the sun for his clock has for his fellow-workers the light, the heat, the wind and the rain, and these take no notice of the eight-hour day. These are pacemakers that no man can keep up with except for a few days during rush times on the farm. As I turned this over in my mind the cities suddenly seemed very far away. As a matter of fact I had barely glanced at the papers since the wheat harvesting began. We were living in a different world and our interest was in another kind of news. The variations of the weather had an interest more absorbing than the fluctuations of the stock market. And the world in which we are living is older than all the civilizations recorded in history. Bread came from the earth in the time of Job as it does to-day. Though we now gather the sheaves to the barns, the purpose is the same as when the sheaves were gathered to the winnowing floors in the days of the patriarchs. And I have no doubts that the husbandmen of those days watched the weather as keenly as the farmers of to-day. And in spite of all the improvements of machinery the men who do the harvesting to-day work as hard as they did in the days of the sickle. Improved machinery does not lessen the amount of labour. It simply releases more men for other kinds of labour. And in spite of the changes in man's methods of dealing with the seed-time and the harvest the ways of Nature change not at all. Growth and ripeness come to-day as they came in the beginning, and in spite of clocks and wrist watches Nature continues to work by the sun. If I glanced at the sun to see the time of day I am no longer ashamed. I was working in accord with something older than any enterprise governed by a time clock—and the work took me out of the world of hurry and worry that men have developed for themselves and which they describe as progress and civilization.

One night when we were going to bed in the tent after a day of harvesting a boy suddenly yelled:

"Wild geese!"

We all listened, and certainly something was going over. But the cry, though loud, was not the familiar cry of the geese. From different parts of the sky above us would come a call that sounded like "Annk," and would be answered immediately by other cries that might be spelled "Eek." Apparently quite a flock of large birds were going over and were keeping in touch with calls and answers. Though I looked steadily toward the moon, none of them passed between me and the light. The birds passed from the southeast to the northwest, and were probably flying from Lake Erie to Lake Huron as their ancestors had probably flown long ages before the coming of the white man. As the mood induced by glancing at the sun in the wheatfield still lingered with me, the flight of the unknown birds overhead made me feel more primitive than ever. We were practically sleeping in the open as the Indians who occupied the land before us had slept. And like the Indians we listened to the mysterious calling of the birds. No doubt the white lights were shining on many Main Streets and many Boardwalks, but that was nothing to us. Such things are but things of to-day, but we were in touch with something as old as Time—something healing and restful.

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 be 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 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 nearby 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.

Wild Fruits

The need of spiking down a plank on the watering tank in the wood-lot took me to the woods yesterday and even though the lot is not very large, there are cool depths that invite to loafing on a hot day. After hunting out such a spot and taking my ease for a while I suddenly remembered that I had noticed some thimbleberry canes among the wild raspberries while prowling in the spring. While in the city I had sampled some thimbleberries at a restaurant and they seemed so mild and flavourless compared with the kind I used to remember that I felt an immediate need of knowing whether thimbleberries are what they used to be. I had been told that the prolonged drought had dried up all the green berries, but we had a couple of good rains and I suspected that I might find a few that had escaped. Going to the right spot I was rewarded by finding one bush from which I gathered a handful of small thimbleberries. Although they were small they made up in flavour what they lacked in size. They surpassed my expectations. They had the old-time flavour and sweetness. I could have eaten a quart if I could have found them. I wonder why it is that the cultivated varieties of the thimbleberries lack that incomparable wild flavour. If you have never tasted it in its perfection I can give you no idea of it, for it is impossible to describe flavours in words—beyond such elemental flavours as sweet, sour, salt and a few others. The full thimbleberry flavour seems to penetrate a man's whole gustatory system with delight. It is more than scrumptious. I believe a handful of these berries would flavour a whole quart of jelly or preserves. I know of no other flavour quite like it and the tame berries only carry a suggestion of it.

The thimbleberries "set my pugging tooth on edge," and as I had got only an exasperating taste, I began to cast about for something else to satisfy my aroused appetite. Then I remembered the wild-plum tree that I planted out a few years ago. I planted them because I could never forget some wild-plum trees that grew on the farm when I was a boy. I can remember going out to them, giving the plum tree a jolt, and then settling down in the grass to pick and eat the sweetest and best flavoured plums that ever melted in a man's—or rather a boy's—mouth. It was in the hope of reviving those youthful joys that I planted out some of the wild plums when putting out some of the respectable domesticated varieties. Happening to notice them this spring at blossom time I took such precautions as I could think of to save them from the curculio. I sprayed them with arsenate of lead and also put sticky fly paper around the trunks of the trees. I do not know which precaution circumvented the curculios, but I was rewarded with a good crop of wild plums. The children tried them and reported that they were sour and bitter—and I took their word for it. But after the taste of wild thimbleberries I felt a longing to sample the wild plums. The display of fruit on the trees was pleasing to the eye, even though the plums were not much larger than cherries. The plums had a white powdery bloom over their ruddy cheeks that gave them an attractive appearance, but the ones I sampled certainly were sour. I was going to turn away in disappointment when I noticed some plums glowing in the grass—and then I remembered. Stooping down I fumbled with the fallen plums until I found a soft one. Um-m-m!!! It had the old sweet, tart flavour that I had been longing for. And the grass under the trees was full of fallen plums.

It was fully half an hour later that I called the littlest boys and let them know the true way to get wild plums. My ancient hankering had been satisfied. Fortunately, I planted four trees, and that insures a sufficient amount of plums for eating as well as for preserving. They may not be so meaty as the tame plums, but they have a flavour that the Burbanks of scientific fruit-growing have not been able to retain in the fat, juicy plums they have developed. I wonder if it would not be a good idea for our horticulturists to concentrate on the production of agreeable flavours without paying so much attention to the fleshy part of the fruit. I am told that canners are able to use turnips very effectively to furnish the body of fruits. If that is true it might be worth while to specialize on flavour-producing fruits, and get the body of our jams and preserves from the more prolific turnip fields.

Take it Easy

Did you ever notice that when you are working hard you get a feeling that you are doing all the work of any importance that is being done in the world? Other people may be going through the motions of working, but it is only what you are doing that really counts. While the haying was in progress and the corn was being cultivated and hoed, it took seventeen hours' straight work and choring every day to keep track of things, and I got so obsessed with the idea that I was doing everything that when the mad rush was over, I felt distinctly irritated to find that there was still work left in the world. I had a feeling that I had done all that needed to be done and to see other people working annoyed me. They evidently did not realize how much I had done. Presently the feeling began to wear off and I was forced to admit to myself that no man can do all the work there is in the world, no matter how hard he goes at it. There will always be more left to do—and then some more. Then what is the use of all our mad rushing at things? We can never get ahead of our work or even catch up with it. The more we work the more we find to do and the less good we get out of what we do. By devoting all our time and energy to work we leave no time for living. So what's the use? My greatest gain from the rush of summer work was that I became convinced that I couldn't do all the work in the world even if I tried, and that there was no reason to suppose that I was expected to do it, anyway. In work, as in other departments of life, there are no guiding standards. A man has to use his own judgment as to how much of it he is to do. It is just as easy to err by doing too much as by doing too little. In the present age most of us err on the side of doing too much.

As a result of getting tired of work and realizing its futility, I was enabled to strip life of a whole lot of supposed responsibilities and to enjoy myself rationally again. Taking it all in all, the mere matter of living is more important than any of the things to which we can devote our lives. A life devoted to work entirely, no matter what the work may be, or how useful to others, is a life wasted. A human being has some rights, and it seems to me that the chief of these is the right to exercise moderation even in the noblest things. Work is excellent when indulged in moderately. It can be used to enrich life and to make living more worth while. But when life becomes one feverish, unthinking round of toil it is practically ended. A person working in that way is not living at all, even though his work may enable him to accomplish great things and accumulate a fortune. It is the same with study. A moderate amount of knowledge enriches life, but a man can clutter himself up with high-class knowledge until he is a nuisance to himself and everyone else. It is the same with either the practise or the appreciation of the fine arts. Painting and writing poetry are pleasant enough accomplishments, but in spite of all the biographies ever written they are not worth starving for or sacrificing life to them. The act of living may yet be recognized as the only great art, the one to which all the other arts minister. It is quite true that those who have "devoted" their lives to this or that—that is, sacrificed their lives to it—are much applauded, but what good does that do them or anyone else? Our best critics of life tend to prove that even the greatest men are simply the result of their time, and that all they are usually credited with having achieved would have been achieved even if they had never been born. Yet they wore themselves out with their work and missed all of life in its accomplishment, and what is their profit?

"Those who harvested the golden grain,
And those who flung it to the winds like rain,
Alike to no such aureate earth are turned
As buried once men want dug up again."

Cow Enjoyment

Did any one say that a cow has no sense of humour? I am not sure that any one did, but cows, as a rule, are regarded as very serious-minded. When Bill Nye tried to emphasize the fact that he could occasionally be serious, he wrote: "There are times when I can be as serious as a cow." He might also have written that there were times when he could be as happy as a cow having her will with a stack. Just let a cow get free swing at a stack and she can have more solid enjoyment than anything else on the farm. Up goes her tail, down goes her head, and she rushes at it as if she were going to pitch it over the moon. Then she will throw herself against it sideways and rub against it like a tom-cat in a catnip bed. If it happens to be a stack of sheaves, and she comes out of her merry bout with a sheaf hanging rakishly from one horn, she will look as happy as a woman coming out of a bargain-counter scrimmage with a new hat. As there is a stack between the stable door and the gate of the pasture field the cows manage to have considerable fun every night and morning in spite of wild yells and the use of a buggy whip. Sometimes, when driving through the country, I see straw-stacks to which the cows are allowed free access, and most of them are so rubbed out at the bottom that they look like big mushrooms. I shouldn't wonder but it is a good thing for the cows, too. There is an old proverb which says, "Laugh and grow fat," and who knows but the cows might lay on beef more rapidly if allowed to enjoy themselves in this way. I offer this suggestion to the scientific department for mature consideration. Although they have done well, there may be a few tricks about beef-raising that may have escaped their attention, because they have been considering the matter so seriously.

M-M-Mushrooms!

After all, there are worse jobs in the world than sitting under an apple tree peeling mushrooms and listening to the crickets. It is a mellow autumn day, even though we are still in August, and flashing humming-birds are visiting the flowers in the border. Although everything looks and feels and sounds pleasant, there are those who say that the signs are set for a break in the weather. And more rain will mean more mushrooms! The prospect is not wholly unpleasing. Judging from the way we have started off, this is going to be a good year for mycophagists. They will have enough mushrooms to be able to decide just which way they like them best. Already we have had them fried, stewed, and grilled on toast. I incline to vote in favour of grilled mushrooms on toast. We have an aluminum grill that is used for occasional pancakes and annual corn fritters, and I have discovered that it justifies its existence by its usefulness in bringing fresh field mushrooms to their ideal state of perfection. The odours! M-m-m! And the flavours! M-m-m! When I get them hot on hot buttered toast, the

> "... name of slave and Sultan are forgot,
> And peace to Mahmud on his golden throne!"

The best result is achieved with fresh mushrooms that are still tenderly pink in the gills and are just opened enough to make them lie flat on their backs while being grilled over a brisk fire. Care must be taken not to spill the juice that gathers in the mushroom while cooking. Work them gently onto a spoon with a fork and place them on the waiting toast. If the juice is then spilled on the toast it transfigures it. And the flavours of home-grilled mushrooms are beyond anything one ever gets in city restaurants. At such a time as this I feel sorry for city people—especially for those of them who were born in the country and learned how to grill mushrooms on a stove-lid. You know how it used to be done! A dab of fresh butter in each fair mushroom cup! M-m-m!

Snake and Frog

A couple of days ago I had a glimpse of life as it is lived, grimly and gruesomely, close to the earth. Fearing that the water supply of the cattle might be running low, I visited the pond at the line fence, where matters are arranged so that they are able to help themselves whenever they feel thirsty. When I was within a few rods of the exposed pool there was a sudden wild splashing that made me suspect for a moment that a wild duck or some water-bird had visited the pond and was diving to hide itself. But when I reached the little pool that wells up from a quicksand bottom I understood the cause of the commotion at once. A large garter snake was swinging down from the plank wall of the pool so that its head was almost touching the water. All around there were wet blue frogs that had evidently jumped out of the water to escape the snake. As I had never heard of a garter snake visiting a pool to hunt in this way, I thought the time opportune for a nature study. I had always thought that the snakes dieted only on frogs that they caught in the grass. The snake slid away under one of the logs that had been placed to keep the cattle from approaching the water except at the place where it is exposed for their use. Having a little time to spare, I sat down on a nearby hillock and waited. The disturbed frogs hopped away to safety, and I wanted to see if the snake would go hunting them when it thought the human danger was out of the way. After waiting for a quarter of an hour or so without seeing any signs of the snake, I decided to give up. But just as I was going to move a gaudy butterfly fluttered along and lit on something near the log where the snake was hidden. I saw at once, and with some amazement that the butterfly had lit on the back of a green frog that stood as still as if carved out of jade. The combination of frog and butterfly made a picture that a Chinese artist could have made into a thing of uncanny beauty. Just why a butterfly should light on a frog's back was, and still is, a mystery to me. I have always had an idea that a frog would look on a butterfly as a dainty tidbit. Presently the butterfly went on its inconsequent way and I got up to examine the frog. My approach did not cause it to stir, even when my foot rested within a few inches of it. Its goggle-eyes were protruding, and I could see its sides panting, but it did not move. At last I pushed it with my toe and it made a jump worthy of Mark Twain's jumping frog. And just as it jumped, a foot and a half of garter snake shot out from under the log and missed it by a fraction of an inch and a fraction of a second. I never saw a quicker or more startling move. The head of the snake touched the toe of my boot, and as it saw its quarry jumping away wildly it flashed out its black and red tongue and withdrew under the log almost as quickly as it had shot out. I understand that the old belief that snakes charm or hypnotize their prey has been exploded; but why on earth did that frog stand there within striking distance of the snake when the other frogs were hopping to safety? Was it so paralyzed by fear that it could not move? And the snake evidently had its attention so concentrated on the frog that it did not realize the danger of exposing itself so recklessly while I was within striking distance. It evidently looked on that frog as its dinner, and was so intent on its plans that it overlooked the rule of Safety First. I was unable to stay and watch for further developments, but I am wondering if our common garter snakes ever plunge into the water in pursuit of frogs. Under ordinary circumstances the frogs would have dived to safety, but the approach of the snake caused them all to jump out of the pool. This makes it seem as if they were afraid of capture if they remained in the water. I have seen garter snakes swimming across a stream, though I never suspected that they might be in the water for the purpose of hunting game. While I did not acquire any new knowledge while indulging in this nature study, I discovered how little I know about snakes and frogs when it comes to matters of life and death.

Summer's Close

The summer has been so beautiful in the country that one does not like to think that autumn will soon be upon us. But it is coming closer every day. Already we have had still, cool nights, with the crickets raising their autumn chorus. But even though autumn comes, it will bring delight of its own. Since the first asparagus and tulips appeared in the spring we have not been without new delights of flowers and vegetables.

The poppies are now giving way to the morning glories, hollyhocks, cornflowers, four o'clocks and other old-fashioned flowers. Although the wild raspberries are done, the thimbleberry canes have already yielded a couple of good pickings, and this rain should bring a lot of them to perfection. The yellow sweet apples and Maiden's Blushes are almost ready to take the place of the Red Astrakhans in the orchard, and from now on we shall have all the fresh fruit we can use. From the vegetable garden we are getting peas, butter beans, cabbages, cauliflowers and beets, and new corn will be on the table in a few days. I shouldn't be surprised if the rain brings us more mushrooms. It all sounds good, doesn't it? Well, I am not telling about these good things that the farm yields merely to excite your envy. I merely wish to make you realize what you are going to enjoy when you finally come to your senses and get back to the land. Here is where one can get a living—and that of the best—in the natural way.

Days of Colour

To-day the world is serenely colourful. Just as Nature is beginning to cast her summer clothes into "the rag-bag of the world" she is giving them a dip in her dye-vats. Wherever one looks there are "hues of ash and glints of glory." The stubbles and weeds give a dull foreground, broken here and there by the vivid green of wheat fields, but the forest trees are a marvel and a delight. There is an absence of the flaming scarlet that the maple sometimes shows, but green, yellow green, yellow, yellow red and red are blended into wonderful harmonies. Under the trees in the orchards there are piles of red apples, and in some fields there are golden pumpkins. Wherever one looks there is colour and sunshine and beauty. The wind is from the south, and the only sound it carries, beyond its own murmur, is the brisk crowing of cockerels and the distant cawing of crows. Occasionally a belated fly drones past and dull white butterflies beat with ineffectual wings. The whole world is serene enough to soothe even political passions. Possibly the men with teams who have stopped to talk on the sideroad are discussing politics, but if so they are out of keeping with the picture. They should be discussing crops and other harvest-home topics. Occasionally an automobile goes racing by and I feel like throwing an apple after it for disturbing us with its unmannerly haste. Presently the sun will go down in a haze of gold and mark the end of a perfect day.

After a week spent in several feverish cities there is a wonderful satisfaction in feeling that there is not a street within miles of one—only fields and the woods. After the clangour of trolleys and subways, the quiet of the country seems better than ever. Here we have peace and security and quiet confidence. In the cities, both Canadian and American, I found irritation and suspicion and unrest. Although I heard many plans for world betterment and reconstruction discussed I heard nothing that seems more practical and useful than the humble task of picking and marketing the apples. If somehow everybody had some little personal job to attend to I incline to think that it would do more to heal humanity than all the windy schemes that are being blown about the world. More than ever I felt while in the cities that the world is over-organized. No one seems able to do anything without being part of some organization. This applies to the country people as well as to the city people. Everybody is out to save the world, when we would be better off if more people were interested in saving the apples and potatoes and vegetables. What we seem to need is more work that is merely man-size. Every kind of work nowadays is being done by an organization of some kind, and the organizations are not working right. We are having too much mob-psychology and too little individual initiative. And all the while the same old sun that lighted our fathers to their work is going over us, "counting his hill-tops, one by one." It is a good world that we live in if we could only take a day off to realize it.

Farm Cats

You cannot convince the boy who is trying to keep the sparrows from getting all our oats and wheat that cats are not intelligent and gifted with wonderful memories. Now that the nights are cold and winter is approaching, the sparrows are gathering from the fields and orchards and preparing to winter in the barns and granaries, where they will not be disturbed. As they gather in hundreds they are as pestiferous as rats, and are even more troublesome, because they can fly. Although there are people who speak a good word for these sparrows there are few farmers who do not class them rightly with rats and mice. They are filthy and destructive, and we are obliged to wage war on them. During the summer we did not trouble them, but now the boy who owns the rifle has laid in a supply of ammunition and commenced his winter campaign. Last year when his eye was good the cats learned to follow him about and pick up the sparrows he shot.

This week the first shot he fired brought a cat with a high political name bounding after him to see what he could get. The second shot served as a call to more distinguished cats, and the third shot lured even the titled cat from his cushioned ease in the house. Those cats certainly remembered that the cracking of the rifle had something to do with feasts on sparrows. To them it was a dinner bell. And their memories must be fairly good, for it is seven months since any shooting was done on the place.

When it comes to being cosy a cat knows more about it than any creature on the farm. The turkeys roost in the windiest spots they can find, and the hens would roost in the apple trees and wonder why they got their combs frozen if they were not watched and carried squawking to the henhouse after nightfall. But the cats have no foolish notions of that kind. The children have three pampered pets that for some reason they have named after Canadian public men, who are altogether too eminent for me to mention in this connection—though I must admit the children were wiser than they were aware of when they bestowed the names. The gentlemen they honoured all have fine purring manners, sharp and concealed claws, and, politically, they are mighty good mousers. Also they know how to keep themselves cosy in public office—and that reminds me that it was the cosiness of the cats that I started to talk about. Our cats have learned that the stable is the source of the milk supply, and also that if they all meow together they will get me so worked up that I will stop in the middle of the milking to feed them, so that they will shut up. After they are fed, one or more of them will climb to my shoulder and rub against my cheek and purr as if he wanted my vote for something. At night they usually curl up together in a cosy hen's nest, but if it is especially cold they go in among the cows and snuggle up to the warm sides of the animals. Of course, feeding three cats with fresh milk may seem to some thrifty people to be a sinful waste, but I think they are earning good treatment. It is many months since I have seen a mouse around the stable or granary, and now that the corn is all in the crib, that is important. A few mice would spoil enough corn in a week to pay for the cats' milk for the winter. So I have no objection to their grafting on me and purring cat politics while I am milking.

This morning I made an interesting observation on the kitten. I had just fed the calves and was coming around the strawstack, when I saw the kitten's tail lashing about significantly. He had his head buried in the straw and was evidently intent on a mouse. As he had been seen in the act of catching a mouse in the grass a few days before, I know that he is big enough to attend to his business in life, and decided to wait and see how he got along. His tail was apparently signalling for less noise for fear the mouse might be frightened away. And then again it might have been signalling "My Meat" to any other cats that might be in the neighbourhood and inclined to interfere. As I have never seen a scientific study of the language of cats' tails, I cannot be sure about it. But I am sure that the nervous twitching and lashing of that tail had some meaning in the business of mouse-catching. I know, because it continued while the kitten was pushing his head cautiously into the stack. Then it stopped suddenly. The tail went limp, and dropped down with an expression of deep disappointment. I did not need to be told that the mouse had taken fright and had escaped deeper into the stack. The tail told it just as plainly as if a voice had said, "Missed again." A moment afterward the kitten backed out of the stack with a look of disappointment, shook the chaff out of his fur, and went about his business. Now, I wonder if any scientist has ever made a study of the relations of a cat's tail to mouse-catching. I am inclined to think that all the cat tribe make use of their tails in this way, for I remember a song in which one was urged to beware of a tiger—the biggest cat of all

—"Especially when a-lashing of his tail." As few things are superfluous or accidental in nature, I have no doubt that some scientist has given his attention to it and has found a deep evolutionary meaning in it.

Heads or Tails

Last week I was obliged to revert to arboreal habits. The scattering of apples that we had this year had to be picked and packed, and while swinging about through the trees I was forced to the conclusion that evolving man was altogether premature in dispensing with his tail. Not only would a strong, prehensile tail be invaluable to an amateur orchardist, but the world outlook is such as causes one to view with regret the ill-considered decaudation of our anthropoid ancestors. It is a debatable point whether primitive man would not have been wiser to have discarded his head than his tail. At least he should have waited until he had some idea of what his head was going to do to him. His head has developed high explosives, high finance, high society, high tariffs and other things that are like to bring us low. The injudicious use of our heads has brought us to a pass where grave, though bilious, philosophers intimate that we are in danger of lapsing into barbarism unless we speedily change our ways. And, if we do, what will we do? Our natural tendency will be to take to what trees are left and live halfway up so as to be above the bombs and poison gas below, and yet far enough down to escape the airships above. In such a position even the dullest can realize how valuable a tail would be. Hence the conclusion that when our ancestors were deciding to discard a useless member they should have chosen heads instead of tails. Tails would never have got us into militaristic, diplomatic, or industrial messes.

One can easily conjecture how the regrettable decision was brought about. When the first ambitious pithecanthropos brained a few of his neighbours and plundered their winter supply of provisions to get the necessary capital and supplies to start a corner grocery, his customers would have to come to the ground to deal at his establishment. At once it would become evident to the observant that for travelling on the ground a tail was a hindrance. It would all the time be catching burrs and be getting scratched with briars. In consequence the simian efficiency experts would claim that tails had been outgrown by evolving man. In this they were just as short-sighted as most of the representatives of their class to-day. But no doubt our ancestors had the same respect for scientific methods that we have, and the reform would be launched with the applause of both practical men and the better classes of society. Then some society leader would make it fashionable and the thing was done. And those who objected and clung to their tails would be regarded as outcasts, thus giving us an early instance of "Truth forever at the bar, and Wrong forever on the throne"—or words to that effect. Anyway the thing was done, and to-day as a result of this primitive folly I am obliged to swing precariously in the branches of apple trees and pick apples with one hand, when a wiser development would have made it possible for me to swing more comfortably and pick apples with both hands. What have the efficiency experts to say to that? Heads you lose—tails I win. But it is now everlastingly too late to remedy matters.

High-Pressure Livestock

There has been so much in the papers recently about high-frequency hens and super-efficient cows that I am going to venture a dangerous paragraph that may provoke some unpleasant controversy. Twice in the past few years I have heard theories advanced which would tend to show that human psychology is seriously affected by the animals or fowls specialized in. There is a picture in my mind of an eminent Western ranchman who sat with his feet on his desk and expounded to me his theory that it is possible to know at once by observable characteristics just what is a farmer's specialty. As he specialized in beef cattle he naturally held that cattlemen are usually men of large and generous proportions, with ideas in keeping with their bulk. As his descriptions of horsemen, sheepmen, cattlemen and poultry specialists were not very flattering, I shall not venture to indicate them. But his theory sounded as plausible as many another, and he was able to back it up with instances that seemed to carry weight. The next testimony that seemed to bear on this point came from a young agricultural specialist who had been travelling through the country investigating certain farm conditions for a Government department. He assured me that attempts to develop cows of high milk pressure and butter content and of early laying hens of record-breaking capacity apparently tended to develop a greedy and over-reaching type of human being. The man who tried to get the last ounce out of a hen or a cow, he claimed, always wanted to get the last possible penny out of every one he dealt with. Of course this is a very sweeping generalization to make on somewhat casual data, but there may be something in it. The scriptural injunction, "Muzzle not the ox that treadeth out the corn," would suggest that the highest efficiency and the most desirable characters do not always go together. What do you think?

Autumn Poetry

A Literary critic has been lamenting the absence of good autumn poetry, and those who have been writing to enlighten him on the subject have missed the point entirely. If the days were not so perfect I could find him plenty of autumn poetry. For instance, there is that gem of Carman's:

> "Now the joys of the road are chiefly these:
> A crimson touch on the hardwood trees,"

and so on and so on. If I were not feeling too lazy to hunt up the volume I could quote enough of this one poem to show that the poetry of autumn surpasses the poetry of spring as much as ripeness surpasses greenness. But even this poem does not do justice to autumn. The poet pictures himself as walking—a form of exercise that is fairly strenuous. In weather such as we are having a poet might dawdle about, but he wouldn't walk—at least, not in a purposeful way. The poet who lets the mellowness of autumn sink into his system is too bone-lazy to wiggle his fingers in counting feet and matching rhymes. At this time of the year the nine Muses are all taking sunbaths and munching the apples of the Hesperides. Those whom they favour are filled with an ineffable content, and steeped in ineluctable sloth. A vast stillness fills the drowsy world, and the little sounds of flies and insects make a droning music that lulls all Nature to sleep. The Aeolian harps of the trees are all silent, and the birds are too full of fruits and seeds to strain themselves with song. In the morning the cattle stand in the sun to get warm, and at noon they shift to the shade to get cool, and are almost too lazy to chew the cud. And the poet who is in accord with Nature lolls around and eats apples and grapes and pears that are brought to him by admirers—being too lazy to get up and get them for himself. If we were not having such perfect autumn weather I would undertake to prove that even the autumn poetry we have was not written in autumn. It was written in the more active seasons when the memories of autumn sank as a balm on the bruised and over-laboured soul.

A Weather Breeder

There may be something in weather prophesying after all. One beautiful day a few weeks ago—a still, cloudless, sunshiny day that was mellow to the core, and showed no sign of spot or blemish; in short, a perfect fall day of the best that Canada can give—I ventured to remark to a man of hoary experience that it was "a nice day."

"Yes," he responded, "but it is a weather-breeder."

I promptly sat down and looked at him inquiringly.

"A weather-breeder," he explained, thankful to have an audience, "is a beautiful day at this time of the year. When we get an unusually fine day at a time when the weather might be expected to be rough it is a sure sign of a storm near at hand. I should say," and here he cocked his eye at the flawless sky and looked meditative, "I should say that we are going to have a storm within twenty-four hours."

After that we had much profitless conversation about weather signs which I did not take the trouble to remember. And when I finally got up enough energy to walk away through the lazy autumn sunshine I had no particular confidence in his prediction about the "weather-breeder." But next morning there was a real storm. It spoiled a number of plans that had been made by the young people, so I heard many lamentations about the change in the weather that had upset everything. This made me remember the prophet with some respect. And it so happened that last week we had another beautiful day that came before another day of plans. Asked for my opinion as to the weather they were going to have, I looked wise and remarked that the day we were having was a "weather-breeder," and that we would have a storm before twenty-four hours. And it proved even so. After this experience I feel that I can set up in business as a weather prophet on at least one phase of the weather in the late fall.

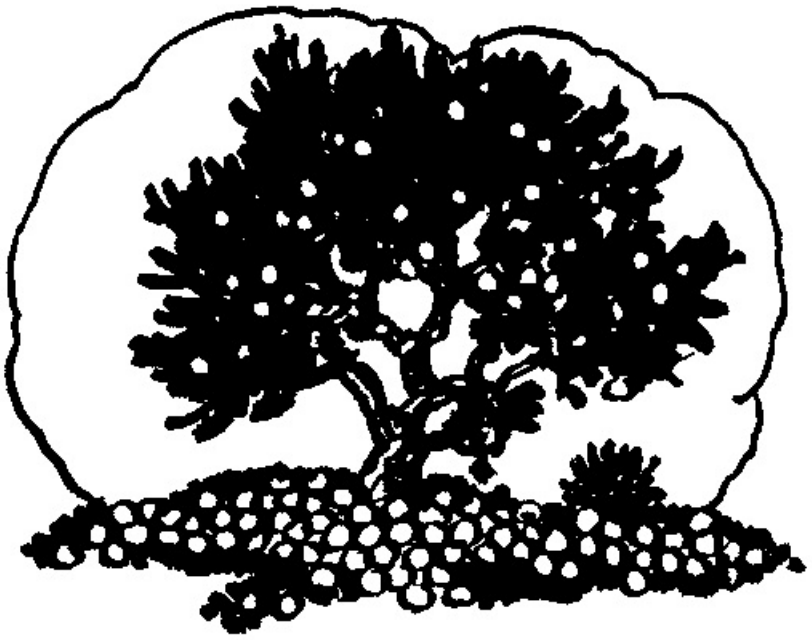
Cow Ingratitude

It's no use trying to do a favour to a cow. She won't appreciate it, and she won't play fair. For the past few weeks we have been keeping the cows in at night and feeding them the regular winter ration. The pasture field is so bare that it merely serves as an extended yard in which the cows can take exercise. On the other hand, the oat-stubble has come up with a fine crop of volunteer oats—the crop was lying down in some places and the binder couldn't pick it up. In this stubble there is also a catch of clover that has grown amazingly in this beautiful fall weather. Now it occurred to me that it would be good business, besides being a kind act, to let the milk cows have a feed of the volunteer oats and lush clover. On Saturday we turned them in and they went at it with eagerness. But there is a little patch of garden in the corner of the field and the cows had to be herded away from it. As the boys were home from school there was not much trouble—though the cows got a taste of the carrots and table beets after they had filled themselves with pasture. This morning I thought I would turn them in for another feed. As soon as the gate was open they rushed straight for the garden. By doing some running I finally managed to get them away from it and drove them to a far part of the field where the pasture was up to their horns. Then I went at some other work. But I had barely turned round before they were back in the garden.

Though the pasture was all that any reasonable cow could ask—and infinitely better than the dry pasture field—nothing would do for them but the luxury of carrots. As I could not devote the day to herding the brutes I simply had to drive them out. By their up-to-the-minute craving for luxuries they fooled themselves out of the necessities. There is something very human about that. I dislike to moralize and I wouldn't do it if it were not that an interesting point is involved. Some will argue that it is absurd to say the cows show a human weakness when they grab for the luxuries first. They are only unreasoning brutes and acting according to their natures. Very well. Then how about human beings who grab for all the luxuries of life—and there are a lot of them just now—before they make sure of the necessities? Are they not showing the same instincts as the unreasoning brutes? This seems to be a question that has two sides to it—both bad. Would I be flattering the cows if I said that their foolishness is human, or insulting human beings if I said that their foolishness is like that of cows? You can settle it whichever way you like. In the meantime I stick to my original statement. It's no use trying to do a favour to a cow. They may stretch their necks over the fence and bawl all they like. They will not get another chance at that pasture—unless the frost keeps away until after the vegetables are taken in.

Hauling Apples

Wise people of my acquaintance are fond of saying in an impressive manner: "It is a good thing that we never know what is ahead of us."



At all times I have given intellectual assent to this profound observation but not until one day this fall, about four o'clock in the afternoon, did I realize the blinding truth conveyed by these few, simple words. If I had known what was ahead of me I would have missed the most complete triumph I have enjoyed since returning to the land.

The children wanted pocket money and offered to pick all the windfalls and culls in the orchard if I would undertake to haul them to the railway station where a car-load of apples was to be shipped to a vinegar factory. Wishing to please them and to encourage thrift I agreed, and as soon as the apples were picked and bagged I loaded them on the hayrack and started to the station three miles away.

Before reaching my destination I began to have trouble. The farmers were hauling sugar-beets—two tons and over to the load—and the roads were beginning to show the effects. During the dry season the clay had been ground to powder and when the rain came this powdered earth turned to mud, with ruts and mudholes of unknown depth. As I had piled on a heavy load it was all the horses could do to haul it and fairly skilful engineering was needed to avoid the mudholes. As we approached the station conditions became worse and by the time we turned in at the siding the horses were in a lather of sweat. As the beets from all points of the compass had to be hauled over the road in the station yard it was at least four times worse than any I had come over. Not being familiar with the station yard I stopped at the entrance to give the situation an appraising look. There was an empty beet waggon on the weigh-scales, so it was evident that others were able to get through the slough of despond that spread before me. The apple car was placed directly opposite the entrance to the weigh-scales and I must make the turn to the platform of the scales in very close quarters. To make matters worse there was a waggon load of apples at the door of the car, which reduced the space to a minimum. But the man on the beet-waggon drove out so there was nothing for me to do but to plough ahead. The man who was loading the apples called to me that I should be able to make it all right, but subsequent events made me doubt his sincerity. There is nothing that real farmers enjoy more than to see a back-to-the-lander in a tight box.

Without getting down from my load to go forward and investigate I chirped at the team and we started. You see, I "didn't know what was ahead of me." The horses plunged wildly through the slush that was axle-deep in places. When we got abreast of the apple car I had to turn at right angles to the weigh-scales. As soon as I saw what was ahead of me I started a yell of terror, but caught myself in time and gave it the right inflection to make it seem a shout of encouragement to the horses. I saw that I had to pass between a stock-pen and the weigh-scales and as nearly as I could judge with my eye there was the barest possible room for the hayrack. The approach to the scales was an ominous puddle of roily water. The trouble with puddles of that kind is that one never knows how deep they are. They may be only half an inch deep or they may be so deep that Chinamen are fishing in them from willow pattern bridges on the other side of the earth.

I have been told that in moments of extreme danger a man's past life comes up for hurried review, but that did not happen in my case. Instead, I had a swift vision of the immediate future in which a load of apples would be piled up at the entrance to the weigh-scales and a host of sugar-beet barons would be standing around like "goblins full of wrath" making disparaging remarks about my driving. But at that instant a forgotten expertness—perhaps acquired while swamping out logs from a beech-knoll in a tamarac "marsh" long ago—came to my rescue. Instinctively I lifted the nose of the nigh horse over the corner post of the stock-pen by a sudden pull on the already taut line. A fraction of a second later the corner of the hayrack shaved that post by an eyelash—the eyelash of a potato at that. The horses made a final mighty plunge and we came up standing on the platform of the weigh-scales.

While the man in charge weighed the load I assumed the air of a man to whom such feats of driving were quite the usual thing. This was because I had an audience. By this time half a dozen waggons loaded with sugar-beets were standing in line waiting for their turn on the scales. The exit from the scales was almost as bad as the entrance but I had recovered my nerve and had confidence in the team. It took the last ounce that was in them but they pulled through to solid ground. The man who was loading the car of apples shouted. "Good!" He may have been sincere—I give him the benefit of the doubt—but I suspected a note of regret in his voice. I had not furnished the expected entertainment.

As soon as I had cleared the way the owner of the first load of sugar-beets marched forward in squashy rubber boots and looked things over. Then he made a few loud remarks in a tone that I would not have dared to use, about a railway company that would have its scales so badly placed and about a station master who would allow the train-men to place the apple car right in front of the entrance to the scales. Then, as it was impossible to do anything about the matter, he called to his hired man to drive up. The hired man obeyed orders. He turned his team swiftly on that sharp angle between the stock-pen and the scales. His rack came up with a crash against the corner post of the pen. Stuck!

What happened next was so casual that no Sherlock Holmes was needed to deduce that such things had happened before. Without a word the man on the next load in waiting jumped to the ground and pulled the draw-bolt from his double-tree. Even before he had yelled, "Where is the logging chain" a man from farther back in the line had started forward with the chain trailing behind him. Everything had the air of having been well-rehearsed or often practised. Without comment of any kind the second team was hitched in front of the first, the beet rack was pried past the post and the two teams leaped forward. But the waggon did not come to rest on the middle of the platform. Instead, the front wheel slipped into a crack between the platform and the framework, sank to the hub and stuck fast.

There was an awful and painful silence.

Then the hired man began to sing in sweetly sentimental tones:

> "I'm thinking of Heaven just now."

That relieved the tension and the cry went up for crowbars and pries. Men came running forward with crowbars and scantlings. In the old days they would have approached with rails but you can't pick rails off wire fences. They placed blocks so as to get a purchase and used all the leverage they could muster, for a waggon loaded with over two tons of beets is not an easy thing to handle. After much puffing and grunting and shouts of "All together, now!" they finally worked the wheel out of the jaws of the trap into which it had fallen. Then the load was weighed and everything passed off quietly.

While all this was happening I stood around and said nothing. As the children say: "I was not hating myself at all." I didn't help to pry out the load of beets for that would have been rubbing it in on the real farmers. Presently I got a chance to unload my apples and have the waggon weighed for the "tare" and started home. Though a cold winter rain had started I was feeling cosy and all in a glow. But all the while an iron resolution was forming in my mind. Never again would I take such a chance. Not for the price of a load of apples would I try that station yard and scales a second time. Let well enough alone. I had got through without being disgraced and giving the farmers a laugh at my expense.

The children tried to convince me that there was another load of valuable apples in the orchard but I was altogether too busy with real farm work to be bothered with such things. I had escaped once by the skin of my teeth and that was enough.

A Still Rain

Yesterday afternoon the world became wonderfully still. The wind died away and a slaty cover of cloud floated across the sky. Not a sound could be heard of beast, bird or insect. After the boisterous winds we had been having the stillness was almost oppressive. Presently little drops of rain began to patter down, making a tiny sound that could just be heard. Gradually the rain became heavier and the patter became louder, but the sense of stillness remained. Then the shadows began to deepen and the still night came on. Although it was gloomy, it was restful, and at bedtime the rain on the roof of the tent sounded like a lullaby. Some time in the night a freight train got in trouble on the railway a couple of miles away and puffed and panted in a way that seemed unnaturally loud. Then suddenly the tent was filled with light. An automobile had come up the side road, and in turning the corner its searchlight swung across the field. While I was wondering what on earth could make anyone be out in the rain at such an hour another automobile came roaring up the side road and turned the corner. It looked like a pursuit, and was enough to start one's imagination going. Were auto bandits abroad, and was someone giving chase to them? Was it an elopement, with the angry father following the speeding Ford of the young people in his high-powered car? Or was it rum-runners with the police on their trail? Probably the night riders were ordinary people who were out on legitimate business, but they gave something to dream about until the rain lulled one to sleep again. This morning the world is wet and cool, but the wind is stirring again and the rain is over, and probably there will be mushrooms in the pasture field when we have time to go out and look for them.

"OO-OO-OO"!

Perhaps you think your nerves are so sound that ordinary superstitious fears would never touch you. It is quite possible that you are right, and yet you may be mistaken. Up to a couple of nights ago I felt perfectly carefree on this point. Then I got an awakening that raised goose-flesh on me and started the cold sweat. Here was the combination. I had spent the evening reading Cotton Mathers' "Wonders of the Invisible World: Being an account of the tryall and execution of certain witches in the town of Salem." I had revelled in the quaint old-time phraseology and shuddered in a literary sense over "Horrendous Clamours" and "Bitter, Doleful, Dying Groans." And some time in the "wee sma' hours" of the night, during the dark of the moon, I was wakened by hearing the most horrible groans that I have ever listened to. My awakening was accompanied by some sort of dream, in which I thought I was reading a proof and there was a quotation of poetry in it that I could not understand. This quotation would keep recurring every few lines—and then I wakened up to discover that the supposed quotation was really three awful groans repeated at regular intervals. It was enough to make anybody's hair stand on end, but after hearing it a few times I decided that the noise was made by an owl in the spruce trees. It is true that I had never heard an owl make this kind of sound before, but the method of repeating the sounds at the ordinary intervals of an owl's call convinced me of their origin. Moreover, I knew that there were hens roosting in those spruce trees. To save their silly lives I got up and went to the opening of the tent, where I clapped my hands to imitate a gunshot. A few moments later I heard the groans disappearing over the corner of the orchard. There had not been a sound, and that helped to convince me that the visitor with the awful voice was really an owl, for the flight of the owl is absolutely noiseless. Of course, after I found the cause of the horrendous clamour I got over my scare, but for a few half-awake seconds I thought all the witches of Salem were holding their midnight revels around the tent.

Mostly About Eating

Has anyone ever written an adequate defense of eating? If so, I cannot recall it at the present time. About all that I can recall about eating is in the nature of reproof, as if enjoying one's meals showed a low animal nature. We have been told that most of us dig our graves with our teeth and all that sort of thing. We are advised to "sit a guest with Daniel at his pulse," and I think I could dig up a lot of improving and reproving quotations about eating—all of them derived from

> "Those budge doctors of the Stoic fur
> Who fetch their precepts from the cynic's tub."

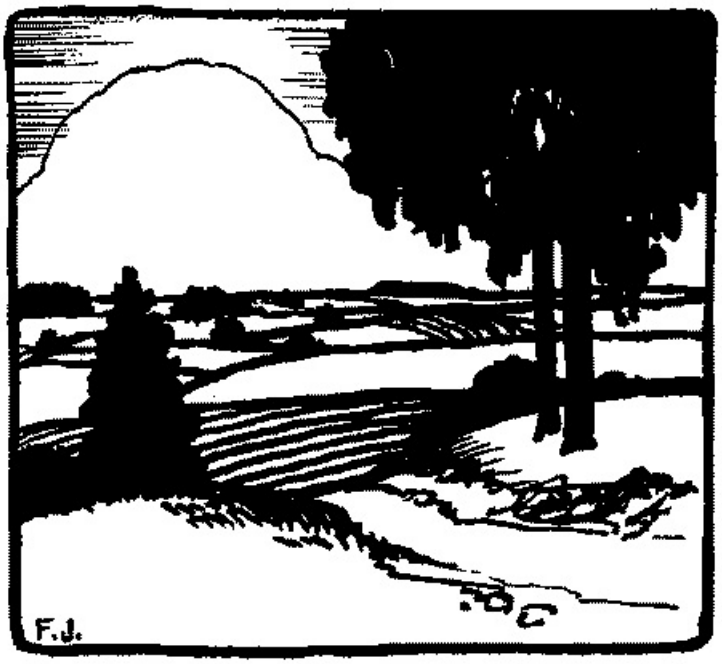
I am interested in the subject because I am beginning to suspect that a great many people suffer from lack of variety in their diet—from not enjoying their meals as they should. In the country especially it is very easy to fall into the habit of having the same kind of food every day of the year. The food may be plentiful and wholesome, but the sameness of it may make it pall. As there are only a few sections of the country through which the butchers make their rounds with fresh meat, many farmers live on salt meat—usually salt pork—from one end of the year to the other. They never were much for going to town anyway and did not establish the habit of buying fresh beef, and now that they have the telephones and rural free delivery they go to town seldomer than ever. Canned goods offer but little relief from the monotony of fried pork and potatoes, because few indulge in more than an occasional can of salmon to have handy when an unexpected visitor calls. The result is that people live on the same kind of food and lose all relish in their meals except the fine spreads they have on Thanksgiving Day or Christmas—or when they kill a hen when the preacher calls. And just because they do not relish their meals as they should their outlook on life becomes clouded. There are times when I suspect that monotony in food is worse for one than false economic doctrines or corrupt politics.

After talking about food it seems quite natural to turn to the pigs (I wonder if that is what makes so many good people frown on feasting). This week we put a dozen pigs in a pasture field beside the corn with a view to finishing them for the market with a liberal ration of corn. All their fat and feasting lives they have had access to a self-feeder and have grown accordingly. But now that they are in the field they get their meals at regular hours and it doesn't suit them at all. But they are really too lazy to make a proper protest. In fact they are the laziest pigs I ever saw. When eating from the self-feeder they used to sit on their hams and eat by the hour. They were too fat and lazy to stand up to their meals. I have even seen them sitting beside the watering trough sipping at the water, so it was no surprise to find that when they wanted to squeal a protest against being separated from the self-feeder and put in a pasture field well strewed with ears of corn they lay down on their stomachs to do it. After they had been put in the field and given their first good feed—corn on the cob and a good trough full of chopped feed—I heard them squealing and went out to see what was the matter. I found them all lying on their stomachs in front of the pasture gate doing their best to let out a chorus of fat, wheezy squeals. The racket they were making was not convincing. A pig that can't stand up to howl for what he wants doesn't want it very badly. But I do not think I ever before saw a pig lie down to squeal.

October Sun Baths

In spite of all the spring songs and rare days in June, this is the time of the year that gives the ideal sun-bath. When the eager and nipping north wind drives you to the shelter of the south side of the house, you find the sunlight as mellow as a fall pippin. You can spread yourself out and take all of it without care for actinic rays or ultra-violet rays or any other kind. The otherwise objectionable flies will make a pleasant droning music for you, while the bumble bees on the zinnia blossoms will contribute the bass notes. Occasionally a humming-bird will dart into your cosy corner to get a taste of nectar from the late flowers, and silky thistle-downs will float between you and the sun. Crows will call pleasantly in the distant wood-lot, and the bluejays in the orchard will pierce the air with occasional cries of sharp joyousness. A little while ago I hunted up the pears that I hid in the long grass about ten days ago, and they were perfect. I carried a couple to the sunny side of the house and ate them in a lazy, unhurried fashion, while the sunshine poured over me and warmed me deliciously. The kittens came and played around and sported among the currant bushes, and made me feel so much at peace with the world that I could find it in my heart to speak kindly, or at least playfully, to a Big Interest. And all the time the broilers were sending forth their amateurish cock-a-doodle-doos and arousing thoughts of future feasting. There is no doubt of it—when an autumn day is perfect it is the most perfect day of all the year.

There is a maple at the edge of the new orchard that can be adequately described by only one word—appetizing. It looks good enough to eat. The colours range from a delicate pie-crust yellow to a rich chocolate brown. When the restaurant waiter brings around the pastry tray I usually regard with a bilious eye his offering of shaving-soap meringues, ailing eclairs and tormented tarts, but if at any future date he offers me anything in the line of pastry that looks like that maple tree I'll take a chance on it. At a distance of forty rods it looks as if one could bite it with relish, but I know that if I went close to it the effect would be spoiled. The forests are shedding their glory as fast as they are putting it on. The sharp frost of a few nights ago—nine degrees below freezing—put the finishing touch on our autumn scenery. It forced the colours to their utmost, but it also loosened the hold of the leaves. Just now a glance toward the wood-lot reveals a drift of flying leaves, and sometimes a flock of crows goes raking through the tree tops and looks like a drift of larger and darker leaves. A pelting rain or a strong wind would strip the trees in a day, but the display may last for a while longer if the present weather continues.



Bildad Progresses

Bildad continues to get more human every day. I am not sure that I approve of the superior airs he is developing, now that the boys are letting him ride about the farm in the waggon whenever they are hauling home wood or doing other farm teaming. It did not take him any time to learn that it is pleasant to ride in an exalted place and look down on common people. He took to joy-riding like a profiteer, and now whenever the horses are hitched up he climbs aboard the waggon. He has even climbed into the buggy and enthroned himself on the seat, but his rides in this high state have been short, for he is not allowed to leave the farm. But no human being could look more satisfied with himself than Bildad does when enjoying a ride. He doesn't even deign to bark at pigs or cows when passing them in the fields, and once when he drove by me in the lane he cut me dead. He was looking out over the world and seeing only far horizons. No human being I have ever known developed a more clear case of uppishness after a little success than Bildad exhibits right now. The next thing we know he will be wanting us to get an automobile for him and will refuse to go after the cows on foot. But, like many a human being, Bildad may get a severe jolt some day. Pride goeth ...

I suppose it is the same on every farm where they have a dog, but I never before noticed that all the fowls and animals can learn so quickly just what is meant by whistling for the dog. This morning I was putting away the driver and happened to leave open the gate that leads to the lawn. A couple of two-hundred-pound hogs started on a raiding expedition, but I began to whistle for Bildad, who was out in a field following one of his young masters who was plowing. The pigs stopped at once, and as I kept up whistling they turned round and came back through the gate. Evidently they knew that they were doing wrong, and knew what to expect. At the same time I noticed that a couple of motherly Plymouth Rocks that had taken advantage of the dog's absence to visit the lawn at once lifted their heads and pointed their beaks straight toward the barn. The effect of whistling for Bildad is to rouse all guilty consciences on the farm and start their owners running for cover. I had noticed some time ago that when milking time comes round the cattle start for the barn as soon as we whistle for Bildad. He has put teeth in our authority. At least he has made all the creatures understand that a series of shrill whistles means that a set of snapping teeth will be at their heels presently unless they obey orders. But if Bildad were to disappear, they would not be long in finding out that our whistling carried no more authority than our yelling. The whistling must be backed up by a yellow ball of fur, full of teeth, if the animals are to obey.

A World of Sounds

For the past three days we have been living most of the time in a very little world. A thick blanket of fog has been cutting us off from the sun and sky and from all familiar neighbourhood sights. The country is lonely enough at any time, but when we are confined in what Carman calls "the reeling dungeons of the fog," I do not blame anyone for feeling depressed. We are living in a world of sounds rather than of sights and know what is going on about us by listening rather than by looking. The railway trains that go roaring by and rousing echoes that seem unusually loud show neither smoke by day nor fire by night. We know that people in the neighbourhood are ploughing, for we can hear the "phut-phut" of tractors and occasionally we can hear a man yelling at his horses when turning on the end land. Even the live stock on the farms seem to be subdued, and I do not think I have heard the cattle bawling or the hens cackling since the foggy weather began. Of course we hear the pigs as usual, and see them too, for one cannot go to the barn without leading a procession of little pigs that think they should have meals at all hours. Even the sparrows are quiet, and I have not heard a crow or bluejay. At night we hear the owls whooping, and they add to the gloom. For a couple of hours yesterday afternoon the fog lifted and we had a while of wonderful warm sunshine, with all the twigs, blades of grass and the wire fences glittering with suspended drops of water. Foggy weather is one kind that does not rouse poetic impulses. One can be uplifted by either a summer or winter storm, and snow, hail, rain or sleet can stir the blood if one must be out and contending with them, but a fog is simply dismal. It shuts us off from the world like the walls of a prison, and is damp, uncomfortable and uninspiring. Any kind of weather that will rid us of it will be welcome.

Work and Leisure

This week I have come to the surface again. That is the way it seems when I look back. For some weeks past we have had a steady rush of work, picking apples, cutting corn, hauling it in and otherwise hurrying to get all the farm work done before the closing in of winter. Every day has been fully occupied with steady physical labour and now that the rush is over I feel as if I were coming to the surface again from a deep dive in some stupefying element. I can hardly remember whether the sun has been shining for the past couple of months. Now that it is over and I am able to enjoy life again I cannot help feeling pity for those whose lives are made up of unceasing labour. No wonder they are exploited and robbed, for in my experience it is impossible for a man to do hard physical labour and think at the same time. Hawthorne was right when he said that the more a man turns over the clods the more like a clod his brain becomes. No wonder your campaigns of education and uplift movements yield such trifling results. The men who do the slavish work of the world are too tired and toil-befogged to think clearly about their own condition. Their benumbed brains cannot be moved to action. Before we can have any worthy reforms in the world we must have a year of jubilee—a year of holidays that will enable the workers to rid their systems of the toxins of toil. If it were not that society is so organized that the majority of people must work to the point of stupefaction, the privileged classes would never be able to hold their control and rule for their own benefit. Work is still what it was in the beginning—a curse. Every once in a while I see a paean in praise of work and I invariably set it down as the production of some toil-maniac of insufficient intellectual capacity to enable him to enjoy leisure. Because thought is a pain to him he has to have his rudimentary brain besotted with work. If everyone did only the work needed to supply his own needs and used his leisure to develop the resources of his mind we would have a new world. But the vast majority do many times the amount of work they should do, so that a few may live wastefully and idly. Those who have leisure under our present system do not know how to use it. Instead of developing themselves they degenerate through riotous excess. By having too much of the fruits of other people's labour and none of their own they become parasites. We go to extremes both in working and not working, and the result is a feverish and unhealthy social system. I am willing to do my share of work, but I want my share of leisure too, and I am not afraid of it. There is enough beauty in the world to enrich the leisure of any man.

Cider Time

There is one serious drawback to the occasional beautiful days we get during the late fall. They are altogether too delightful and langourous for anyone to work, but at the same time they are the only days we may have on which it will be possible to finish the season's work, and we have to make the most of them. If it were not for the crowing of the roosters, we would hardly have the industry to keep going, but the roosters, especially the young ones with sharp, shrill voices, are a constant inspiration. When everything in Nature is dreamy and warm and lazy they crow with a sudden vivacity that cheers a man on. Even without seeing them you know that they are scratching gravel with both feet—just as you should be doing. The crowing in the young roosters is the characteristic music of Indian summer. The insects and birds are still, and if it were not for chanticleer we might fall asleep on our feet, but he sends a vibration of joy through the still air that rouses a man like a live wire. And then there is a fine neighbourly sound about the crowing of the roosters. It is purely a sound of civilization. You never hear it in the wilderness or far from human dwellings. When you hear it, it calls up all kinds of pleasant domestic associations, including fricasseed chicken and chicken pot-pie. Any way you look at it—or listen to it—it is a most seasonable and satisfying sound.

Now that the heavier work is done we are having time for such dissipations as cider-making. But, instead of doing it in the old way by having a small coffee-grinder machine to reduce the apples to pulp and a little press with a capacity for about a pailful of apples at a time, we load our apples on a waggon and take them to a cider-mill to be ground in quantity. People go to these mills and wait their turns as they used to at the old grist mills. Whenever I drive to the postoffice I am sure to meet farmers going home with milk-cans and barrels filled with cider and the waggon-box filled with sour-smelling pulp. Occasionally one of them offers a drink of new cider, and as they never have a cup or other vessel suited to the occasion the feat is usually performed by dipping up about half a gallon of cider in the lid of a milk-can and passing around this unwieldly loving-cup. To drink from it successfully a man needs a very wide mouth or he will have a couple of rivulets of apple-juice running down each side of his chin. But this amber fluid, perfected in the alembics of autumn, is worth getting in any way, even if a man has to push his head down into the barrel to get it. I am told that the best cider is made from apples that have been slightly frostbitten on the trees, and I seem to remember that Thoreau has something to say about the superior flavour of frostbitten apples. Anyway the apples should be thoroughly ripe to make the best quality. As yet cider-making is not an institution in this country as it is in the old countries, but one hears rumours of hard cider that is perfected on the quiet. Much of the cider that is being made in this district will be allowed to turn into vinegar and some will be used in making applebutter, but people who have cool cellars will be able to keep some of it sweet well into the winter.

A Winter Day

To-day we are enjoying perfect winter weather—cold, still, with lazy flakes of snow floating down from leisurely clouds. The air is so still that the least sound "starts the wild echoes flying," and a man can't yell instructions to a boy at the barn without letting the whole neighbourhood know what he has on his mind. When the colts were let out to water, and to get a little exercise, they scampered over the pasture field and kicked up clouds of powdery snow with their flying heels. Although the snow blanket is light, not over an inch deep, it gives the world a thoroughly wintry look. In its way, a perfect winter day is as enjoyable as a perfect day in any other season. The air is crisp and exhilarating, and the trees that have their branches marked out with white have as distinct a beauty as when they are covered with foliage. The enjoyment of this kind of weather is much like the enjoyment of a cold bath. After the first plunge one feels joyously comfortable. One of the boys reported that there is skating on a neighbouring pond, and also that he saw a big flock of snowbirds, so nothing is lacking except the musical jingle of sleigh-bells. But we must wait for more snow before we can have that crowning pleasure of winter. Those who are weather-wise say that this little "skiff" of snow will probably melt in a day or so, and that we shall have open weather again. Still, it doesn't matter very much for the fall work is well in hand on most farms and very little of this snowfall fell on the shrinking and humped backs of young cattle. Most of the animals are properly stabled and ready for winter, and they don't care whether school keeps or not.

Wood-Making

Wintry weather and a sufficient woodpile arrived on the farm at the same time. An insatiable buzz-saw needed only a few hours to work its way through a pile of logs and poles that I thought would hold it for at least a day. But that was because I had never seen a buzz-saw really in action. My recollections of wood-making with a sawing machine date back to the time when we used a straight saw that was worked across the log by horsepower. Those old sawing machines seemed a great improvement on the crosscut saw and axe, though they needed expert handling and careful driving of the horses to keep the saw from wabbling when it finished a cut and was running light. I have known a saw to miss the guide when being lifted at full speed, and pieces six inches long would snap off and fly through the air like shell fragments. I never knew one of those old sawing machines that had been in action any length of time that didn't have a piece snapped off the end of the saw. But these new buzz-saws are not only more efficient, but I am inclined to think less dangerous. Being run by a gasoline or oil engine, they never run short of power, and when the saw is not snarling through the wood the heavy drive-wheels prevent the instant rising in speed that used to be so disastrous. Every precaution is taken to reduce danger to a minimum. The saw is covered over except when the timber is being pushed against it, and there is no need of anyone getting hurt, unless, like Bill Nye's man, he "lays his thumb on the thrilling edge of the buzz-saw."

The cutting of the larger logs was very satisfactory, but the operation did not arouse in me the same emotion as when the small poles were fed to the saw. I had my eye on those poles for some time and knew that if anything happened to delay the buzz-saw those poles would be cut with a bucksaw. And I knew who would have to do that. There are people who cut wood with a bucksaw under doctor's orders, as the work is said to give just the right kind of exercise for the liver, but I have never felt the need of it. I have always felt that the woodpile and the bucksaw should have a place beside the stonepile and hammer as a form of hard labour to be inflicted as punishment on those who vary sufficiently from the conduct of their fellows to merit punitive disapproval. And every bunch of poles—for they often handled three or four together—that was pushed against the saw made me feel that my sentence had been commuted at least a day. But logs and poles are now cut and piled and only the splitting remains. If one is a little shrewd in picking out the free-splitting timber it shouldn't be very hard to keep ahead of the stoves. The best of it is that the boxstove takes in large chunks, so that I can get rid of the tough wood and the knots in that way. Anyway, the outlook for winter warmth and gentle exercise is excellent, and we need not give a thought to coal mine strikes or railroad strikes, so far as home comfort is concerned. Let the city man put that in his pipe and smoke it.

The thirteen little pigs on the farm are in need of sympathy. All through the beautiful weather of the past few weeks they were confined to a narrow pen, because there were apple piles in the orchard, and they could not be kept away from them by ordinary wire fences. Not until yesterday did we get the apples cleared up—all except the hopeless culls. Then the little pigs were given their freedom. Their chief delight was in running. Every few minutes something would stampede them, and they would scamper wildly about the orchard. Another thing that kept them moving was the hostile attitude of their mother, the Speed-hound, who had been restored to freedom at the same time. She seemed positively to loathe her offspring, and every time they came near her she would rush at them and bite them savagely. She wouldn't even let them live up to the maxim, "Root, hog, or die." If she saw them rooting for vitamines she would rush in at once and rob them of the roots and grubs they were trying to uncover. Nevertheless, they put in a happy afternoon, rooting, scampering and occasionally stopping to eat an apple. But to-day the scene is changed. The snow is too deep for their short legs, and they are shivering around the strawstack, instead of foraging afield. And their mother is in even a worse temper than she was in yesterday. They can't do anything that suits her. But they will soon get used to the snow and discover forms of mischief suitable to winter weather.


FROST and SNOW
E.J.

A Fine Day

It doesn't do to spend too much time in thinking about an article. If you think about it earnestly enough you will soon be beyond your depth, and then airy persiflage becomes an impossibility. I am moved to make these observations because we had some especially fine days between Christmas and the New Year, and while enjoying them I made up my mind to describe them for the benefit of poor city people who never see Nature in her happier moods, and for the still poorer country people who live among scenes of beauty and never give them a thought.

But I spent too much time making observations and thinking the subject over. Before I realized what I was doing I had discovered that a fine day is more a state of mind than a meteorological condition. No day is fine unless it is contemplated by someone in a joyous, expansive, appreciative frame of mind. If I were to describe those beautiful days as they seemed to me I would simply be setting forth the fact that on those days I was particularly happy, and in accord with the world in which we live—which would be most reprehensible egotism.

Still, I am determined to have something to say about fine days. Our lives should be made up of them and our very greetings to one another when we meet on the streets is a prayer to that end. "Good-day!" we exclaim, when we see a familiar face, and because I have just been reading "The High History of the Holy Grail," I know that this is equivalent to saying "God give you a good day." When wished in all sincerity this is surely one of the finest wishes in the world, but if you listen to the way in which it is said by many people you are convinced that they have not only lost the original meaning of the phrase, but have given it a new one. They seem to be saying "Good-day—and be damned to you!" There is a modern greeting, however, that I am inclined to like even better than the ancient when it is given with sincerity. Men must meet on the street, smile, nod and exclaim in passing: "It's a fine day!" If you get hold of the idea that a fine day is largely a state of mind you will realize that it is equivalent to saying "I am entirely happy," and the wish is implied that you may be the same. I have noticed that men of an habitually cheerful disposition use this form of greeting, no matter what the weather may be like. You may meet them in a sleet storm or a driving blizzard, and they will shout above the howling of the wind: "A fine day!" If they really mean and feel it you realize instantly that the day has some fine qualities that you have been overlooking, and for a little while at least you feel the better for the meeting. Men of this kind seem to be power stations of sunshine, and they go about cheering the world, whatever the weather reports may be like.

It would not be hard to put together quotations from poetry to show that men are often at variance with the accepted notions of fine or disagreeable days. The remorseful and crime-sodden Macbeth exclaims: "I 'gin to grow aweary of the sun."

Most people seem to feel that if the sun is shining they can make a shift to be happy. In fact they seem to feel that sunshine is absolutely necessary to fine weather, but Byron may be quoted to the contrary. In his rumbling Spenserian stanzas on "The Storm" he exults:

> "And this is in the night! Most glorious night!
> Thou wert not sent for slumber! Let me be
> A sharer in thy fierce and far delight,
> A portion of the tempest and of thee."

At such a time as that many of the people I know would have their heads hidden under the bed-clothes and would be shivering with fright. But the poet had the right state of mind, and the thunderstorm in the Alps was music to him. Most people seem to achieve the right state of mind most easily on still, sunshiny days, when the air is balmy and vibrant with warmth. It is on such days that the birds and the wild things seem most in accord with Nature, and we, doubtless, inherit a primitive state of mind that enables us easily to be in accord with Nature at such times. Yet there seem to be occasions when even the birds can rise superior to weather conditions. Who that has slept in the spare bedroom of country houses has failed to admire the pillow-shams with a couple of sparrows embroidered in a snowstorm, and chirping the lines,

"It's sunshiny weather
When we are together!"

That even men can rise superior to blustery conditions is attested by the old Fourth Reader, where the sailor is represented as rejoicing in

"A wet sheet and a flowing sea,
And a wind that follows fast."

But there is no end to the quotations that might be advanced to show that either a fine day or a bad day is simply a state of mind.

And now to come back to the weather we had during Christmas week. The first day that impressed itself on me was quiet and sunshiny, with just enough snow sifted over the fields to bring out the greyness and brownness of things in Nature. There was a haze along the woods such as we see during Indian summer, and the still air was hovering at the verge of frost. Moreover, the air was so exhilarating that I am afraid to describe it for fear some serious-minded person should jump up and shout, "Abolish the air!" It even sounded good to hear the pestiferous sparrows chirping around the buildings, and apparently congratulating one another that the boy who is usually after them with a rifle was skating on the Government drain instead of making life a burden to them. Crows were cawing in every direction, but I was glad to notice that the bluejays were silent, for they seemed to be confirmed weather prophets, and whenever they go squawking through the woods or orchard we may look for a storm within a few hours. The day was entirely beautiful, all the way up to the sun and back, and when the cattle were turned out to water they romped around clumsily, and then stood in the sunshine to chew the cud. Everyone I met that day shouted, "A fine day!" and I was glad to notice that the state of mind I was enjoying seemed to be so universal. The next day was cloudy, with occasional little whiffs of snow driving through the air, but in its own way it was just as enjoyable as any other, though many people greeted me with the exclamation, "Looks like storm?" Nevertheless it was a fine day, and no matter what the weather may be like when this article is being read I hope you will all be in the state of mind to say, "A fine day!"

Frost and Snow

Winter has come, and I am glad of it. The frost has hardened the ground so that a man who "interferes" can go about without getting muddy up to his knees. I notice that bow-legged men have little trouble in this way. For months past the mud has been so bad that one couldn't even go into the cow-stable without cleaning his feet, and I have rubbed the grass off a considerable part of the lawn by constantly wiping my boots when coming to the house. But now the ground is as hard as a city pavement and we can at least be clean when going about our work. And the little "skiff" of snow is even more welcome than the frost, for it has covered the work that I have not been able to finish, and has made the place look fair and white. The apples under the trees no longer reproach me when I pass the orchard. I fully intended picking all the culls for chicken feed and to give the cows an occasional treat during the winter, but it is too late now, and "what is past cure is past care." The closing in of winter finished my farm work in a few hours, and, though it means a loss, I confess to a feeling of relief. Once more I shall be able to read and answer letters and go to places and enjoy life generally. As I feel to-day, I do not care how long the winter lasts, for while it lasts there will be no work to do except chores and keeping the fires lit. Rah for winter!

You may remember that Kipling's mongoose when fighting with a cobra kept himself so nicely balanced that he could start off in any direction at a moment's notice. That is the way I perch on the milking-stool. Whenever the cow makes the slightest move I can start back or sideways instantly. And this delicate skill is necessary. Even with her legs tied she can raise a disturbance. When she is at her worst I put in practice a little lesson I learned from the driver. She hates to have her harness put on, but as she knows she must not bite me she bites the manger or the side of the stall. Now I know it would never do to kick the cow or be cross with her, so, like Huck Finn's father, I "cuss the gov'ment" and kick the milking-stool. The cow is gradually quieting down, and before the winter is over she will probably bawl for me to come and milk her. But, though she is a nuisance just now, I sympathize with the man who has her calf. He has to teach it to drink from a pail, and, after a calf has run with its mother for a while, that is just about the meanest job a man can tackle. Even quiet, settled farmers have been heard yelling at a distance of two miles when trying to teach a calf of this kind to take skim-milk without bunting over the pail.

Mitts

I suppose different people have different ways of recognizing the approach of winter, and an interesting article might be compiled on the subject. Putting in the young cattle is a sure and somewhat exciting sign, but, come to think it over, what convinces me finally of the advent of winter is the necessity of wearing mitts. Mitts are a detachable part of our raiment, and as soon as I have to begin wearing them my troubles commence. I think, if anyone were to take the trouble to hunt, mitts in various stages of decomposition could be picked up all over the farm, and on the roads leading from it to the villages. Mitts are absolutely necessary in cold weather, but something is always turning up to make one pull them off for a minute and then he goes away and forgets them. When the snow came last week I went to a box containing all kinds of odds and ends and made an earnest search for mitts. The best I could discover was two mitts of different pairs, both for the left hand. They proved such a nuisance that I have made up my mind to lose complete pairs this winter instead of odd mitts. When you lose an odd mitt it is of no use to the finder, and the one you are carrying around with you is of no real use to you. I daresay I should have my mitts fastened together with a string that would go around my neck, the same as the children have them, but I hardly think that would look right for a grown man. The next best solution I have found is to buy half a dozen pairs of the cheapest kind of canvas mitts, and have them scattered promiscuously around the place. By having them in the pockets of my overalls and coats, and in the cow stable, and under the kitchen stove, I stand a chance of being able to lay my hands on a pair sometimes when I need them. But there are some jobs that can't be done while wearing mitts, such as cleaning the seeds out of pumpkins. In my hurry I usually drop the mitts on the ground, and then a cow comes along and steps on them, and buries them for the rest of the winter. Almost every fall I start off by buying a fancy pair of mitts with water-proof fronts but I never know who is wearing them by spring.

It is years since I have seen a pair of the real, old-fashioned home-knitted mitts of my boyhood days. These mitts were usually about half an inch thick, and when they once got soaked they seldom dried out during the winter. We used to face them with leather, and that made them hold the water longer. I have a very distinct recollection of the misery of pulling on wet mitts when going to work, and I am inclined to think that my present method of having many pairs of cheap cloth mitts is an improvement. They do not cost much to buy, and I understand that many careful housewives now make a winter supply from any old cloth that may be about the place. They cut them to a pattern, and stitch them up on the sewing machine. If I were working out doors all the time I would just about keep one woman busy making mitts for me to use and lose.

Scared by a Rabbit

It is hardly a matter to boast about, but for a few seconds I was scared stiff by a rabbit. As the corn is all husked and in the corn-crib, and the stalks hauled in, the cattle have been allowed to range about the farm and pick up whatever appeals to their taste. One day last week they wandered into the new orchard and showed signs of staying there all night. Shortly after sunset I went to the orchard to round them up and as I was driving them over a piece of long grass I suddenly saw a streak coming straight toward me at no ordinary rate of speed. From its appearance in the dusk it might be a wildcat or almost anything. There are house cats roaming the fields in the locality that are almost as wild as those that were in the woods in pioneer days. Last summer one that was followed by a couple of kittens defied my approach with fearless savagery. So when I saw something rushing straight at me I thought of a cat at once. Only a creature that meant to do me grievous bodily harm would rush at me so recklessly. I stood still and prepared to meet the attack with my bare hands. But when the approaching menace was within a couple of yards of me I recognized it as a rabbit. At the same instant the rabbit saw me and managed to change his course so as to avoid a collision. It was with very real satisfaction that I watched his dab of cotton disappearing in the distance, for I was all set to receive a whirling bunch of claws. The rabbit had evidently been frightened by the cows and had not seen me. Although the incident was trivial and lasted for only a few seconds, I humbly remember the fact that for once in my life I was thoroughly startled and scared by a rabbit.

The Storm

A storm is a test of a man's physical, mental and financial condition. If he is full-blooded, with a cheerful outlook and sure of his due share of the good things of life, he will find the storm exhilarating. His spirits will rise with the rising of the wind and he will exult with the elements. Such a storm as we had on Sunday morning will call to him like a trumpet. What a storm it was while it lasted!

> "Roared the wind in the tree-tops; rose the white-cowled snow wraiths,
> Whirling headlong, writhing snakelike, leaping upon us,
> Hissing their scorn of the weakling, rousing the strength of the strong."

We have not had such a combination of wind and snow since the great storm of February, four years ago. Fortunately, the severe frost of that historic storm was lacking. But it looked for a while as if records would be broken. Then the snow stopped falling and blowing and the wind died down. While the storm lasted the drifting snow sought out every chink in the buildings and there were drifts in all sorts of unexpected places. And for once a haughty and belligerent cow got just what was coming to her. Fenceviewer II. had put a horn through the window beside her stall a couple of days ago and, as the storm was on that side of the building, she got completely plastered with the clinging snow. Of course, she didn't know she was doing wrong when she broke the window and didn't know that the chill she got was the result of that indiscretion, but still there was some satisfaction in seeing her get it. It is not often that the punishment fits the crime as nearly as it did in her case.

The man who hit on the idea of using mica in coal stoves should have a fitting memorial raised to his memory. Half the comfort of having a good fire comes from seeing the light. An open wood fire is probably the most cheery fire of all, but changing conditions made necessary the adoption of new kinds of heaters. The old-fashioned box stove that succeeded the open fireplace gave plenty of heat, but it lacked charm. The modern sheet-iron stove is no better. But a coal stove in which the glowing coals can be seen through windows of mica radiates cheer as well as warmth. As we put up our coal stove just before the coming of the big storm we had a chance to enjoy it thoroughly. The sheet-iron heater that had been used all fall had its merits, but it was dull and dark. But when the wind was roaring outside and the drifting snow beating against the windows, that newly-lighted coal stove gave a sense of cosiness and well-being that not only made life tolerable, but made it positively enjoyable. Its light and warmth gave serene defiance to the elements. It wouldn't have been half so good had not some mechanical genius hit on the scheme of building a stove well windowed with mica plates. It is not likely that anyone knows who first hit on this plan, for mica in stoves has been in use a long time, but whoever he was he deserves better of humanity than many men whose fame is assured.

Cats and Comedy

"Why does the cat want to come into the house, when the first thing he does after getting in is to sit in a window and look out?"

That is the question I had propounded to me a few days ago. Of course, I couldn't answer it. But I could ask a whole lot of other questions of the same kind. For instance:

"If poets and artists are as fond of Nature as they claim to be, why do they all crowd to the cities to live?"

"If everyone knows that a simple life is more enjoyable and less subject to cares, why do we all struggle for wealth and a complex life?"

One could multiply such questions indefinitely, for contradictions of this kind appear everywhere. But to return to the cat. I have strong reason to suspect that he has a sense of humour. A couple of days ago he was engaged in his favourite occupation of sitting in the kitchen window and looking out, when the kitten jumped up on the window-sill on the outside. They sat quietly for a few minutes with the pane of glass between them. Then the kitten yawned openly and insultingly in the face of the pampered aristocrat inside. The house cat wakened up and switched his tail as if annoyed. Instantly the kitten made a jump as if to catch the switching tail. Then for ten minutes there was a lively game in which the old cat switched his tail along the glass and the kitten clawed around and tried to catch it. Once the kitten was so eager that he tumbled backward off the window-sill. The old cat stopped switching his tail and looked bored. But as soon as the kitten jumped back the tail-switching started over again. The old cat seemed to appreciate thoroughly the joke he was having with the kitten while teasing him through the pane of glass.

Now for another question. Why is it that a little byplay like this between a cat and a kitten can cause more hearty and wholesome laughter in a normal family than they could get at a comedy or a picture show? I feel safe in saying that the free and unrestrained laughter of the world is seldom provoked by the masters of comic genius. Personally I find a deep amusement in many humourous books and plays, but it is not often that they rouse me to anything like the tribute of laughter that I yield to little happenings of everyday life. And the worst of it is that the really humourous things of everyday life can seldom be put across in writing so that they will provoke a smile in others. For instance, the most rib-cramping laugh I have enjoyed in a year was due to an interruption at the dinner table. Someone was telling of a paragraph in The Youth's Companion about a man who was without any sense of feeling. He could not feel either cuts or burns and didn't even know when he was tired until he fell down from exhaustion. A boy who was intensely occupied with his dinner crowded down a mouthful and exclaimed in accents of horror:

"Didn't know when he was tired!"

His eyes were popping out with the sense of tragedy that overwhelmed him and all of youth's spontaneous aversion to work was expressed in his tones. Everyone caught the point at once and the dinner was cold before order was restored. But where is the literary, pictorial or histrionic artist who could put across that little incident with all the comedy of its first occurrence? It simply cannot be done.

Real jokes and smiles are no laughing matter—even though the statement may seem an absurd paradox. A spontaneous, happy smile is a sign that for the moment the person wearing it is wholly carefree and in accord with life. A joke that can call forth such a smile is a notable addition to the wealth of the race. It gives to those who appreciate it moments in which they are free and equal. Nothing puts a group of men on terms of equality so quickly as a hearty laugh in which they all join. Have you ever noticed a crowd going to business on a windy morning? Their faces will all be grave and careworn and you can see every distinction of society from the highest to the lowest. Suddenly a fat man's hat blows off and he starts to chase it down the street. Instantly everyone begins to laugh. Instantly they are all on terms of happy equality. The judge on his way to the courtroom laughs with the newsboy on the corner. The merchant prince laughs with the street sweeper. Everyone is joyous except the fat man who is chasing his hat. It is seldom that he has his sense of humour sufficiently developed to enable him to join in the general hilarity. He is more likely to growl with John L. Sullivan: "Nobody loves a fat man." It is hard for him to see that he is a public benefactor inasmuch as he has enabled all his fellow citizens who were in sight at the time of his mishap to begin their day's work thoroughly refreshed by a hearty laugh. And wouldn't it be altogether too much to expect him to go through that kind of a performance every Saturday morning?

We depend altogether too much on others for our enjoyment. The poets and philosophers have been pounding in this truth since the beginning of time but few of us manage to get a decent grip of it. This world would be an entirely different place and we would be different beings if we could once grasp the whole significance of Whitman's magnificent statement of the essential equality of all men:

> "Whoever you are! You are he or she for whom the earth is solid and liquid,
> You are he or she for whom the sun and moon hang in the sky,
> For none more than you are the present and the past,
> For none more than you is immortality."

If you once get hold of that idea you will not be troubled much by the seeming inequalities of life. You will find your own day's work as full of fun, poetry and philosophy as that of any other man and you will not need the antics of a fat man to put you in good humour every Saturday morning.

Bumped

Yesterday it was my intention to write an article of great pith and moment. I looked up profound references in the encyclopaedias and other deep works with which the house is cluttered. But fate intervened. Just before sitting down to the typewriter I went out to the stable to attend to some chores. Suddenly the most blinding snowstorm of the winter swooped down on us. I stepped to a window to look at the smother of snow, and instantly things began to happen. My first impression was that a bomb had dropped on me. I saw more stars than are shown in the orrery, and there was a close-up of a big star, which looked like Betelgeuse, which, I understand, is five thousand times the size of our sun. When the astronomical exhibition drifted away and I gathered my scattered wits I realized what had happened. The stable windows have the top half provided with hinges, so that they can be let down when the building is being ventilated. When closed they are kept in place by nails. The nails in this particular window had worked loose, and when a gust of wind struck it the top half came down with a crash on the most sensitive skull in Middlesex county. Now will some pundit deeply read in judicial astrology explain what nexus of fate entangled me with that particular window, storm, and moment of time so that I arrived punctually to get the full impact of the blow? I had never known the window to blow open before. If it had blown open a minute earlier I would have escaped. If it had blown open a minute later I would have passed on in safety; but fate brought me to the right spot at the right fraction of a second to vent its spite. My first thought was that my new cowhide shoes would be ruined by being driven through the cement floor. The next thing I realized was that the children were trying to sympathize and laugh at the same time. The combination did not work well. I didn't say a word. I went away from there. And will some learned person explain what primal instinct makes people want to laugh when an accident of this kind occurs? In the meantime I have postponed writing the article I had in mind. Not only were my ideas scattered by the blow, but ever since I have had a temper that would need to be well lubricated with Electric Oil or some sovereign embrocation before appearing in public.

The New War

Who knows but the cure for war is more war? It is seldom that anything has appealed to my imagination like Dr. L. O. Howard's speech before the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Here is a scientist of the highest rank who solemnly warns the world that a war of extermination is already on between the human race and the insects. If the human race is to survive we must declare implacable war against myriads of creatures, many of which are better fitted for life on this planet than we are. The one advantage we have over the insects is our ability to combat their instincts with reasoned knowledge. But in spite of the fact that insects and minute organisms are destroying more life and property than man has ever destroyed in his wars we are largely indifferent to what is going on. If a rival nation assassinated as many of our citizens as are being killed by microbes every year we would double our national debt by going to war to protect our lives and our honour. If a rival nation destroyed as much of our property as is being destroyed every year by corn-borers, coddling worms, potato bugs, and similar insects, we would ravage them with war and try to dictate peace from their Capital. But because the challenge to our existence is being offered by insect pests and microscopic blights we refuse to be excited. Yet the danger that is threatening us is greater than that of hostile armies. And all nations are being threatened—in fact, the race itself is being threatened. Here is a world war that is all that a world war should be. Men of all classes, nationalities and races must unite to face the menace. What we need is someone like Lloyd George to launch a declaration of war in terms that will arrest the attention of all the world.

Seeing that statesmen and diplomatists are finding it hard to unite the nations for peace, why should not our scientists unite them for war? Self-preservation is more important than self-determination. Let war be declared in every Capital and in every seat of learning against the insect forces that are threatening all the world. Then let us have treaties between all nations for united effort in this last war for the preservation of the race. While we were killing one another in the great war, the influenza germ attacked all nations and killed more people than were killed in battle. Typhus and other deadly disease germs also took advantage of our insanity to destroy their thousands and millions. Insect pests checked our food production at a time when food was most sorely needed. This should convince us that our new enemy, though guided only by instinct, and fighting blindly, is still able to take advantage of our folly. Surely, if we are to continue to make any further claim to intelligence, we will stop trying to destroy one another and unite to fight the forces that are destroying us. In building our civilization we have upset the balance of nature and released against ourselves forces of which we have no adequate knowledge. We have no organized intelligence department to uncover the strategy and power of our enemies. We are fighting more blindly than they are. With their infinite power of reproduction and multiplication, they defy our undirected efforts to exterminate or check them. If any military leader made an announcement as important as that contained in Dr. Howard's address, we would rush to arms overnight and start all our munition factories under full steam. But we are as blind as Pharoah was in the face of the plagues of Egypt.

When we finally waken up and declare war we will do much to restore science to its proper place in the world. The fact that the great war owed most of its horrors to the skill of the scientists made their usefulness to the world very questionable. But if they will now turn their abilities to directing the war against our real enemies they will quickly restore themselves to their proper position. If they show anything like the skill they showed in developing poison gases, and means of exterminating human beings, in devising means for overcoming disease and fighting pests, they will win greater honours than they have won in the past. But before anything worth while can be accomplished we will need a propaganda that will rouse all men to the danger. We must have the whole story told to us in terms of human lives and—alas, that this should be necessary—in terms of dollars and cents. If people could be made to realize the amount of suffering and death that could be avoided, and the amount of wasted effort that could be conserved, they might take action. There is much scattered information along these lines floating about in the form of newspaper paragraphs, but they are read merely as items of interest. Perhaps if they were assembled, so that we could consider them all at once, our stupid indifference might be overcome. But even such a disaster as the influenza epidemic caused only a ripple of public interest. There were cases within my own knowledge where the epidemic was raging and causing frequent deaths, and yet no quarantine was declared for fear it might hurt business. This inclines me to the cynical conclusion that war will

not be declared against our new enemies until their inroads threaten to destroy our profits. When that happens we will make an awful roar, and probably kick out the Government because the matter wasn't attended to long ago.

The first people who should waken up to the need of declaring this new war are the farmers. There is not a product of the farms from which pests do not take a disastrous toll every year. There is not a plant, fruit, beast or fowl that is not subject to diseases and inroads by insects. The annual losses on the farms alone would justify lavish expenditures to combat the evil. Already something has been done to stamp out diseases among men and beasts, but nothing like what should be done. And the evidence is overwhelming that it pays to make the fight. The man who fights off the pests from one product gets returns that show in his bank account. And now that the existence of the race is threatened we should undertake the new war as grimly as if it were a war between nations. Best of all, if we could be made to realize our danger, we would have something else to think about than national honour, national aggrandizement and national glory. Civilization would be saved if we could once get the minds of men turned from their selfishness and aroused to the need of self-preservation. But I am afraid that a bug-fight cannot be given the pride, pomp and circumstance of human war. We could not march to it with flags flying and bands playing. And I am afraid that there would be no chance for the frenzied profiteering that is so stimulating to patriotism. I am afraid that the outlook is dark and that the bugs will win.

Sleigh-Bells

Who originated the use of sleigh-bells? Works of reference tell us that they are used to warn people of the approach of sleighs, but that seems rather absurd. Nothing so musical would be used for that purpose, unless the custom originated away back in the golden age, when all life was full of harmonies. In our rushing, raucous time sleigh-bells as a means of warning are of no use. When we really must have something of the kind we invent nerve-racking automobile horns, and the nearer their sound is to the wail of a lost soul on its way home the better it serves its purpose. To people accustomed to automobile horns as a means of warning, the musical tintinabulation of the sleigh-bell as a herald of approaching danger is valueless. No one can possibly associate "grievous bodily harm" with a sound so alluring. I know that once there were laws on the statute books, and they were rigidly enforced, which made it a misdemeanour, punishable by a fine, for anyone to drive a sleigh or cutter on the streets without having bells on the horses, but it is long since I have heard of anyone being arrested, although I have often met people driving sleighs without bells. At the present time sleigh bells are used because they add to the charm of sleighing. Their music seems to go with the rapid slipping and sliding in the frosty air. They express the joyous emotions of the driver and of the sleighing party. A sleigh ride without the accompaniment of bells would be tame and insipid. Even if there were no laws ordering their use we would still use them after having experienced the pleasure they give. And they are as much a part of Christmas music as carols and chimes.

Animal Stuff

There is no doubt of it. A whip, or a handy switch, is "a biological necessity" when one is dealing with farm animals in cold weather. Their cunning little ways get altogether too exasperating when one is in a hurry. Although the watering-trough is twelve feet long not more than one creature could drink out of it at a time if I did not drive the bosses away and make them wait while the other cattle got their supply of water. One big brute of a horse gets positively dangerous when she reaches the trough if another horse or one of the cows dares to come near. She lays back her ears and rushes at them, thereby causing stampedes in which the attendant human being is in danger of being trampled. But the wood-lot, where the daily rite of watering takes place, abounds in long, pliant beech switches, and that haughty horse now drinks in solitary state after the others are done. And there is no need trying to teach modern efficiency methods to the cattle. In going to the watering pond they worked out about the crookedest path that could be made between two points. There were at least two Hogarth curves in it, and at times it seemed doubtful where they were going. But they followed this path without deviating a step. One night last week we got quite a snowfall. It wiped out the corkscrew path, and, with my well-known passion for scientific efficiency, I decided to put through a reform. Leading the driver, I struck out a straight path from the barnyard gate to the pond. But I couldn't make a horse or cow follow it. Although the path I made was new and inviting, and the old path was wiped out, they insisted on rambling over the field in the original way. That path seemed to be marked out in their rudimentary brains and they followed it even after the snow had covered it. And I was in a hurry at the time. Do you wonder that I use a switch?

About the most interesting thing on the farm just now is a litter of little pigs. There are thirteen of them—a noble thirteen—and I am hoping that they will grow up to take the curse off that unlucky number. They are now two weeks old and as plump as sausages. We had to do a lot of fussing with them during the zero weather, but they were worth it. My interest in them seems to be exceeded by that of the young cat with a high political name. He sits on a post for hours at a time and watches them. He seems to be interested in hogs just now. And they are worth watching, for their actions are quite symbolical. Although they fight at meal times they huddle together in the most amiable fashion when they are touched by a cold, investigating wintry blast. If that cat intends doing anything with them he had better hurry up, for they are growing rapidly and will soon be too big to handle.

Donald Ban Talks

The other day I had a call from Donald Ban, the pioneer. His son John was going to the village, and he let the old man out at the lane for a little visit. When we had made him welcome and he had taken off his overcoat and scarf and fur cap and overshoes, he put his feet in the oven of the kitchen stove and soon was comfortable. After all the family news had been passed, he stroked his long white beard and looked at me in a way that made me know at once that I was in for a lecture.

"I have been reading some of the things that you have been writing for the newspaper," he began, "and I wanted to have a talk with you."

"What have I been doing wrong now?" I asked, with mock alarm that still had a touch of real alarm in it.

"O, nothing so very wrong, but I am afraid that you may be giving some people wrong ideas about pioneer times. Do you know, when the sleighing was good last week, I just wished that I could get a yoke of oxen and a pung and take you out for a joy-ride, so that you could know a little more about the way folks got around in pioneer days. There are times when I think that a yoke of oxen would be 'about your speed,' as I hear the grandchildren say."

"All right, Donald," I replied. "Any time you want to take me out for a ride behind a yoke of oxen I'll be ready to go, but I'll bet that before we travel half a mile your imagination would be taking me on trips around the world, and back in the past and forward in the future that would go faster than the lightning and would make us forget to use the ox-gad to keep our oxen from straying into the fence-corners to hunt for grass."

"Maybe you are right," said the old man with a chuckle, "Maybe you are right." Then he went on:

"You mustn't give people the idea that all the pioneers were angels, for they were not. Most of them were good at helping one another, and they couldn't have lived if they hadn't been, but there were pioneers that took advantage of those that were in hardship. Do you know, there is one thing that you do not give the banks credit for. For a while at least they drove out the old neighbourhood usurers who broke so many men in the early days. I can remember men who charged as high as twenty-five per cent. for money when times were hard and compounded the interest if it was not paid on the day. One year I paid eighteen per cent. for some money I needed and in the fall I had to sell my steers for half-price to the son-in-law of the scoundrel that I borrowed the money from so that I could pay him off. There were plenty of men like that and they got a lot of money about them, though little of it lasted in the hands of their children. If you tried to get a rating on them now you would find that little is left of them or their money but a bad name. But for the credit of humanity it was well that there were other men in those days who loaned whatever money they had to their neighbours and asked for neither interest nor security. They left a good name to their children that is more precious than riches, for their children and grandchildren still have the good-will of the neighbourhood. I am sorry to hear that usurers are beginning to do business in the country again and to take advantage of the hardships of their neighbours, for, next to the white slavers, they are the lowest vermin that the love of money has spawned."

After this outburst Donald Ban stopped to cool down for a while. When he started again it was on a different tack.

"What I was afraid about was that people might think from what you were writing that to get homes and make the home the foundation of things as it was in pioneer days they would have to go back to pioneer ways of living. But you must know better than that. Having a home is just a way of looking at things. We must have money, and must earn it. Where the home is the great thing in a man's mind, the money is what helps to make the home and the more money he has, within reason, the better home he can have. You know that the Roman Emperor, Marcus Aurelius, said that even in a palace a man can live well. And he didn't say it as a joke, either, though it sounds like one. He knew from experience that the temptations and trials of a palace are perhaps the greatest of all, but he knew that they could be overcome. If a man wants to live well and have a home he must put living and home-making first in his thoughts. The man who puts money first neither lives well nor can have a home. He sacrifices everything to the getting of money, and loses everything that money was meant to get for him. I often think that it was because the pioneer homes had so little of what money can buy that so many of the children of the pioneers went mad on money-making. I know five men who went from pioneer homes and became millionaires, but they didn't make their millions by saving money. The poverty of their youth made them envious and greedy, and they would stop at nothing to make money. That spirit got into too many people, and the world will not be right until it gets out of them. The man who wants to get the most out of life cannot do better than remember the prayer of Agur, the son of Jakeh, who prayed for 'neither poverty nor riches.' Those of the pioneers who got neither poverty nor riches did the best for themselves and their children. They were the home-builders, and if people set their hearts on

homes instead of on dollars they could build homes to-day. That was the lesson of the pioneers. And it is a lesson that the New World must learn over again unless it is to go the way of the old world."

Disillusioned

I am grievously disappointed in our Plymouth Rock rooster. He has shattered one of my most cherished beliefs. And I cannot make up my mind whether it is because he is affected by a tendency of our times or because bred-to-lay poultry have had some of the fine instincts of the old dung-hill fowls bred out of them. Anyway, he is a noble-looking bird of the most approved strain, though he has one off-colour feather in his tail. To the casual observer he seems to live up to the high traditions of courtesy that should prevail in the poultry yard. He crows with moderation on all suitable occasions and leads his dames about the barnyard with a certain knightly grace. But it is all a veneer or hypocritical pretense. This morning I happened to be standing at the stable door when this fine, upstanding rooster discovered a grain of corn.

"Chuck! Chuck! Chuck-a-rah-rah-rah! Chuck! Chuck!" he called cheerily as he picked up the grain of corn and dropped it again on the doorsill. He was calling his dames to the feast in the most approved manner of polite and unselfish roosters. Plump Plymouth Rock hens began to waddle toward him eagerly as he repeated his call—in the meantime picking up the grain of corn and dropping it temptingly. I was just ready to congratulate a motherly hen that led the race to the dining table, but I was premature. Just as she was stooping over to pick up the grain of corn the rooster made a quick peck and swallowed it himself. Then he made a few remarks in throaty tones that might probably be interpreted in this fashion:

"There! I have shown you that it is possible to find grains of corn, and now you can hustle around and find some for yourselves."

I was very much shocked and disappointed at his selfishness. I had always understood that the king of the flock called his ladies to the feast and then stood back until they were satisfied. Although I never observed closely as a boy, I always thought that that was what they did. But the change in sex relations is probably having a bad effect on chivalry in the poultry yard as well as elsewhere.

Educationists assure us that it is the finest thing in the world to be interested in everything. That is the way to learn about all sorts of interesting things. Out here in the country being interested works out all right. If I hear an unfamiliar bird note in the orchard I can take a healthful walk and enjoy a session of nature study. If the sunshine attracts my attention I can hunt up a sheltered spot and enjoy its genial warmth. A rabbit track that seems to be headed toward the orchard will prompt a walk to see how the young trees are coming on, and may lead to the discovery of a lot of interesting things. In the country a man may safely allow himself to be interested, but in the city it is different. The matter of interesting people has been reduced to a science. If one's attention is attracted by an attractive splotch of colour on a billboard he will soon find himself convinced that he should go to some lecture, concert or movie show. Something interesting in a show window will cause him to pause, and before he realizes what has happened he will find that he is almost persuaded to buy something that he really does not need and perhaps cannot afford. But if he has cultivated the habit of being interested it is hard for him to escape. A man would need to be a millionaire to be interested in the city.

Progress

While working among the cattle to-day I was struck by the fact that man is woefully lacking in ideas. All the solid part of our progress from barbarism is based on the single idea of taming Nature to our use. We have domesticated the horse, the cow, the hen, and so forth, and by careful thought and attention have brought these to a high state of efficiency. But when we wanted to make a farther advance what did we do? We stupidly applied the same idea to ourselves. We organized corporations to which we bear the same relations that our domestic animals do to us. I feed the Red Cow freely, so that she may give me milk rich in butter-fat, and when I work for a corporation I am well-paid, so that I may give work of high efficiency. But am I a gainer by working for the corporation? Only in the same sense that the cow is a gainer in being owned by me. If I allow myself to be owned by a corporation I may have

> "A wider trough and a more splendid style,"

just like a lot of other fellows who work for them. But in order to enjoy this privilege I must give up my personal freedom and my leisure for recreation and thought. I must become a slave of the corporation just as truly as the cow is mine. And if I am not efficient they will turn me adrift just as I would turn over any cow, except the red one, to the butcher if she failed to give milk rich in butter-fat.

It is true that a corporation would not tan my hide for leather and turn my bones into buttons—but you must remember that corporations are young yet. There is no knowing what they may do when they get their growth. It strikes me that we have got hold of this business of organization at the wrong end. Instead of using it to do the work of the world in a way that will give us more individual freedom—as we did when we domesticated the animals—we are using it to enslave ourselves just as we have enslaved the cattle. And instead of producing supermen we have produced parasites who have the leisure to ramp around in motor cars and have ornamental luncheons in places where the temperance act is not working. If we could use our faculty for organization to give a fairer distribution of the opportunities of life, corporations would perhaps be as useful to us as our cattle, but at the present time the majority of our organizations are madly engaged in money-making, without a thought for either decency or human progress. And what is the result? We plunge into the mad strife, work like fiends,

> "And lo!—the Phantom Caravan has reacht
> The Nothing it set out from—Oh make haste!"

Tender Shins

It is not yet decided whether Socrates, the wise ram, is a menace or a bluff. So far, in spite of all his threatenings, he has not managed to land on anyone. The boys contend that he simply wants to play. They say that if you pay no attention to him he will not bunt. That may be, but I do not propose to expose myself unduly. I notice that he never makes a frontal attack, but always tries to approach from behind. If I hold out my hands to ward him off he will bunt against my palms, but if I hold up my foot he will not take chances on getting a heel in his eye. The only place where he really bothers me is at the gate to the barnyard. As sometimes happens in even the best regulated barnyards, this gate does not work well in the winter time. It is easier to climb over it than to open it. And it does not add to my peace of mind to see Socrates squaring off for a bunt when I go to climb the gate. He would, no doubt, help me over, but I prefer to go over under my own steam. Up to the present I have been unable to try the broomhandle cure that one correspondent recommended, because I haven't been able to find a broomhandle on the place. But a neighbour told me a trick that works just as well and throws a light on the character of Socrates. I was told to take a switch and switch him across the shins when he tries to bunt. It is useless to hit him on the head, for it is hard, and prepared for just that sort of treatment. His woolly coat protects his body, but his legs are bare. One day when he was bothersome I used a switch as directed. Old Soc. shook his head and shied off. The game was not to his liking at all. After I had met three or four of his attacks in this way he shied off and left me alone. Since then, if I pick up a cornstalk and make a pass at his shins he will run away. He had learned a lesson. Evidently he thinks that he should be allowed to bunt and hurt other people without running any danger of being hurt himself. I wonder if Lowell had something like this in mind when he wrote:

> "You mustn't be hard on particular sins,
> For then you'll be kicking the people's own shins."

Youth

A week of sunshine, even of winter sunshine, is enough to give one a new interest in life. The sunshine has flooded earth and sky and poured through windows and filled all dark corners and made the world seem habitable again. And there has been a warmth in sheltered spots that reminds one that spring is not so very far away and that before long we shall be overwhelmed with growth and youth. When spring comes the world will be reborn and eternal youth will be supreme. But will it? The youth of bird and beast and flower will be supreme, but I am afraid that the youth of mankind may still be curbed and repressed and snubbed as it has been for some years past. With all due respect to years and to hoary heads, we have had too much of the control of age in human affairs. The savour of antiquity is over everything. We have had an old man's war, and now we are fumbling with palsied hands to make an old man's peace. All our efforts lack the initiative and generous impulse of youth. The interviews and pronouncements on all manner of affairs published in the papers are by statesmen, captains of industry, bankers, college professors and others of matured caution and stupidity. I have been waiting vainly for some illuminating touch of youth. It is always youth that saves the world. One might show that every great advance has happened when youth has been called to the council chamber. The French Revolution released the terrible youth of Napoleon and his young Generals and advisers—all in their twenties. In the American Revolution Alexander Hamilton was a power at nineteen. Pitt was Chancellor of the Exchequer at twenty-three and Prime Minister at twenty-four. History is full of just such instances of the constructive genius of youth. But where has a dominant youth emerged in the past generation save in the ranks of war?

At the present time there is much railing at youth because of frivolity. Let us examine this accusation for a moment. I admit that the young are flocking to the movies—but who placed the temptation in their way? Go down the whole alphabetical list of movie producers from Adolph to Zukor and you will find them men of the older or oldest generation, and all of them are inspired by a love of gain that is as old as original sin. It is quite true that youth is crazy on fashions, but once when prowling around New York I found myself in a place where fashions originate. The designer of patterns was a baldheaded old coot with Darwin tips on his ears. The advertising and sales manager was a side-whiskered pterodactyl with false teeth that didn't fit him, and the President of the company was a paunchy plutocrat so rich that he posed as a thinker and as an authority on everything. He bored me excessively with his views on the functions of delegated authority in democratic government. And it was these men whose fiat made certain kinds of apparel fashionable and led youth astray. In the same way, if you investigate any of the follies of youth you will find a bunch of oldsters who are profiting by their folly. All of them should be treated to a hemlock cocktail.

And now that the sun is shining again, I am hopeful that before long youth will be heard from. Youth is the high explosive that will finally shatter the burdens that press us down. Even though we have done much to educate our youth to a cultured inefficiency or to a docile acquiescence in our smothering social organization, I am hopeful that the young still have enough vigour to break away from our petrified conventions and build a world that is nearer to their needs. They have more right than Tennyson had to rail against the social lies that warp them from the living truth, and against all the things that sin against the strength of youth. Some day they will discover that the things we cling to so fatuously are outworn, and they will dare to be simple and unaffected. Like Thoreau they will enrich themselves by limiting their desires—and in that way sap the foundations of a foolish system that depends for its profits on unregulated desires. Whenever you find a great fortune you will usually find that it draws its revenues from a great foolishness. The world and all that is in it may belong to the old, but the future and the joy of life belong to the young. And now that the future is uncertain, and the joy of life is being crushed, it remains for youth to find its way out of the labyrinth. At all times youth has a disconcerting faculty for seeing through shams and selfishness, and I have faith that it will not fail in this crisis. The sun is shining to-day as it shone on the youth of creation, and I am waiting confidently for youth to assert itself once more and lead the world to better things. And youth must do it if it is to be done at all.

The Prodigal Returns

Yesterday a prodigal cat came home. Last fall he felt so big and strong that he decided to go out into the world and enjoy life. Except for a few brief visits, during which he beat up his successor in the stable, he has been away all winter. But the blizzard of Saturday brought him home. There was nothing penitent about him. His bearing was that of the lost heir who has come home to claim the estate. His tail pointed skyward and his ears were perked at an angle of insolent affability. His whole air seemed to say, "Lead me to the fatted calf!"

I understand that a compromise was effected by letting him have his will with the calf's milk. He drank about half of it. Afterward he was carried to the house for exhibition purposes. After his noble proportions had been admired he took the first chance to jump on the table. This was unusual impudence, for he was never allowed in the house when he lived with us. He was so intent on making himself at home that he had to be turned out of doors. A little while later I noticed him sitting at the foot of a spruce tree exchanging evil-sounding badinage with his successor in the stable—a large white cat called Wangus. Wangus was indulging in repartee from the safe vantage of a high branch. According to the latest bulletin the prodigal met the titled cat at the feeding dish. When they recognized each other they both spat defiantly, and then returned to opposite sides of the stable without fighting. The vigilant Wangus improved the occasion by stepping up to the feeding dish and lapping up the milk. According to a neighbour who called this morning he had followed the tracks of a large purposeful cat for a mile along the road until they turned in at our lane. From this we infer that the prodigal has been wintering about the buildings of a vacant farm a mile away. That district is well supplied with rabbits on which he could prey. Wherever he has been living he has been faring sumptuously, for his form is bulky and his fur lustrous. As the storm has abated he will probably resume his travels as soon as he has appeased his hunger.

Country Thinking

Little by little I am learning how much and how deeply some country people think, and how wonderfully they dream. In the silence and loneliness of the fields they meditate on all things from the duty nearest to hand to "the chief end of man," and dream beautiful dreams of the possibilities of life. They fashion for themselves theories of conduct, both private and public, that are never tried, and give the rein to ambitions that are seldom whispered even to their dearest friends. Of this inner life even the most sympathetic observer seldom gets a glimpse, for, as Carlyle says somewhere, "There is no known art by which a man can lay bare the holy of holies of his own soul." As a class country people are shy and sensitive, and repress all expression of what is best and most original in themselves for fear of being laughed at. For that reason their thinking and day-dreaming may seem futile to utilitarian people, and a grievous waste of time and energy that might be devoted to plans for making more money. I regard it as wholly admirable, and have a theory about it that I shall not hesitate to set forth, because I am shamelessly outspoken in such matters. It is meat and drink to me to perplex and dash the maturest counsels of practical and fat-witted men by laying before them beautiful but impracticable theories just to see them flounder and wriggle. In spite of the reverent belief to the contrary, public life is full of men who have "crawled by flattery into high places," and are allowed to remain in them simply because they are dull and dependable.

Philosophers tell us that every great practical achievement was at first a dream in the mind of some dreamer. That this is true is amply proven by history, and it is equally true that the dreamer seldom profits by his dream. He sets it forth and is laughed at and even persecuted, but when the time is ripe some practical man takes hold of it and puts it into effect. I would not object to this so much if it were not that the practical men so seldom follow the original specifications. They lack the imagination to see things in their entirety. They are often blinded by their own selfishness and desire for graft, and consequently scamp the work. Now I believe, of course without evidence, because evidence is impossible, that even though the rational dreamer may do absolutely nothing, his dream will somehow and somewhere find expression. Although they do not know it, the men who have power to express and act are simply the slaves of the dreamers. They do their work because of a dream that someone else launched into the world of thought. Even our greatest poets may simply be using the thoughts and beautiful dreams that come knocking at their doors for expression. The thoughts and dreams may owe their real origin to some mute inglorious Milton who never tries to "rage on swift iambics." Having this very satisfying belief, I am overjoyed to find that the country is full of dreamers who are shaping in their minds a glorious future of their country, their fellow-men, and the race. They may not live to see it, but their dreams will some day be fulfilled.

The Thaw

Perhaps it was a long slow thaw—a thaw of wind and rain and slush that Shakespeare had in mind when he described someone or something as being as "tedious as a great thaw." He surely couldn't have been thinking of a brisk, balmy, sunshiny thaw such as we had last Tuesday. That thaw was something to write sonnets or soliloquies about. It came as a sort of meteorological depth bomb dropped into the middle of winter. It blew up the wintry pirates and gave us a perfect day after two months of steady frost. And wasn't it just a perfect day? It was a day to make a man come out of his wintry shell and crawl out on the roof of the world to bask in the everlasting sunshine. Perhaps Einstein's theory doesn't recognize the fact that there is a roof on the world, any more than the shattered Newtonian theory did. Never you mind. There is a roof—a roof that is crossed by the pathway of the gods, and such a day as we had could make a man's soul expand until he could loll around on it and soak in sunshine and not care a whoop. While our thaw was not the beginning of spring it indicated spring, and one couldn't help spouting Carman's immortal Spring Song:

> "Make me over in the morning
> From the rag-bag of the world!
> Scraps of dream and duds of daring,
> Home-brought stuff from far sea-faring,
> Faded colours once so flaring,
> Shreds of banners long since furled!
> Hues of ash and glints of glory,
> In the rag-bag of the world."

Alas, and alas! we have devoted most of our energies during the past few years to stuffing that "rag-bag of the world." Let us hope that something can be made over from it, and that before long.

A couple of mornings ago I was startled, on opening the kitchen door, to find Socrates, the wise ram, standing on the doorstep waiting for me. He had taken advantage of an open gate to come to the house. Apparently he wanted me to understand that he was going to be on the job of bossing things all day long. After the first shock of seeing him there I stepped back, opened the door full width and invited him in. But he spurned my invitation. Instead, he shook his huge head threateningly and defied me to come out. But, as mentioned before, I have found the weak spot in his armour. He has a foolish notion that he should be allowed to bunt people around without being hurt himself. But one day I switched his tender shins and taught him a lesson. He learned it so well that now all I have to do is to stoop over and make a pass at his shins with my mittened hand and he will run. He is something like an amateur prize fighter. He is not trained to take punishment as well as give it. I made a pass at his shins with my hand and he cleared out at once. But he came back at me as soon as he saw me standing with my back to him studying the thermometer. A little while later he almost got me when I was dipping a pail of water. He evidently wanted to send me head-first into the well, but the backward lift of a heavily shod foot disconcerted him. Seeing that he couldn't get any satisfaction out of me personally he went back to the doorstep and butted over a spare hod of coal that had been left there the night before. I wonder why he did that. If it had any symbolical meaning it was too deep for me.

Chores

There seems to be no end to farm problems. A fellow can find a new one most any time, no matter what he may be doing. Chores are about the most routine job imaginable, and yet they can present new phases on occasion. For some time past I have been getting out of the chores with considerable success, but there are days when I am forced by circumstances beyond my control to buckle in and do them. To-day was one of my days for doing chores, and though I have been doing them on and off since I was a boy, I went wrong when I decided a little problem that faced me. I found that the slice that was being cut off the straw stack for roughage and bedding was just about used up. It had been cut down to the level of the Speed-hound's bed, and that amiable but impudent mass of pork had started rooting through it with a view to making a fresh bed with clean straw. After that I could not use it for feed, though what she had loosened up would do for bedding. My obvious duty was to climb to the top of the straw stack, shovel off the snow, chop through the frozen straw and then start cutting a new slice with the hay knife. But I didn't know where the shovel was, the axe was at the house, and the ladder had been buried by the last fall of snow where it lay at the end of the barn. And the sides of the stack looked slippery. All the signs were set against my starting to cut the new slice. Besides, I might not start the slice to the satisfaction of the regular master of the chores. It would be much simpler to take a fork and pull what straw I would need out of the side of the stack.

From the jaunty way the Red Cow was wearing a hornful of straw after rubbing herself along the side of the stack I felt sure that it would be an easy job. So taking a three-tined fork I tackled it. But, like the old Captain in "Captains Courageous," I was "mistook in my jedgments." The cows have been spending much of their leisure time while at liberty in rubbing themselves along that stack. Apparently cows have a knack of packing straw by this method that would repay investigation by the inventors of machinery for packing and baling hay and straw. I found myself tackling a solid straw wall from which I couldn't extract more than a fistful at a time. I tried pulling down and pulling up and several times put so much leverage on the fork handle that it began to crack ominously. But having started I was bound to see it through. By tugging, pulling, twisting and digging viciously I finally got the supply of straw I wanted, but I had spent enough energy to have cut the stack in two. As we live we learn.

In doing the chores I found I had one extra chore to do that would almost serve as a theme for a paragraph moralizing on the degeneracy of the younger generation—of animals. The ex-driver, the dowager of the little bunch of horses, although arrived at what should be years of discretion, still has an amount of energy and cussedness that makes her something of a nuisance. Although she is slower in her motions than a political reform when hitched to the buggy or cutter she is the cut-up of the farm when she finds herself loose.

The last time I did the chores she went down to the watering hole in the Government drain as sedately as an old cow, but when she had imbibed several pailfuls of ice water she developed an amazing amount of steam. The water seemed to act on her like a feed of oats—or she wanted to get warm or something. Anyway she started off on the gallop with the colts at her heels. The old misleader of youth led them through snowdrifts which they kicked up until they almost disappeared from sight. She led them through open gates from one field to another and if it hadn't happened that the road gates were closed she would have led them half way across the township. I know, for she has done it before. It took me a good part of the afternoon to get her and the colts rounded up again. What beats me is how she manages at her age to have such reserves of steam. Of course she hasn't much to do, for we had to put her on the retired list as a driver because of the emotions aroused in her by the sight of an automobile. An ordinary little tin Lizzie can make her try to jump out of her skin and stay outside of it. Because she is so frisky at watering time, I was informed when left to do the chores that it would be advisable to lead her to water and back. It was perfectly safe to turn the colts loose, and they would go to water and back without any cutting up. And the moral of this seems to be that the colts of the present generation do not seem to have as much energy in them as their mothers and grandmothers. I wonder why that is. Can it be that my methods of farming have something to do with it?

Below Zero

I hate to think what this dip below zero is doing to people in the cities, but living in the country I confess to a touch of exhilaration. It so happened that on the first day of the cold snap I had to be up and about and walking along the sideroad before daylight. This does not mean that I was up so very early, for daylight does not come until seven o'clock. Snow was falling lazily and the world was wonderfully still. Presently an owl began to whoop in a neighbouring wood-lot and added the last touch of desolation. As the road was covered with light snow that made everything slippery, the walking proved to be vigorous exercise that started the blood circulating and tingling to my finger-tips. There was something to rouse a man's egotism in being superior to the night and the cold and the storm. In the warm seasons we may get into accord with Nature and enjoy the bounties by which we are surrounded, but if we are to survive in the winter we must be superior to Nature. We must be warmly clothed by our own efforts and provided with food, fuel and shelter that are due to our own foresight, as much as to the bounty of Nature. There is no season of the year when a comfortable man has so much right to feel proud of himself as in the winter. I have seen it argued that it was the alternation of heat and cold that developed in man the qualities that made civilization possible. When he makes proper provision for the winter he "gets a good conceit of himself" and proceeds to further achievements. While these reflections were passing through my head the dawn grew brighter in the east. As the sun came up I was surprised to see the light clouds from which the snow was falling. They were little more than a tattered veil, through which the sun shone from time to time in full splendour. In the moments of sunshine the light flashed back from the myriad facets of the newly fallen flakes and the day was bejewelled and resplendent. Even though every breath turned to a white puff in the frosty air I found my morning walk as enjoyable as any I had taken when the morning zephyrs were laden with the perfume of wild flowers.

A Handy Lap-Robe

I never admired the lap-robe that we use in the cutter, but at present I have a tender feeling for it. Last night, after getting home from the village, I was coming to the house with that lap-robe draped gracefully over my arm. It was snowing and all the icy spots were covered. Although I was walking with short and cautious steps, both feet suddenly joined the Independent party and moved a sub-amendment to my procedure. There was a wild whirling of arms and legs, but in the mix-up that intelligent lap-robe disposed itself in a thickly folded pad just on the spot where I landed. I got a jolt, of course, but suffered no contusions, abrasions, or any other form of bodily harm. To those about to fall on the ice I advise the carrying of a good thick woollen lap-robe. Of course, it took skilful work to get it where it was needed, and I cannot tell exactly how it was done. But that is one of the things that we can leave to the watchful sub-conscious mind. I am not at all ashamed about having a tumble, for if I had escaped I should have been in a minority of one. Even the large black-and-white tom-cat who acts as cheer leader when the cats are expressing themselves went over yesterday with all eighteen claws extended. He and Wangus were having one of their usual vocal practices at the kitchen door when I opened the door to drive them away. The amiable Wangus scatted at once, and as he disappeared around the corner of the kitchen the big fellow made a rush after him. At the corner there is a patch of ice that has been given a high polish by the drifting snow. When the cat struck it he rolled over a couple of times, spitting and meowing, but utterly helpless. So when things are so slippery that even a well-clawed cat is not able to keep his footing it is no disgrace to a human being to go over.

Last Friday afternoon we had a couple of hours of sunshine and warm air that made us forget the winter and its storms. It seemed as if spring had taken a little excursion across the snowfields to see how we are wintering and to assure us that she is not so very far away. The little breeze that came from the south purred with happiness and the sunshine spread a glorious smile over the frozen fields. A group of crows in the wood-lot were so noisy that one would be excused for thinking that they were trying to furnish a substitute for the bird-song that should accompany perfect days in the country. Their cawing fitted the occasion so admirably that it almost seemed musical. Although the fields and forests were still frozen, they seemed to be flooded with the almost palpable life that always comes with the first days of spring. To feel the warm sunshine and to breathe the pure air was exhilarating and filled us with courage to endure what may yet come of winter. The spring has not forgotten us and before many weeks have passed she will come back, with all the hosts of life, to overwhelm us with beauty. But it was only a little visit and to-day we are having sleet and east winds. But the memory of spring is with us and we pile wood on the fire and let the tempest rave. There are still apples to eat and nuts to crack, so who cares for surly winter.

A Scientific Query

Can any one tell me why it is that hens always sing when fed on corn on the cob? We had been feeding them oats, bran, and occasionally wheat, and they took to it in a matter-of-fact way, but when a few cobs of corn were thrown out to them they pecked at it and sang as if their hearts were overflowing with joy. Since noticing this peculiarity I have watched them at every feeding, and it is only the corn that arouses them to music. I also had a chance to make a further observation on the ducks. One of them got a small ear in its bill and started away on a swift waddle with the rest of the flock trailing behind. Instead of trying to find a quiet corner where it could enjoy its meal it made straight for the mud-puddle and dropped the ear in the centre of it. The corn immediately sank out of sight and the whole flock of ducks crowded around to get at it. Judging from the noise they made they must have been enjoying themselves hugely, and I am led to do a little speculating of a scientific character. We are told that hens should be fed in straw or chaff so that they will get plenty of exercise with their meals. I wonder if it wouldn't be a good idea to feed the ducks in a convenient mud-puddle so that they can develop themselves properly. I await an authoritative verdict from some one who knows.

Home Talk

Last night a number of things united to induce an unusual mood. I was sitting up alone to keep the fires blazing against the homecoming of youthful holiday-makers who would probably come in chilled from a cutter ride in the worst storm of the winter. Just at the "very witching hour of night"—doubly witching, because the thermometer was slipping down across zero as the clock was reaching midnight—I saw that my supply of wood was running low, and put on coat, cap and mitts to bring in a couple of armfuls. Now it happened that I had just read a reference to Drake's drum and how that fierce hero would come back to the aid of England when his drum was sounded in Devon. I mused on what it might be that would call back to us in our need the souls of the pioneers that were also akin to "The Soul of a North Sea Storm." As I stepped out the stars were twinkling frostily and the wind was roaring through the elms. Instead of being oppressed by the storm, I was elated by it. A wave of exultation swept over me. Then memory gave back a tag from an old recitation:

"There's war within the blast,
Old faces crowd around me,
Old forms go trooping past."

Surely if the spirit of the pioneers were to come back it would be on such a night as this. Their greatest battle was with the Canadian winter, with the legions of the cold. They waged an age-long warfare and were victorious. Where there had been a wilderness they made a land of homes.

In the room where I was sitting there had once been a huge fireplace that roared on such nights as this with blazing back logs and sticks of cordwood. Years ago it had been taken out and replaced by a stove whose appetite for fuel was more in accord with the available supply. But I had heard pioneer stories told around that old fireplace by veritable pioneers, and last night the old scenes came back to me. I remembered the tenor of those stories. They dealt with home-building and the struggles through which men and women passed in getting a foot-hold in the new land. Those who talked were shepherds, sailors, weavers, fishermen, carpenters and workers, who knew nothing of clearing land and farming. They had entered the wilderness without training, without preparation and without means. It is true that they suffered much, but they had the indomitable spirit that prevails over all difficulties. They prevailed because of the hope that sustained them—the hope of establishing homes for themselves and their families. The homes that they established were practically self-sustaining. Almost everything they needed in the way of food, shelter and clothing they produced themselves or secured by barter with their neighbours or with artisans in the villages that sprang up to serve the needs of the new country. It is doubtful if Canada will ever again see so self-reliant and independent a race of men and women. It is true that all who came did not succeed, but enough of them succeeded to establish a land great enough to make its prowess known to the world. And in spite of all that has been accomplished—whether for good or evil—by statesmen, financiers and industrial leaders the true spirit of Canada is the spirit of the pioneers. But how shall we evoke that spirit in an hour of need?

It is true that we have no Drake's drum to call up the souls of the pioneers. But throughout the length and breadth of the land there remain the homes the pioneers established and the farms they cleared. Wherever they laboured is historic ground full of inspiration for Canadians to-day. Few of them acquired wealth for that was only secondary with the most and best of them. But we have travelled far since the time of the pioneers. We had an era of industrial expansion which built up great cities where wealth was amassed until its glitter became a lure to thousands. We have passed through a great war that gave a further stimulus to the acquisition of wealth until it seemed as if nothing except wealth was worth considering. And all this happened in spite of the heroic sacrifices of our armies and of devoted men and women who did not hold that war time was a time for piling up profits. At last people are awaking to the fact that in the scramble for riches they allowed themselves to become dependent on wealth-producing organizations in whose profits they have not shared. Surely they can see by this time that homes as nearly self-supporting as possible are more worth working for than the uncertain rewards of the race for wealth, where only the few can ever win. When home-building was the ideal men kept before them, as did the pioneers, the great majority were able to achieve a reasonable amount of comfort. But while

the race for wealth was progressing merrily, the doors open to the home-builders were closed one by one. The land passed into the hands of a limited population unable to work it properly, and the trades by which individual homes could be supported gave place to factories where the skilled work is done by machinery. Those who would return to the simpler and more independent life find the pathway

"With dreadful faces thronged and fiery arms."

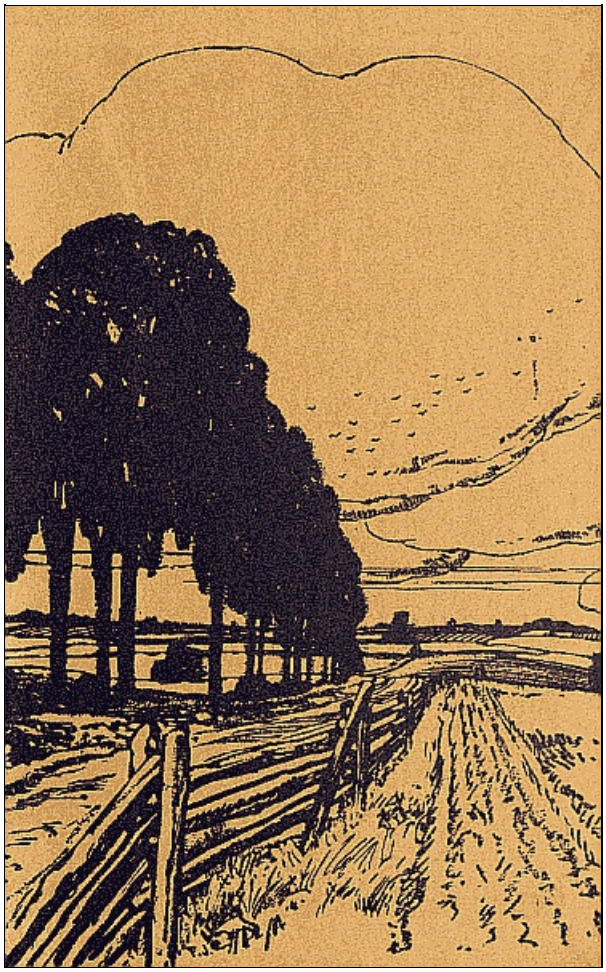
But before any substantial progress can be made we must learn the great ideal of the pioneers, who placed homes before wealth. To redistribute the people so that the struggle for wealth can be renewed with freer scope would profit no one.

Fulfillment

Here in the fields the troubled vision clears,
The goal that I have sought, unsought I win,
The great are but a far-off clamour and the years
The easeful years that they have ever been.

In life's lulled stream is neither pride nor fame,
Your empires are but eddies on its shore,
Nor bird nor beast seeks honour or acclaim,
Nor man who once has learned this silent lore.

And when the harvest fills the earth with glee
No tinselled wizard we behold emerge,
But in the light of flowing life we see
A patient drudge, the master thaumaturge.



Transcribers note

Punctuation errors have been corrected.

The following suspected printer's errors have been addressed.

Page 58. bits changed to bites.
(such monstrous bites that they are)

Page 165. exhilirating changed to exhilarating.
(crisp and exhilarating)

Page 228. it changed to is.
(why that is)

[The end of *Friendly Acres* by Peter McArthur]