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BY

PETER McARTHUR

AUTHOR OF
"THE PRODIGAL AND OTHER POEMS"
"TO BE TAKEN WITH SALT," ETC.

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I DEDICATE THIS BOOK
TO ALL CITY MEN
WHO ARE TALKING
OF GOING BACK TO THE LAND.
IF EACH ONE WHO DOES NOT GO
BUYS A COPY
I SHALL BE ENTIRELY SATISFIED

PREFACE

[Pg vii]

The brief essays in this book were written for the *Toronto Globe* and *Farmer's Advocate*. As they deal with all kinds of farm work at different seasons of the year they have been cast into the form of a journal in order to give the volume some degree of continuity. The man who wishes to learn the human side of farming may find something to interest him, but the man who consults these pages for scientific information does so at his peril.

In order to suggest the scope of the essays and outline the experiences on which they were based I offer the following letter which was published in the *Globe* shortly after the outbreak of the war. After this has been digested thoughtfully the reader may wander through the pages of the book just as he might wander over the farm if he wished to learn something about country life.

EKFRID, *Aug. 20.*—This morning, while thinking about one of the serious problems now pressing for solution, I was moved to take stock of my business as a farmer, and the result surprised me. Feeling that what I found may have some bearing on the solution of the problem I had in mind, I am going to set forth some personal matters, in the hope that they may be helpful to others.

Five years ago I landed on this farm with no assets but a love of nature, a sense of humour, and a deep-rooted conviction that because I had been born and brought up on a farm I could make a living for myself and family from the land. When I took stock to-day I found that I have on hand enough produce to keep man and beast in perfect comfort for at least a year—until another [Pg viii] harvest—and that is not a small matter at a time when our world is in ruins. When you understand my purpose you will absolve me from any suspicion of boasting when I tell you what I have on the farm. I have four milch cows, two heifers, a steer that is fattening for winter beef, and three calves; over twenty tons of hay; stacks of mixed oats and barley that if threshed would probably yield from two to three hundred bushels; a field of corn that will probably yield five hundred bushels; a well-loaded orchard and a plentiful supply of home-preserved fruit; a good patch of potatoes, and a garden with a winter's supply of such staple vegetables as celery, tomatoes, cabbage, beets, carrots, and onions. I also have an interest in a flock of poultry that insures a plentiful supply of fresh eggs at all times, as well as fat hens for the pot, and just now plump broilers are practising crowing all over the place. I also have ducks, turkeys, and guinea-fowl to provide for feast days that may be allowed to come oftener than they ever came in the city. The expenditure of less than $50 would provide us with supplies of flour, sugar, tea, salt, and other necessaries that would enable us to live in comfort for a year, even if we were entirely cut off from the rest of the world.

Just what the farm has meant to me in the past five years I cannot tell, for things did not work out as I had planned. Instead of applying myself wholly to farming, like Zangwill "I returned to my inky vomit," and depended on my pen for a living. While doing this I farmed in "a rambling, desultory way," and had more fun with my farming operations than an active pup ever had with an old shoe. I did what I liked, and did it as I liked. At no time did I attempt to farm for profit. Everything was raised for our own use, and if there was a surplus of anything it was sold. No attempt was made to run a model farm—I was simply a poor farmer of the kind that make a bare living from the land. While doing this I kept up a constant roar about my farm work. I issued more bulletins than the Department of Agriculture, and I am afraid they were more widely read. [Pg ix] This was good business from the point of view of a writer, but I am afraid that some who missed the burlesquing tone of many articles got obsessed with the idea that I was trying to farm scientifically and to show how farming should be done. Real farmers, according to their various natures, viewed my work with pity, contempt, ridicule, loathing, malevolence, mendacity, loquacity, jackassity, and every other capacity that people develop. Lecturers for the farmers' institutes made it a point to call on me when they were in the neighbourhood, and after the first shock was over proceeded to gather specimens of noxious weeds that they found it hard to get elsewhere. Government scientists came out of their way to see me, and gazed with awe at the neglected farm from which I had raised such a crop—of newspaper articles. Then they took out their cyanide bottles and began to collect rare specimens of bugs and pests, for I had all of them. Touring automobilists stopped to make a call, and when they went away I could hear them

laughing as far off as the second culvert on the concession line. Nevertheless and notwithstanding I never described any farm work that I did not do and no incident was recorded that did not happen. If you have a false idea of my farming it is your own fault. At all times I told the truth, merely garnishing it with humour, poetry, and philosophy. And to-day the result of my farm work is the most satisfactory asset I have. In the days of the patriarchs a man with more than a year's supply of provisions would be regarded as a plutocrat. In the awakening that has been caused by the war I shall be surprised if there are not many people in our cities who will think that the patriarchal view was right.

During the years that I have been writing from the country I have received many hundreds, possibly thousands, of letters, and I was glad that not one of them was from some one who had been induced by me to leave the city and try farming. To-day I feel differently about the matter. My experience has shown me that although attempts to farm for profit would result in failure for [Pg x] most city people, it is quite possible for a city man to farm for a living. Without any definite purpose to that end I find myself with a year's living in hand, and know that, with good health, I can accomplish that much year after year. At this time, with the business of the world more completely disorganised than most people imagine, I do not hesitate to advise every one who can possibly go back to the land to go. If I had my way there would not be a vacant farmhouse in all Canada before the snow flies. Men who are out of work and have some resources would find it cheaper to spend the idle winter on a farm, and they could be ready by spring to begin to make their living from the soil. At the present time our cities have many victims of the war who are as blameless as the victims of a great fire or any similar disaster. They must be cared for, and our government would be making no mistake in voting an appropriation for the purchase of a million bags of flour for the relief of distress at home. It will be many years before the business of the world can be resumed in the volume of past years, and those who are in authority can do nothing better than get the unemployed back on the land, where they can earn their own food, clothing, and shelter. This suggests that the land problem will soon be one of the most pressing in Canada. How are people to get back on the land? My friends of the Single Tax Association need not write to me to explain how this is to be accomplished. I admit all their conclusions, though as a weak human being I resent the perfection of their logic. Nothing in my experience has ever happened logically. If they will stop antagonising people with their perfect theory they may see their dreams fulfilled much sooner than they expect. The nationalisation of land is immeasurably nearer than any one supposes, and it will be brought about by the blundering logic of events. The people must get back on the land, must! must! must! The work of education undertaken by Henry George and his disciples is now practically complete. The time has come for action. People must have access to the land—to the one source of production. If the people of the cities turn towards [Pg xi] the land, where they can provide for themselves, it will not be long before as much justice as is humanly possible will be accorded to them. Land-hunger will force a solution of the land problem. The time for dissertations on abstract justice is past. It is to stimulate the land-hunger that I have made bold to trouble readers of this column with so frank a statement of my personal affairs at the present time. If you are looking ahead with terror to the long winter, you should make up your mind that before another winter comes you will be as well provided for as I am, with the fruits of your own labour on the land. "Back to the land" should become a slogan of power. I trust that those who are in authority, and who will have the task of caring for our victims of the war, will give it their earnest attention.

IN PASTURES GREEN [Pg 1]

JANUARY

Ekfrid, *Jan. 3.*—We are a hopelessly unromantic people. We go about even the most delightful of our affairs in a sadly hum-drum way. Take the opening of an apple-pit in winter, for instance. If the "well-greaved Greeks" had anything like this in their lives they would have approached the task with appropriate songs and ceremonial dances. They would have done justice to the winter-ripened apple,

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

Now notice how prosaically the Canadian farmer undertakes the work. After the women folks have been nagging him for a couple of weeks he begins to feel apple-hungry himself, and some fine morning he takes the long-handled shovel and an old axe and proceeds to open the pit. The snow is first carefully shovelled away from the little treasure-house of autumn fruitfulness and then the covering of frozen earth is chopped away. This uncovers the protecting layer of straw, which is removed, laying bare the apples. What a gush of perfume burdens the frosty air! Spies, Baldwins, Russets, and Pippins give their savour aright, and if a man had a touch of poetry in his soul he would begin at once to fashion lyrics. But there is no poetry. He simply remarks to

himself that they have kept well, fills a bag, stuffs back the straw and piles on the earth and snow to keep out the frost. He then carries the bag to the kitchen and announces that he expects to [Pg 2] have "apple-sass" for dinner. Possibly he wipes an apple on his sleeve and eats it while going to the barn to finish his chores, but on the whole he treats the event as if it were an ordinary part of the day's work.

Although our Canadian apples are good at all times, they are now at their best. There is a flavour to a winter-ripened apple that surpasses praise. It has a fullness and tang that provoke the appetite more than it satisfies. A winter evening spent around a roaring fire with a plateful of well-polished apples within reach, and old friends to talk with, is something to cheer even the soul of a pessimist. As for the children, their delight is twofold when the apple-pit has been opened. Not only do they gorge themselves, but they dream of the affluence they will enjoy by bartering apples at school. The school price of apples varies, but yesterday a sound, rosy Spy was disposed of for two empty rifle cartridges (thirty-two long), the stub of a lead-pencil, and a copper harness rivet without a washer. From this you can figure out how much boy bric-a-brac a bushel would buy. It is possible that it was by just such bartering as this that some of our financial magnates developed their wonderful business sagacity. Perhaps it was by carrying the best apples to the teacher that they learned the first principles of lobbying and the value of standing in with the powers that be. It does not seem at all unreasonable to suppose that the boy who learns at school how to dispose of his apples most profitably will later pick plums and cut melons. Our educational system may have sides to it that are not recognised by the Education Department.

The man who induced the pioneers of this district to plant orchards should have his name emblazoned on the pages of history like "apples of gold in pictures of silver." I remember him as a hale Scotchman of eighty, to whom a twenty-mile walk to visit an old friend was simply a holiday jaunt. In his youth he could do fifty miles a day and sell trees at every farmhouse he passed. He canvassed the country from London to Windsor, and probably sold more trees than any other [Pg 3] agent that ever covered the territory. He was known as an honourable man, and when he praised a particular apple his words were believed. By his efforts an orchard was planted on almost every farm, and although the apples he sold could not compare with the highly-developed apples of the present, they were good, and demonstrated beyond a doubt what a glorious district this is for fruit. Most of the early orchards were planted too closely because of the scarcity of cleared land, and the trees were seldom pruned properly, but they yielded a store of apples that added a zest to the simple fare of the pioneers. The orchards he sold have all died out, but they have been replaced by others, for no one here would think of being without apples. I know of only one tree of his selling that is still in existence. When a mature tree it suffered some injury that checked it for a time until a second growth started near the root. The original tree died away, but the second growth is bearing every year, and it seems destined to a long lease of life. I do not know the age which apple trees attain, but this one is now over sixty years old. It is what was called a rib apple, a kind no longer known to the nurseries. In its time it was counted the best apple in the township, but it cannot compare with the wonderful fruit of the present. It furnished good eating in its day, and deserves to have a tablet affixed to it as a survivor of the pioneer orchards.

It is a pleasure to be able to record the passing of the dried apple. It was the precursor of the prune as a boarding-house dish, and was once widely used as a substitute for food. They used to have paring-bees, where the young people peeled, quartered, and cored the apples, and then threaded them like beads to be strung up over the stove to dry. While drying they served as "a murmurous haunt of flies." Every farmhouse once had its apple-screen, made of laths, which was hung over the stove with the pipe going through it for the purpose of drying apples. Its contents were also popular with the flies, and, as screen-doors were unknown then, you can guess how [Pg 4] plentiful the flies were. Dried apples were once an article of commerce, but it is long since I have seen any or have been insulted by having them offered to me at the table. I am told that, although the farmers no longer dry apples, there are factories where apples are desiccated—desecrated, one woman explained—and that they may be found wherever prunes and dried apricots are offered for sale. It may be so; I do not know, and do not want to know. I am sure that dried apples by any other name would taste as leathery and unpalatable. I am content to know that they are no longer used in the country. Sound apples, fresh from the pit, are good enough for me.

Jan. 5.—I used to wonder why our nature writers never write stories about the common domestic cow. She is certainly of more importance than wild animals, and yet she seldom figures in literature except in the herd book and in market reports. I say this used to puzzle me, but it puzzles me no longer. Charles G. D. Roberts and Thompson Seton and Kipling can tell us the secret thoughts of wolves and bears and tigers and crocodiles and such critters just as easy as easy, but cows are beyond them. Cows are deep. They think thoughts that are beyond the poets. You can't fool me about cows, because I am living with them just now. Acting as valet to a bunch of cows and young cattle has given me a chance to study them closely, and my respect for them is increasing every day. Cows certainly think, but only when they have the proper environment. They don't think all over the place like college professors and eminent people generally. It has always been very disconcerting to me to meet great men on the street, or in the railway station, or on the crowded rear platform of a street car, and to find them thinking all the time. They seem to have developed thinking into a bad habit, but not so with cows. Cows can spend days and days without thinking, but when the conditions are right they think unutterable things. And they are very human in this. A well-known writer told me once that he can never think freely unless he [Pg 5] begins by thinking about a telegraph pole. He couldn't explain why it was, but if he once got his mind completely concentrated on a telegraph pole ideas would at once come surging into his brain. It is the same with cows, and the object that inspires them to their loftiest flights is a gate.

Let no one be surprised at this. Even philosophers have mighty things to say about gates. What says Omar?

"Up from earth's centre to the Seventh gate
I rose, and on the throne of Saturn sate,
  And many a knot unriddled by the way
But not the master-knot of human fate."

Fate—there you have it. Fate is undoubtedly the favourite subject of thought with meditative cows. You have only to look at them and notice their awful solemnity and the gravity of their mild and magnificent eyes to know that they are not thinking of any ordinary matter like the beef trust, or the high cost of hay, or anything of that sort. But it is not enough to have a cow see a gate to start her thinking. You must try to drive her through it. In fact, I am not sure that one lone cow would start thinking even in a gate. You must have a herd of them and it usually works out in about this way. After you have run yourself out of breath gathering the herd the boss will take the lead and the skittish young cattle will be bringing up the rear. As soon as the boss gets into the gate where none of the others can pass her a great idea will strike her and she will stop to chew her cud and think it over. If you are in a hurry you will probably start yelling at her, but it will do no good. Nothing can interrupt her profound thoughts and your yelling will only disturb the young cattle and start them scampering around the field. In all probability you will start throwing clods and sticks, and if your aim is good you may jolt her through the gate, but you will find that before further progress can be made you will have to gather the young cattle again. When you get your little flock to the gate once more you will find that the deputy boss becomes seized of a great idea when she reaches the middle, and the business of yelling, throwing clods, [Pg 6] and gathering the young cattle has to be done all over again. There have been times when it has taken me half an hour to get a thoughtful herd of cows through a twelve-foot gate, and by the time the last of the young cattle passed through, a hair's-breadth ahead of the toe of my boot, my temper "had gone where the dead crabs go." Still, I always solace myself with the reflection that I have been the first to discover that cows think.

But gates are not the only things that inspire cows. Doors also seem to have a very stimulating effect on their cerebral processes. Sometimes when I turn the cows out to water I just go down the line unloosing their chains. When the first cow reaches the door and gets a glimpse of the fair round world she stops to reflect on its beauty. The cows behind her, lacking this inspiration, begin to hook and bunt one another until the stable is a howling pandemonium, but the cow in the door is in no wise disturbed. She stands there and thinks, and thinks, and thinks. As for me, well—perhaps I hadn't better tell what I am thinking and saying. As a rule, before I am too severely trampled I manage to get hold of a fork and break the reverie of the thinker in the doorway. In my opinion Rodin missed a great opportunity when sculptoring "The Thinker." He should have hewn a cow out of marble rather than a man who looks like G. Bernard Shaw. When it comes to real thinking, give me a cow. I suspect that she gets as far with her problems as the best thinker of us all.

Now that I think of it, there is another cow problem that I should like to have solved. Does any man of wide experience know how to drive half-a-dozen cows across a ten-acre field without zigzagging back and forward until he has travelled about ten miles? Sometimes in the summer when I went to milk I would find that the cows were standing in the farthest corner of the field licking one another's ears and having a nice, quiet sociable time together. They would pay no attention to my alluring calls of "Co-Boss," and in the end I would have to hang the pails on the gate and go after them. Though they would be nicely grouped before I disturbed them, they [Pg 7] would promptly spread out like a fan, and I would have to run along behind them driving each cow a few rods and then rushing on to the next. And each cow after I left her would stop and look at me with mild, wondering eyes as if trying to figure out just what I was trying to do. None of them would move except when I was raging behind them, and each time they moved they would move farther apart. If any one knows a practical method of keeping cows bunched while being driven across a field I am open for instruction. Cows are certainly useful and indispensable animals, but there are times when they are trying, very trying.

Jan. 6.—Last night the conversation turned on summer wood and the need of providing a supply.

"Good!" exclaimed the deponent, bubbling over with fool enthusiasm. "I need exercise, and a session at the end of a crosscut saw would do me a world of good."

As a matter of fact, winter life in the country does get monotonous when one has nothing to do but drive to school with the children, go to the post office for the mail, read papers, crack nuts, and eat apples. The prospect of varying matters by a few days' work in the woods was positively alluring.

This morning conditions were ideal for outdoor work. The sun was shining, and a faint north wind was breathing over the snow. Bluejays were squawking in the orchard and crows cawing in the woods. The "eager and nipping air" seemed to put steam in every living thing that was about, and to go crunching through the drifts with an axe over one's shoulder seemed large and primitive and manly. In the woods flakes of snow were sifting down from the branches and faintly pungent woodland odours gave an exhilarating touch to the air.

A beech that had been felled for some purpose, but found unsatisfactory, was first attacked. It was held clear of the snow by a log on which it rested and by its branches. As the saw bit into it with a metallic "tang, tang," the prospects for a pleasant and profitable day were excellent. [Pg 8] Yanking a saw across a sound piece of timber seemed more like fun than anything else, and as

exercise it was not unlike rowing.

The first cut was all right and as the block fell into the snow the achievement was celebrated with a deep-lunged "Wheeee!" of satisfaction. When the second block fell the overcoat was felt to be an encumbrance and was removed.

"Tang, tang!" whimpered the saw through the hard wood. Two cuts more were completed and then the ordinary coat was felt to be rather heavy and was accordingly thrown off.

"Tang, tang!" The sound was getting monotonous and breathing was becoming noticeably difficult. What of that? Professor James of Harvard has written an authoritative essay on "Second Wind," in which he shows that if one keeps at it he will soon get his "second wind," and will be in a better condition for work than when he started. Nature has provided us with wonderful reserves of strength if we will but persist until they are reached. I was certainly in need of second wind, for the first was almost gone. I was distinctly puffing. Another cut and I was gasping. By the time another cut was finished I had developed "Charley horse," glass arm, lumbago, asthma, and symptoms of apoplexy. As for breathing I was simply biting at the air. Sweat was dripping from my eyebrows and the tip of my nose, and I was in the condition one reaches in the hot room of the Turkish bath, when the rubber comes in and remarks: "You are in a fine sweat. Better come and have a rub down." But there was no rub down. That wretched saw was pulled away from me as often as I pulled it across, and there was no music in its "tang, tan-n-ng!" Just as I was coming to the conclusion that the world was full of sawdust and that I hadn't a friend on earth, the tree was all cut into blocks.

"Now we will go at that maple stub."

I grunted assent. The enthusiasm was all gone.

As we tramped towards the maple, tracks were noticed that started us guessing. They looked like two footprints close together a couple of feet apart. Was it a mink or a weasel? It seemed too big [Pg 9] for a weasel. A light snow had fallen on the previous night and the fresh tracks were easy to follow. They were much more interesting than that maple stub and I insisted on following them. We might get a mink. I have known men to draw to a mink and catch a fur-lined overcoat, so why shouldn't I? About fifty yards further on the tracks disappeared in a hole in a snowdrift beside a log. We were certainly in luck. By using the axe and kicking vigorously the snow was soon removed and a snug nest of leaves and mouse fur was found in a hollow under the log. It was still warm, showing that the occupant was at home. A few pokes with the axe handle brought out a more than snow-white ermine with a black-tipped tail. For about five seconds I was as active as a political K.C. hustling for a vacant judgeship. There was enough ermine in sight to make a beginning on a judge's robe, but only for a few seconds. He disappeared into a hole that led under the stump of an uprooted tree and I was looking at the place as disconsolately as a political K.C. reading the notice of a rival's appointment. A brief investigation showed that he was safe from pursuit. There was nothing to do but go at that miserable maple stub.

The maple stub measured two feet at the stump and was as sound as a bone. The top had been broken off by a windstorm a year ago and ever since it had been seasoning. After a notch had been cut on the side towards which the tree was to be made to fall we proceeded with our Gladstonian task. Working a crosscut saw in its natural position is bad enough, but working it on its side to cut through a standing tree—Oh, well, everything has to end some time. Presently it came crashing down.

> "As falls on Mount Alvernus
> The thunder-smitten oak."

As the echoes died away another sound was heard. It was the call to dinner. Say, have you ever heard the call to dinner in circumstances such as have been described? It is the most joyous [Pg 10] sound in the world. If the women-folks only knew how good their voices sound at such times, they would call oftener—and earlier.

During the dinner hour the ermine—everybody else called it a weasel, but I had the *Century Dictionary* to back me—was discussed and the fiat went forth that he must be trapped. Where hens are kept weasels and similar vermin are not popular. There was a vivid recollection of twenty-six chickens that had been killed by a weasel one night last summer, so this one must be destroyed. No objection was made, for setting a trap is easier work than dragging a crosscut saw through a maple log. Nevertheless I scorned the preparations that were made. The dictionary describes the weasel as being remarkable for cunning, wariness, and alertness. It quotes the proverb about "catching a weasel asleep" and gives the impression that this creature, above all others, is capable, as the nature-fakirs say, of matching the intelligence of man with his cunning. The preparations for trapping were such as would be laughed at by a young rat, not to mention an old one. A dead hen that had been in cold storage in a snowdrift for a couple of months was dug out and laid beside a stump near the creature's hole. Around the hen a little hut of rotten wood was built, leaving an opening at the bottom. In this an ordinary rat trap was placed without any attempt at concealment. The whole arrangement was one that a cow would avoid even if it was baited with turnips. It was absurd to think that a weasel would be so foolish as to walk into a danger so "gross and palpable."

A time always comes when excuses and shifts fail, and at last there was nothing for it but to tackle the crosscut saw again. My hinges all felt rusty, and how sore those blisters felt! The first cut warmed me up and I felt better, but the second cut brought back the symptoms of asthma and apoplexy. Then I thought of a story.

"Talking about weasels, did I ever tell you about the Presbyterian elder living less than twenty miles from here who broke the Sabbath to kill one? He is the strictest Sabbatarian in the county [Pg 11] and keeps the Sabbath in a way that makes the blue laws of New England look frivolous. He has all of the Sabbath food, fuel, and water prepared on Saturday, goes to church three times, and will allow no visitors. Well, one Friday night last summer a weasel got into his hen-house and killed all his hens but three. On Saturday night he came back and finished the three. On the Sabbath morning the elder saw the vermin skulking about the barn, and throwing his record to the winds he took out his shotgun and peppered the weasel." (This story was good for a five-minute rest.)

Another cut. "Tang, tan-n-n-ng." You will notice how slow and long-drawn the sound was becoming when I drew back the saw.

When the cut was finished I just had enough breath left to start a discussion of the comet that is now appearing in the west. The papers have not told definitely whether it is Halley's comet or another visitor. But even that ended.

After the next cut I managed to work up a talk about the plans of the Hydro-electric and to paint in glowing colours the good times we would have when electricity would be used to heat houses and for cooking. It wouldn't be necessary to cut wood then. Whew!

While the next cut was coming off a blister broke and I couldn't think of anything to talk about, so we plunged recklessly into another. Then I began to count the strokes. I found it took five hundred to take off one block. That may not show well beside some of the records made at the sawing matches, but it must stand. About this time I thought it would be a good idea to take the measuring stick and mark off the rest of the stub. Twenty-nine more cuts. At five hundred strokes to the cut, you can figure out what that would amount to. When I realised what this meant I sat on the log and, as Meredith says, my "thoughts began to bloat like poisoned toads." Would the sun never go down? I was killing time as shamelessly as a plumber. To work again, and then [Pg 12] another blister broke. I don't believe the stories they tell about two men cutting eight cords of wood in a day with a crosscut saw.

As the dragging minutes passed I began to sympathise with Sisyphus, who had to roll a stone uphill, only to find that it always rolled back. No matter how savagely I yanked that saw towards me, it would be yanked away. As I kept up the dreary task I began to admire Schopenhauer, and decided that henceforth I would be an outspoken pessimist. Still the saw whimpered—

"Tang, Tan-n-n-n-g!"

At last, when "even despair grew mild," I was told the time had come to do chores. Without a word I shambled towards home and, like Hosea Biglow, I went

> "Back
> Along the very feetmarks of my shining morning track."

Also like Hosea, I was

> "Forlorner nor a musquash if you took and dreened his swamp."

When I reached the house I picked out the kindest-looking chair I could find and fell into it. I don't believe we shall need any more summer wood. Besides, after such a steady winter, we are almost sure to have a hot summer.

Jan. 7.—That fool weasel or ermine was in the trap this morning. You needn't tell me that they are cunning or anything of that sort. By the way, working a crosscut saw isn't nearly so bad a job on the second day. One can get used to anything.

Jan. 11.—My move, is it? Where did you move? Oh!—well, why didn't you say so? I've been waiting for you to move for the past week.

A checker epidemic is now raging in the country. It is affecting people in much the same way as tarantism, or the dancing sickness, affected the Italians in the middle ages. We speak the language of checkers, act the actions of checkers, and even in our sleep we try to make moves on the patchwork quilts. When the boys go to do the chores they jump the swill-buckets over the [Pg 13] pigs, and when the girls make pancakes they jump them around the pan instead of turning them. The storekeepers jump the pennies over the quarters when making change, and the bakers jump the buns with the cookies when filling orders. Even the snowflakes seem to be jumping one another as they fall, and then they drift in zigzags towards some mysterious king-row beyond the horizon. The present state of the public mind is shown by the following clipping from the Appin news of *The Glencoe Transcript*:—"Ed. Laughton and John McMaster have chosen sides for another checker match. Each side has thirteen players, and over 500 games must be played in the next two weeks. The losers must provide an oyster supper and concert in the Town Hall. Every available space in town is covered by a checkerboard."

The outbreak is by no means local. This week some one sent me a copy of *The Grimsby Independent*, and marked a letter which overflows with Gargantuan mirth and Homeric defiance. It is humorous to the point of libel:—

"A CHALLENGE TO THE FIVE SCOTCH-IRISH JOHNS OF CAISTOR

"There are so many contests now going on, some fool and some legitimate, that the

writer thought it would be unique to have one on the checkerboard here in Grimsby. Now, if the Five Johns of Caistor, who have had a checkered career living out in the jungles, viz.: John Young, John Deans, John Warner, John Jackson, and John Leslie, could be induced to leave their lairs for a short time to make some moves on the magic squares (and, by the way, it is the only time some of them do move) we will trim them to a peak. There will be in this contest no houses and lots, pianos, trips to the Falkland Islands, moon, etc., but they will get their paunches well filled with 'Scotch haggis' and potatoes boiled with the hides on; the liquid refreshments men from that burg always carry on or in their person. If they should win, perhaps our other John might give us a trophy out of his rare collection to turn loose in their swamps—" [Pg 14]

"'A Hip-pa-con-da-hare
Or a High-ta-ton-ta-toose
A Wolver-ine-achipmunk,
Or Tam-a-ram-a-goose.'—*D. Jackson*."

If the Grimsby-Caistor match is pulled off I hereby issue a challenge to the victors on behalf of the winners of the Appin tournament. I pin my faith to our local talent. We have some of the most sedentary players in this vicinity that the country has ever produced. They are wearing the bottoms out of the chairs playing checkers, and if a fire broke out when a game was in progress they have their minds so completely concentrated on the moves that they would have to be carried out with the checkerboard on their knees, and they would finish the game in a snowdrift, without noticing that anything had happened. Bring on your champions.

As far as I am concerned, I am forced to confess that I am not making the progress I should. I have too many things to take my mind off the game, and a man can never hope to be a great checker-player if he ever thinks of anything else. The boys have got used to all my tricky moves, and have developed new ones of their own, so that when we play my kings and men are all the time being caught on level crossings.

Jan. 14.—The editorials in the papers urging the farmers to produce more and better foodstuffs, so that they will make more money and reduce the cost of living in the cities, are being read by the farmers with growing wonder. The answer to these eloquent appeals is simply, "What's the use?" Is it possible that the economic writers of the cities have not discovered that the good old law of Supply and Demand is as dead as Competition? The trusts and mergers killed Competition and gave us wasteful methods and high prices of monopoly instead, and now the transportation companies and the middlemen have strangled our old friends Supply and Demand. A point has been reached where our historical societies should be erecting brass tablets sacred to the [Pg 15] memory of the economic laws that once governed trade and commerce. It would be a good idea to have these tablets put up on the walls of our parliament buildings, so that our representatives might have constant reminders of the results of granting special privileges to favoured persons and corporations.

But it is hardly exact to say that Supply and Demand are dead. They are simply handcuffed and fettered. According to the papers, Demand is very noisy in the cities, but his twin brother, Supply, cannot rush to his assistance. What's the use? If Demand could only find some way of offering to the farmers those wonderful prices that we hear about it would be surprising to see how Supply would wax strong. When H. H. Vreeland was traffic manager for one of the Hudson River railways that feed into New York he worked out a scheme by which the farmers could reach the city markets with their produce at the least possible expense. The immediate result was that the district through which his railway passed at once became one of the greatest dairying sections in the country. When Demand expressed his needs to the farmers in terms of higher prices, instead of newspaper reports, they adopted better methods at once and doubled and trebled their products. That one act by the traffic manager did more to promote the best methods than could be done by an agricultural college, and his railway reaped the reward in the form of increased freight at a reasonable rate. I am inclined to think that if something were done to enable the farmers to market their products profitably more would be done to promote scientific agriculture than any one dreams. The farmers would then go after education instead of waiting to have it carried to them. It is no answer to say that the farmers should co-operate. They are already co-operating in a Government that should look after their interests. What is the use of telling farmers that they should feed only the best stock when they know that, taking things year in and year out, about all they can hope to get by feeding the best stock is more fertiliser to [Pg 16] enrich their land? Once do away with the restrictions that keep Supply and Demand apart, and you will solve both the problem of cheap living and the spread of agricultural education.

Jan. 15.—When one is prepared for it, this zero weather is as delightful in its way as the balmiest season of spring or summer. At no other time of the year is the air so pure and stimulating. Yesterday I had a walk in the forenoon and another at night. In the forenoon the sun was reflected from millions of fresh snowflakes that had sifted down in the night and had not been blown away by the wind. But though the sunlight was dazzling there was not enough warmth in it to start the growth of an icicle on the south side of the house. At first I thought I was not going to see a trace of a living thing except occasional mouse-tracks, but Sheppy, the collie, made a sudden rush and for a moment I saw a black squirrel making a flying leap from one tree to another, where it disappeared into a hole. A little farther on we started a flock of quail, and instead of alighting in scrub of some kind they lit in the tops of the tallest maples. While searching for them where they were perched on the branches I was surprised to see a highholder

busily hunting for insects in the rough bark of a maple.

At night I went for another walk and saw the snowflakes glisten by moonlight. As the thermometer stood at nine below zero, I had to maintain a lively pace to keep from being nipped by the frost. Not even an owl hooted and not a sound was to be heard except the rhythmic "gling-glong" of sleigh-bells a couple of miles away. There were as many stars in the snow as in the sky, and the silver moon presided over both with still serenity. In spite of the loneliness and the silence I am not sure but the walk by night was more enjoyable than the walk by day.

Jan. 20.—The January thaw has arrived, and up to the time of writing it has proven itself an entirely competent thaw. It has its work cut out for it, however, and only time will tell whether it [Pg 17] is equal to its task. That last snowstorm piled the drifts as high as the fences, choked all the drains and watercourses, and brought everything in the country to a standstill for some days. There was no doubt but winter was with us, and then came signs of a change, though the weather-wise were unable to say with certainty just what the change would be.

"Well, what are we going to have—rain or snow?" became the general form of greeting.

"I can't exactly make out. It may be either," was the invariable reply.

After a day of mild stillness a raw, damp wind began to breathe from the south and nature favoured us with another of her marvellous transformation scenes. Hoarfrost began to gather on everything, but it was not like the hoarfrost of a couple of weeks ago, which crystallised from the still, cold air on every side of everything. This hoarfrost showed like an icy growth on the side of things nearest the wind, delicate fern-like formations, closely packed, that in some cases attained at least an inch in length. The sky was whitish grey, and a white mist veiled everything between the blinding white snow and the sky. Still the result could not be predicted.

"We are going to have a big change of some kind," was the general verdict. "I have always noticed that when things take a few days working up we get something worth while."

Yesterday morning the air became milder, the hoarfrost began to disappear, and presently the snow became "grippy" underfoot. By noon there was a driving mist and the thaw was on. By nightfall, for the first time in weeks, the rain was on the roof. This morning things are dreary in the country, with the ground covered with slushy snow and a dripping sky overhead. One realises what a terrible bore the man must have been who was described as being as "tedious as a great thaw." But wait a moment. A glance through the window shows a driving snowstorm in progress. It looks as if both those who predicted rain and those who predicted snow were right. What is the [Pg 18] use of trying to describe country weather anyway? It simply refuses to sit for its picture.

Jan. 22.—Although the fields are bare and deserted there is still much business activity in the country. This is a time of much dealing in horses, both for local use and for shipment. Teams, both heavy-draught and roadsters, are being matched for future use or sale, and this gives rise to much dealing among the farmers themselves. It is seldom that a farmer manages to raise a properly-matched team on his farm, so he must seek among his neighbours for horses of the proper points to match his own. As most of the men who deal in horses are excellent judges of horseflesh, their trading is sharp and discriminating. In this part of the country horses almost have social position, their name, breeding, and history being as well known as their owners'. The experts recognise them at sight, and it is not unusual to hear scraps of conversation like this:

"Was it you that drove along the town line yesterday?"

"Yes."

"I was sure it was your team, but I was not sure it was you that was with them."

To be known by the horse one drives instead of by one's own commanding presence is always something of a shock to one who becomes aware of it for the first time. But it is not surprising. The men who make a specialty of horses know every colt and horse in several townships, as well as, or even better than, they do their owners. When a dealer wishes to get together a carload, he applies to such men and can at once get an idea of the quality and prices of all the desirable horses of any particular class in the vicinity, just as readily as if they were all assembled in a market for his inspection. Then by driving about the country and using the rural telephone he can quickly secure the lot he wants. The matter of preparing horses for the market is not an entirely simple one, and a number of men usually make their profits before the horses reach their final owner. One man may be successful as a breeder and may be depended on for a constant supply [Pg 19] of colts. Another may be an expert at breaking colts and bringing out their best qualities. Then comes the shuffle of matching teams. Finally, they pass through the hands of local buyers to the dealers, who ship them to points where there is a demand. One result of this experience and interest in good horses is that some horses from this locality have been prize-winners at the horse shows of New York and Chicago and are now doing high stepping on fashionable driveways of many great cities.

Jan. 23.—The next great European war will be fought by soldiers who have nothing left to fight for but a national debt. It is quite evident to every one watching the progress of events that the only thing preventing a war at the present time is that none of the belligerent nations are prepared. It is also evident that they will not be fully prepared as long as they are able to borrow money or raise it by taxes in order to build Dreadnoughts and get on the best possible war footing. The great powers of diplomacy are being exerted solely to delay war until the preparations are complete, and they will doubtless delay it so long that the inevitable war will synchronise with a general bankruptcy of the nations. This will give the historians and poets of the future new matter to deal with, and as I speculate on the forthcoming war of universal

bankruptcy my imagination is roused. How will the soldiers fight in such circumstances? Will they march into battle, singing:

"How can a man die better
  Than facing fearful odds"
For the taxes of his fathers
  And the Armour lobby frauds?

That doesn't sound very inspiring, does it? And yet I cannot think of anything else that would be so appropriate.

The article, "War against War," which I wrote some time ago in the *Toronto Globe*, brought me so many letters that I am impelled to deal with the subject again. Some letters approved entirely, while others were so delightfully sarcastic that I am tingling all over with the joy of battle. I have [Pg 20] just read "Horatius at the Bridge" to put me in a vaunting mood, and if you find quotations from it bubbling to the surface you will know what is the matter. After all it may be quite timely to deal with the subject again. At the present writing it is rumoured that the naval bill will be up in Parliament before many days have passed.

"I wis that in the Senate
  There was no heart so bold
But sore it ached and fast it beat
  When that ill news was told."

It is not likely, however, that we shall have such a battle as raged all over the Hansard last year. It is quite certain that the two parties will be no nearer to agreement than they were a year ago, and that emboldens me to make a suggestion. Of course I do not expect it to be accepted at once, for when I read what editors and statesmen have to say on the subject I am afraid that Mr. Borden is fortified in his own opinions like Lars Porsena:

"There be thirty chosen prophets,
  The wisest of the land,
Who alway by Lars Porsena
  Both morn and evening stand:
And with one voice the Thirty
  Have their glad answer given:
'Go forth, go forth, Lars Porsena;
  Go forth, beloved of Heaven.'"

As neither party seems to have the power to put through its policy I venture to suggest an alternative. Instead of giving money or building a navy why should not Canada contribute thirty-five million dollars' worth of wheat? Wheat will be needed just as much as Dreadnoughts or ammunition. We have wheat. Why not give it?

It seems to me that this suggestion embodies all the good features of both policies and has a few good ones of its own. It would be as quickly effective in a case of emergency as a cash contribution, and the money would all be expended here in Canada. Of course, there is the [Pg 21] question of Canadians fighting in their own defence, but I shall deal with that later. Now, think it over carefully before arriving at a conclusion. What would be the matter with a contribution of wheat, or, still better, of flour? The chief weakness of Great Britain at the present time is an underfed population. Reliable statistics show that in the British Islands there are over twelve millions of people who are below the hunger-line, who never know what it means to have enough to eat. By making it possible for these unfortunates to be strong and well nourished we should increase the fighting force of the empire by millions. Because no one in modern times has contributed to war funds in this way, the suggestion may seem novel, but in the brave days of old such contributions were frequent. The people gave what they had and gave what would do the most good. Moreover, there is a Canadian side to this suggestion that appeals to me. If our government undertook to buy thirty-five million dollars' worth of wheat, to mill it and ship the flour, they might learn things that would lead to far-reaching reforms. They might find out why Canadian flour is cheaper in London, England, than it is in Winnipeg, and they would learn all about our transportation problems and the shipping combine. Also they would get more reliable facts about the high cost of living than could be dug out by Royal Commissions in ten years. And practically all the war money would be spent with our own farmers, millers, and railways, and in that way would stimulate our basic home industries. Now, do not all speak at once. Stop and count thirty-five millions before scolding me for my wheat-giving suggestion.

As for doing our own fighting, I think every red-blooded Canadian is in favour of that. But we should not think of fighting except in self-defence. Those who would undertake our fighting should be men with a deep-rooted horror of war, who would be willing to fight to put an end to it. The great trouble with all the suggestions for warlike preparedness that I have seen is that they are full of the pride, pomp, and poppy-cock of old-fashioned war. There is no true glory in war. [Pg 22] The killing of men, even in self-defence, is a hideous necessity at best. But if it must be done, let it be done without fuss and feathers. If we cannot be prepared for war without indulging in strutting and tinsel, there is something wrong. I think history will bear me out in the statement that the great fighters were men with a great purpose, rather than with elaborate training. Without referring to cases in recent history where embattled farmers—men without training and devoid of the love of glory—held in check the best trained troops, let us consider for a moment

the "crop-eared boors" led by the brewer, Cromwell. Having a great purpose, they developed into the renowned Ironsides, perhaps the most efficient group of fighting men that England ever produced. Glory was no part of their creed, and if we should ever be compelled by aggression to put men in the field they should be men of that kind. I would have no criticism to make of military training if it taught men to fight only for the rights of humanity. Men should shudder when they think of war instead of bursting into song in praise of its horrible glories.

Jan. 24.—Some recent discoveries have made me wish to publicly abase myself—to admit that in at least some respects I am an old fogy, unobservant and far from being up-to-date. Ever since coming to the country I have been waiting patiently for some of the good old swindles to turn up and to observe just how they are worked. I have been positively yearning for a visit from a book agent who would try to get me to subscribe for the first volume of some one's Compendium of Useless Information in sixty-seven volumes. The first volume would be only a sample, of course, but there would be a little joker in the order form that would make it a contract for the whole sixty-seven. I hankered to see an order for a force-pump that would later turn out to be an order for a whole crate. After months of waiting I was coming to the conclusion that the men who used to prey on the farmers and rob them of their earnings have either died or reformed. And all the [Pg 23] time evidence was lying about me and I couldn't see it. I take refuge under the assertion of a great wit that "Nothing is so hard to see as the obvious." But at last I am wise. Years of city life had dulled my ears to the siren song of the promoter and I did not realise when I heard the same voice in the country that it indicated an old industry in a new form. The fact is that the modern farmer is a business man, and when swindled the work must be done in a business-like way instead of by trickery. He will not consent to be separated from his money except by the methods that are used in the city. When he has a bunch of money that is burning a hole in the stocking—I mean bank—in which it is kept he listens to the glozings of the get-rich-quick man or to the silvery persuadings of the mining promoter. He buys stocks, forsooth, and loses his money like a business man. I am reliably informed that there are successful farmers who could paper the spare bedroom with nicely lithographed little squares of paper, the sight of which would make the house tomcat arch his back and spit because of their wild-cat complexion. When I hear young men discussing the price of wheat, I no longer regard the conversation as a sign of the interest they take in their work, but begin to wonder mildly what bucket-shop they are patronising. Assuredly the times have changed and I had not changed with them, but my eyes are opened. I am no longer waiting for the double-dealing book agent or the deceitful peddler. Instead, I am culling alluring prospectuses from my daily mail and revelling in their financial humour. I thought they were part of the penalty I had to pay for having once lived in the city, but I find they are part of the present features of country life. Thus do we live and learn.

Jan. 25.—Is an open winter a blessing after all? I have heard many people rejoicing because the mild weather made it unnecessary to feed their stock heavily, and those who, like myself, cut their own wood find that there is a great saving in fuel. They say that a winter like the one we have been having is "not so hard on the poor" and that is a good thing, but there is another side [Pg 24] to the story. The weather is so changeable that colds and sickness are very prevalent, and because of the bad roads the social life of the country has been at a standstill. There are days when hardly a rig passes, even on a road that lies between two villages, and not since I have come to the country have there been so few public entertainments of any kind. The mild and wet weather leaves the country roads impassable, and that keeps people at home when there is little work to be done. It would be much better if they could be refreshing themselves with the natural enjoyments of visiting and parties. Although most of us dread the steady cold of the old-fashioned winters, I am inclined to think that the steady severe weather is better for us than the kind we are getting. The old-fashioned winters have plenty of sleighing that makes travelling about a luxury, and it always freshens people to mix with their fellows. Although the weather has been mild, this winter threatens to seem unusually long because people are practically prisoners on their farms.

Jan. 27.—Yesterday I saw the largest flock of quail it has ever been my pleasure to look at. I counted twenty-two, and they made a pretty picture as they scurried across a stubble-field feeding on the seeds of weeds that had not been buried by the snow. They all looked plump and vigorous, and unless something untoward happens they should winter all right. I know where there are nine more flocks and all are within a mile of where this is being written. As I was at one time an enthusiastic hunter of quail it gives me a pleasant glow to realise that, with such abundant opportunities at hand, I came through the hunting season without being tempted to do them harm. Of course there is a little matter of rabbits, but rabbits are something of a nuisance, given to girdling young trees and rose bushes. They rest lightly on my conscience.

I am beginning to wonder what the hunters are after. Every day I hear shooting in the woods, and I am at a loss to know what game is being pursued. It is now the close season for quail, partridge, [Pg 25] and black squirrels, but the guns are banging away as merrily as in the early fall. Once in a while the wind brings evidence that skunks are being killed, and that reminds me that skunk-hunting seems to have risen to the dignity of a profession. One day last fall I saw a couple of well-dressed hunters with guns and dogs passing through a field, and fearing that they might be after quail I went out to warn them off. The one I interviewed was dressed to the minute in puttees, khaki hunting jacket, and prospector's boots. He told me that they were hunting for skunk, and were having a very successful season. They had taken seven on the previous day, and as I understand that good skins are worth from three to four dollars each, the occupation is not unprofitable. They had a tent located a couple of miles away, and were travelling through the country hunting carefully through each district. As neither the dogs nor the hunters gave my nose any evidence of their occupation, there must be some way of killing skunks and "trammelling up the

consequences." When an ordinary man undertakes the task it is usually months before either he or his dogs are received in good society. Yesterday a hunter passed through the neighbourhood looking for mink. He said that their skins are worth twelve dollars each this year. This recalls the fact that while in the village recently I saw a young man getting a lot of empty packing boxes, and was told that he was going in for breeding mink and wanted the boxes to make dens for them. With skins at that price, mink farming should rank with the fox farming of Prince Edward Island. Strange to say, although the woods are so nearly cleared off, I have been told that the catch of fur-bearing animals in Southern Ontario is almost as great as it was in the days of the Indians and the Hudson Bay Company. It is some time since I have seen a coon skin tacked up on the end of a wood-shed, but every once in a while I hear a farmer complain that coon hunters have cut down a tree worth more than many coons. As a matter of fact the beavers seem to be the only [Pg 26] important kind of fur-bearing animals that have entirely disappeared from the country. It does not increase one's respect for the law of the survival of the fittest to find that such vermin as skunks, weasels, and mink have survived the deer and all the other wild creatures that were in the original forests. I wonder if it is the same with human beings, and that the harder the struggle for existence becomes the more likely we shall be to find the meaner, more cunning and despicable types prospering? Sometimes when I am feeling bilious I am inclined to think that the law of the survival of the fittest works out among human beings the same as it does among skunks.

It is surprising to find how few of the things that were native to the country have really disappeared. Last fall I was asked to write a Christmas story, and in the course of it tried to describe a dinner where pioneer dishes were used. I found it was possible to get all of them except one. Nowhere could I get a trace of the old wild crab apples that grew in the thick woods. The pioneers used to put them away in pits until spring, and then would cook them in maple syrup. I felt quite safe in saying that these wild crab apples had disappeared with the original forest, but when the story was published I found that a housewife living within a mile of me had been putting up wild crab apple jelly about the time I was writing the story. It seems that there is a thrifty wild crab apple tree about three miles from here on the banks of the creek that flows through this farm. This is another thing that shows how foolish it is to be sure about anything. Emerson, in his biographical sketch of Thoreau, tells that the naturalist-philosopher had found, in the neighbourhood of Walden Pond, specimens of practically every kind of plant produced on the continent. He was even able to duplicate samples that had been brought to him from the Arctic circle, and that were not supposed to exist in the temperate zone at all.

Jan. 31.—Last week I opened another silo—I mean trench—of celery, and was surprised to find that I was altogether too hasty in complaining about the pithy growth of the plants. When the [Pg 27] work of trenching the celery was being completed we trenched the pithy stuff on general principles, and because we had noticed a few good hearts in the huge bundles of stalks. On opening the trench I stripped away the pithy outer stalks and found in almost all of them large sound hearts. The celery I grumbled about turns out to be the best we have had this year. It is crisp, and tender, and better flavoured than the kind we had been using earlier in the season. But this has been a bad year for trenching celery as it was almost impossible to keep the water drained away from it, and the mice got into some of the trenches. At the same time I am inclined to think that trenched celery, if handled successfully, retains its flavour, and is much more appetising than that which is kept in cellars.

Apples that we kept for the winter are proving interesting in several ways. They were packed in barrels just like those that were shipped, and instead of being put in a cellar were buried in a side hill. Although I hear complaints that apples kept in pits and cellars are rotting badly, ours are coming out as sound as when they were put away. We opened a barrel of Spies last week, and I found only one rotten apple. They were as sound as when they were packed, and it was interesting to find that, although they were tightly pressed, they were not injured. The bruises caused by the pressing had all dried instead of rotting, and the only damage done was to the shape of the apples. As the barrel we opened had been filled with culls, I am inclined to think that the apples shipped must have been of pretty good quality, because these were good enough for any one. The ink spot and scabs, which made it necessary to cull them, have not affected the eating or keeping qualities of the apples, and now when there is no choice fruit with which to compare them they seem more like Fancy No. 1's than like culls. So far I have not found a single worm, and "we eats them cores and all."

FEBRUARY [Pg 28]

Feb. 2.—Since moving to the country I have been greatly impressed by the spread of education. Those who are set in authority over us seem to think that education is a remedy for everything. If the farmers are not prospering the cry goes forth, "Educate them." When the high cost of living begins to pinch in the cities they trace the whole trouble to the farmer, and then some one yells, "Educate him!" If the farmer complains about the exactions of the middlemen, the answer invariably is "Educate him." No matter what goes wrong, the only solution that occurs to any one is to "educate the farmer."

Once in a while a reporter representing the press, our modern palladium of freedom, calls on a canning magnate and tells him in a deferential tone that the farmers are complaining because he is not paying enough for tomatoes on the hoof and is charging altogether too much for catsup.

The great man looks at the paragraphical serf with a baleful eye, scatters some benzoate of soda on a pile of bills, puts them into his vault and snarls: "The farmer is grumbling, is he? Then ejjercate him."

Another trembling representative of the above-mentioned palladium calls on a high financier and tells him that the farmers are complaining because the last issue of watered stock he unloaded on them had typhoid germs in it.

"Oh, they are, are they?" sneers the plutocrat as he packs a tainted million in a deposit vault and wipes his hands on his overalls. "Then why don't you educate them?"

Up to a certain point this attitude is a good thing for the farmer. In the past he has been woefully [Pg 29] lacking in education. But now he is being educated so thoroughly that almost any farmer I meet is ready to sit down and have a breezy chat about the way the soil particles are held together by the water menisci or to discuss intelligently the value of ($PbHAsO_4$) in destroying codling moths.

The farmer is getting his education all right, and it is a good thing, even though it might be better adapted to his needs than it is. Moreover, if you would only increase his opportunities a little he would clamour for more education. But that is not what is bothering me.

While I sat on a corner of the voluminous report of the Department of Education meditating on these deep matters in a playful spirit I began to wonder what would happen if the farmers got to thinking, like every one else, that education is a national cure-all. If they once get this into their heads they will want to educate a few other people who are standing in the way of progress. They will want to start night schools in Toronto and Montreal to educate a few plutocrats into right ways of thinking. Does not your imagination kindle at the prospect? The class-room would be the smoking-room of the Millionaires' Club, and the little scholars would be sitting around in large, kind-looking arm-chairs, smoking expensive cigars, toying with slim-necked glasses, and letting their second chins rest comfortably on the bosoms of their dress shirts. Unobtrusive imported waiters would be flitting about noiselessly, taking orders and promoting good cheer. Enter Bill Simmons, instructor in true economic doctrines. Bill's necktie is climbing over his collar, but no one dares to smile, for he is carrying a well-oiled harness tug in his brawny right hand. Hanging the tug suggestively over the corner of the mahogany desk, he takes his place on the costly Ispahan rug, thrusts out his chin truculently, and opens the proceedings with a few well-chosen words. Thus Simmons:

"The House Committee informs me that after last night's session some of the hollow-stemmed glasses were full of cigarette ashes, and that there were cigar stubs in the silver-plated [Pg 30] champagne-coolers. Now, I want it distinctly understood that if I catch any dollar-besotted financial degenerate up to tricks like that I shall dust his swallow-tails so that he will eat his meals off the onyx mantelpiece for the next week and then I shall kick him several parasangs down the street. Do you get me?" (Oh, yes, he would talk like that. You have been educating him, you know.) "The class in elementary economics will now step forward."

Prompt at the word Sir Philabeg McSporran, Senator Redneck, Mr. Gosh Whatawad, and a few others step to the edge of the rug, where they stand with thumbs at the seams of their trousers legs, heels together, and their toes well apart.

"Now, my pretty ones," says Bill, "if a railroad is built under a government charter, with the assistance of the public treasury, and is then presented to the company that built it, to whom should that railroad finally belong?"

"To me," pipes Sir Philabeg, who is a High Financier and understands how to manipulate the market.

"Wrong," says our bold bucko from lot 17, seventh concession of Alfalfa township. "It will belong to the peepul—at least sufficiently so to justify them in regulating its operations so that it will serve the best interests of the community. You may go to your seat, Sir Philabeg, and figure it out, and I will come around with the tug in a few minutes and see that you have it right."

Then the grim instructor goes on:

"What is a Big Interest?"

"A corporation that contributes liberally to our campaign fund," says Senator Redneck, with a knowing smile.

"Wrong!" booms Simmons. "The Biggest Interest in this country is farming and after that comes labour—both engaged in producing the real wealth of the country. If any one is to get special privileges the farmers are the ones that should get them. You may go to your seat and figure that out, and I will see you when I get through with Sir Philabeg."

Again Simmons:

"If a farmer builds a new bank barn and silo, how much should he be fined in the shape of taxes [Pg 31] for showing so much enterprise?"

And so it would go through the whole educative evening.

Of course it is not likely that we shall ever have any educational developments along the lines suggested, but why not? If education will cure all the troubles of the farmers, why shouldn't it be tried on a few other problems? When the promoters of mergers and combines begin to do things that are against the best interests of the country, why shouldn't the farmers all yell: "Educate them!" When politicians become subservient to the powers that prey on the resources of the country, why shouldn't we all start to "educate them"? It wouldn't be so very hard. A few well-

placed votes at the right time would do wonders in the way of giving light and leading to those who are making trouble for us. Let the work of educating the farmers go right on, but I hope the farmers will soon feel that they have enough and to spare, and that they can devote a few hours to educating their leaders. "Educate him" is a beautiful cry for a campaign of education of the right kind, and as there are a lot of people besides the farmers who need education, I hope that it will soon swell to a fine chorus. Don't get mad at the people who are bamboozling you. Just give them a good dose of the medicine they are so fond of giving you. "Educate them."

Feb. 4.—Have you ever noticed how the sounds carry on some winter mornings? One day last week we had a few hours when I felt as if I were eavesdropping on the whole countryside. The air was very still and judging from the way the smoke fell to the ground it was very light. When I went out to do the chores I was struck at once by the clearness with which I could hear things going on. I could hear the neighbours talking to their cattle and somewhere about a mile away an angry man was reasoning with an impenitent pig. I could hear what he said to the pig and what the pig said to him, and judging by what the pig said I think the man must have kicked him while [Pg 32] pouring swill into the trough. Every sound started an echo that went bounding over the fields. I could hear a train moving on the Michigan Central Railroad twelve miles away and almost imagined I could hear the people in the town three miles off frying their breakfast bacon and grumbling about the high cost of living. I understand that the carrying quality of the air is due to its being thin or rarefied. According to the papers some inventor has increased the power of the telephone by having the air in the receiver warmed by some new device. The principle on which he works is probably the same as prevailed on this particular morning. The ease with which sounds carried was due to the condition of the atmosphere and that reminds me that at other times the air must be very heavy and dead. Anyway, I know that there are days when I cannot make a boy in the next room hear that the wood-box is empty even when I yell at the top of my voice. Now that must be due to the condition of the atmosphere, and I have noticed that the best way to overcome the difficulty is to warm things up.

Feb. 7.—There seems to be something wrong about Mr. Glendinning's criticism of telephone and rural free delivery at the recent meeting of the Grange. It seems like flying in the face of progress at a time when every one is insisting that we might as well be dead as unprogressive. I have avoided the telephone myself, chiefly because I got tired of it in the city and did not want any one to call me up to talk things over unless I wanted to talk. I have always sympathised with the British in their attitude to the telephone. The best families may have one in the kitchen for ordering supplies, but they refuse to be disturbed by it themselves. When a Britisher goes to his home he wants it distinctly understood that his home is his castle, and when he takes up the drawbridge and lets down the portcullis no one can intrude on him without his permission. I have a very distinct recollection of having an interview with an English business man, and while we were talking the telephone bell on his desk began ringing. Instead of stopping to hear what was [Pg 33] wanted he reached out and took the receiver from the hook and placed it on his desk so as to stop the ringing. He would not allow any one to reach him by the telephone any more than he would by letting them enter through the door of his office while he was keeping an engagement. As a contrast to this I remember an advertising man in New York telling me with much glee of being refused admission to a business man and instead of being discouraged he went to the nearest telephone booth, called the man up, submitted his proposition, and got his order. We people of the new world lack the necessary poise to use the telephone properly. When the bell rings we are consumed with curiosity until we know who is speaking and what is wanted. If we could learn the British method of using the telephone only when we need it, instead of using it for gossiping and all kinds of nonsense, and instead of being slaves to its constant ringing, there would be no good ground for objecting to it. There are still a few things that we can learn from the people in the Old Country.

Feb. 9.—What are signs of spring, anyway? when I was out doing the chores this morning the thermometer stood at ten below zero and yet there was a feeling of Spring in the air. The sky and the sunshine had a look of spring and the sparrows were all chirping as if they were talking of the good times coming. There was a hen cackling over a new-laid egg that would be worth its weight in silver on the table of a Toronto millionaire, and about a dozen Leghorns had found their voices again and were making a feeble attempt to scratch in a forkful of straw that lay in the sunshine. And yet, as I have just said, it was ten below zero. When I got up to shake down the coal-stove about seven o'clock it was eighteen below. A little while later when the sun was peeping over the horizon I looked again, and after scratching away the hoarfrost that was settling on everything I found the mercury standing at twenty below. But, of course, the air was so dry I didn't mind it. Still, I didn't stand before the thermometer to think things over. I preferred standing as close to [Pg 34] the stove as I could get. It did not seem much like spring just then. Come to think of it, I guess the signs of spring vary considerably. I remember years ago that a man who had moved to Dakota wrote home saying that it was beginning to look like spring out there. He said that the snow was already down to the tops of the windows.

Feb. 11.—I have fully made up my mind that another winter will not catch me so unprepared as this one did. Early in the fall I shall get all my agricultural reports and farm bulletins warmly pitted, so that when I want a basketful of them to help spend the long winter evenings I shall know where to get them. Now when I go to look one up it usually cannot be found, or if it is to be found it is badly frostbitten and weather-beaten. Besides, when they are lying about loose they are in danger of being used for all sorts of things. The other day I wanted to read up on the question of early potatoes, but the pages of the Vegetable-growers' Report were missing. When I finally tracked them down I found that I would have to stand on my head to read them where they had been pasted upside down over a knothole in a shed. The bulletin on Alfalfa is missing too. I

remember sitting on the fence reading it one day last fall, and in all probability I left it there while I went to do something else. Of course I intended to pick it up on my way back to the house. We all intend to do things like that, but somehow we seldom do. When I find it next spring it will probably be after a cow has stepped on it. It is a shame to do things in this way, for those bulletins are really valuable. I would feel worse about it, only I know that a lot of good farmers are just as careless about such things as I am.

Feb. 14.—When I read the articles in the papers telling about the high cost of living I am moved to ask why thrifty housekeepers do not buy their supplies in the old-fashioned way and get along without paying the charges and profits of the packers and retailers. Last fall I bought a dressed hog, hunted up a good recipe for curing bacon, ham, and salt pork, and proceeded to prepare the [Pg 35] winter supply. I also got a chart showing just how a pig should be cut up for curing, and followed all the directions carefully. By devoting a few hours to the job the winter pork was laid in at a cost of nine cents a pound. The only objection to this method was that the meat was so much better than the kind we had been buying at the stores for from twenty-three to twenty-seven cents a pound that we ate more of it. Encouraged by this experiment, I bought half of a fat heifer —like the man in the old joke we "killed half a cow"—and proceeded to cure the meat according to good recipes. As in the case of the pork, I got plans and specifications for cutting the beef, and followed the blue-print carefully. The beef is turning out as successfully as the pork, and the cost was nine cents a pound for the forequarter and ten cents a pound for the hindquarter. In this weather the roasts and steaks keep without curing of any kind, and besides a supply of corned beef and soup joints there was plenty of material for mincemeat and the old-fashioned "forcemeat" that could be found in any farmhouse in the days when people cured their own meat. This is a luxury I have looked for in vain in even the best restaurants. It is made by chopping together fresh beef and suet, moulding it in little cakes, and putting it away to set. This sounds as if it were a kind of Hamburg steak, but it is not. It has a flavour entirely its own. I imagine it is more like pemmican than anything else. And I mustn't forget the piece that is being spiced and dried. It seems to be coming on fine, and I have no doubt it will be just as good as the kind they charge thirty cents a pound for in the stores. I know all this sounds very carnivorous, but I don't care. I am not a believer in vegetarianism. I cannot forget that Cain was the first vegetarian on record, and we all know how bloodthirsty he got from living on fruits and salads. And the moral of it all is that the cost of living would not be so high if people did not turn over to the butchers and bakers and canners the work of curing and preparing their foodstuffs.

Feb. 16.—I see that there is much being written about the advisability of giving "demonstrations" [Pg 36] of proper beef-raising in various parts of the country so that the farmers may be induced to raise better stock. If the men who have this in mind will also arrange to give "demonstrations" of how to sell the finished product at a reasonable profit they may be able to accomplish something worth while.

Feb. 17.—Now is the time to think about reforestation. If you are thinking of planting in the woodlot now is the time to apply to the Department of Forestry for trees. I understand it is a case of first come first served, and you cannot get your order in too early. Of the thousand and eighty trees I planted last spring about eight hundred survived the heat and drouth of last summer. That is sufficiently encouraging to make me apply for twice the number of trees this spring, so as to finish the job of reforestation that I set out to do. The conditions last summer were greatly against the little trees, and yet the result was satisfactory. Above all things, I wish to impress on those who undertake work of this kind the necessity of following to the letter the instructions given by the department. They seem to be about perfect. The way in which the sod is turned up and left beside the tree not only keeps down the weeds and grass, but I noticed in the fall that the hole made by lifting the sod filled in with leaves, and in that way gave the trees a perfect mulching for the winter. I expect to find them all looking fine and hearty when the snow melts in the spring.

Feb. 18.—Well, the farming operations for this year have commenced in earnest. With the Ontario Government acting as my hired man, I propose to do a few things this summer—and to tell all about them. If we succeed we will try to be modest and if we fail we will be frank. What says the poet?

> "'Tis not in mortals to command success;
> But we'll do more, Sir James: we'll deserve it."

This is how it happened: When I undertook to handle a farm by myself I was immediately confronted by the problem of labour. How was I to get a good, capable hired man to help me with [Pg 37] my work? Not being able to solve the problem to my own satisfaction, I wrote to Mr. C. C. James, Commissioner of Agriculture, and put the matter up to him somewhat as follows:—

> "From what I have been reading in your bulletins and reports I see no excuse for the man who has a good farm and some capital if he keeps on working in an unprofitable way. That is all very well as far as it goes, but there are thousands of people like myself whom it does not touch. Now, I want to know just what you can do for a man who is trying to farm without capital and with a lame horse that is blind in one eye."

This led to some correspondence, and I told him about the orchard on the place. There are over fifty mature trees of standard varieties that have been yielding occasional crops of fairly good but very wormy apples. Mr. James promptly rose to the occasion and agreed to send an expert to show me how to handle that orchard. This morning Mr. F. M. Clement, B.S.A., representative of

the Ontario Department of Agriculture in Elgin county, came and pruned a tree for me and told just what he will do to get results from that orchard. He outlined his part of the work and my part, and we are going ahead. Just watch us.

Before telling of the interesting day I had with Mr. Clement I want to give some idea of the trouble many good people thought I was making for myself.

"You'll just find that you will have to work in that orchard all summer if you try to handle it according to the instructions of the Department of Agriculture. They'll make you scrape the trees and whitewash them and prune them and spray them three or four times and fertilise the land and work it every day. There will be no end to the fussing you will have to do."

That was the way they talked, but I just laid back my ears and looked stubborn. I made up my mind I would carry out all instructions, even if I had to work every day and then sit up every night with those trees. They told me that the scraping alone would take me at least three weeks [Pg 38] of steady work on trees like those. I would find that those Spies and Baldwins were

> "Wild and woolly and full of fleas;
> And had never been curried below the knees."

Nevertheless I was willing to curry them carefully, and even to go over them with a manicure set if that were necessary. And now my courage has been rewarded. Mr. Clement showed me how to curry an untamed tree, and estimated that I should be able to go over the whole orchard in two days at the outside. The pruning will take about a week. Then I shall have to devote about a day a week to the orchard for a couple of months. Mr. Clement and his assistant will do the spraying themselves to make sure that it is done right. That doesn't look as if I would not have any time left for anything else. Of course there is no knowing whether the work will pay or not. Unless there are plenty of fruit buds that have not been killed by the severe frosts there will be no crop. We shall have to wait until blossoming time to see what the prospects really are. In the meantime we shall do the necessary work of pruning, scraping, and the first spraying.

During the day Mr. Clement rid me of a few popular delusions. Ever since I can remember I have heard that an orchard will bear only every other year. It seems that this is true only of neglected orchards. Apple trees can be made by proper treatment to yield a decent crop every year. And yet I am not sure that I am rid of this bugbear of orcharding. This orchard has been neglected and it is just possible that this will be the off year. If the fruit buds are not on the trees all the expert work in the world will not make them bear apples. We made a hasty examination of a couple of trees and found some fruit buds, but not enough to make me see rosy visions of big profits. When I go at the pruning I shall examine more carefully, but in any case the treatment that will be given to the trees should insure a good crop next year. That seems to be the way with a whole lot of things on a farm. In order to get results you should have started working last year. I always [Pg 39] seem to get started a year too late, but now that I have the Ontario Government shedding wisdom upon me I hope to do better. By the way, there was one thing that I forgot to ask Mr. Clement. I had been warned not to prune the trees during the full of the moon because at that time the bark is loose and the trees would be injured. But as Mr. Clement came on the second day of the new moon I presume he had this in mind. A man who has studied the question of orcharding as thoroughly as he has and has won so high a reputation for good work would never overlook so important a point.

From the above paragraphs you may get an impression that we are having spring weather out in the country. Well, it has been pretty decent for a few days, but at the time of writing the blizzard of the season is raging. Although it was quite mild on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, and this morning was still temperate enough for us to prune trees, we are having a snowstorm-driven gale from the north-east that is piling such drifts as we have not seen for many a day.

Feb. 19.—I have to thank F. M. Clement, B.S.A., for a kindness he had no thought of doing me. By a chance question he recast all my ideas of farm work. He flung two words at me over his shoulder, and instantly my ideas shifted, like the bits of coloured glass in a kaleidoscope when you shake the tube. He came over from Dutton yesterday to show me how to handle that orchard I have been talking about, and, to begin with, he pruned a tree. While at work, he explained just why he removed one branch and spared another, and told me just what I should have in mind when pruning a tree. Of this part of my experience I shall have nothing to say, for you can get such instructions as he gave in the bulletins or in *The Farmer's Advocate*. From time to time I asked questions, and tried to figure out just how much hard work I would have to do to get results. I was also figuring how much of the work I could get out of doing without being caught. But he finally completed his task, so that every branch was swinging free and open to the [Pg 40] sunlight. Then he climbed down and looked at his work. I was standing behind him. Suddenly he asked, with a backward turn of his head:

"How's that?"

There you have the question that startled me. Simple enough, isn't it? There doesn't seem to be much to it, but wait.

It has been my privilege to stand beside a great artist while he drew aside the curtain from his picture, and then to have him fling the same question at me:

"How's that?"

It has also been my privilege to have poets whom the world acclaims as great, recite their poems to me, and then ask:

"How's that?"

To have the same question flung at me in the orchard was something of a shock. The manner and the tone were the same. I realised that once more I had been asked to pass on something in which a man had expressed himself. The chance question suddenly elevated work to a form of self-expression worthy to rank with the great arts. Ever since I have been able to see possibilities in work—mere work. It is something that a man can engage in as a man, and not simply as a drudge.

"How's that?"

Now the cat is out of the bag. I have let you see that I do not like physical work, and never have. But I am neither humiliated nor ashamed. Why should I like work? I have seen it in almost all its forms, and have practised it in a few. Almost everywhere it is slavish and sordid. I have seen it in the sweat-shops of the big cities, in the factories of the New England States, the mills of the south, and of England, and on the Canadian farms. Always it was wearing, soul-stifling, degrading. Men, women, and children—little children—were being ground to extinction by work. They became old before their time, broken-spirited, deformed. Work is a hideous monster, demanding all we can give of youth and strength and vitality, and giving in return only a starved and meagre living. Seeing work in this way, I learned to hate it. It has "the primal, eldest curse [Pg 41] on it." It is slavery of the cruellest kind, and makes slaves of men even where they are their own masters. Do you wonder that I turned to the arts? The arts are joyous, exultant. They enable a man to express himself, and we all hunger for self-expression. The greatest tragedy in the world is to be misunderstood, and we are all misunderstood. The artist makes himself understood—at least, to a select few—but the worker usually dies

"With all his sweetness in him."

But here was a worker who expressed himself by an ordinary piece of farm work. He had laid creative hands on a tree, and it would take form as a picture might under the brush of an artist, or a song on the lips of a poet. He had put into it his conception of what it should be. In that way he gave expression to his own soul, and was willing that the world should look and see. He had enjoyed the task because he had a definite purpose and knew just what he was doing. He got the effect he was after, just as an artist might when working under the stimulus of an urgent inspiration. I looked with new-found admiration, and now the tree has a new meaning to me. I feel that he has revealed to me something of himself, just as did the artists and the poets.

How's that?

Since getting this little flash of light, farm work has looked very good. Farming is a great art, and the artist works with life, rather than with pigments or words. He gets his effects by working in accord with Nature. Surely that is greater than merely imitating Nature, or describing it. And, though I look at farming in this way, I do not regard it any the less as a science or as a money-making proposition. In fact, it should be all the more scientific and profitable by making it artistic. The art puts the joy into it and elevates it above mere drudgery. Mark Twain said that "Play is work that a man enjoys," and I see no reason why many kinds of farm work should not have the charm of play. If we could only go at it in that way, we would accomplish more, and life [Pg 42] would be more worth living.

Of course, I quite realise that I am only a beginner at real farming, and that I should remember the text: "Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off." There is a job of ditching to do that it will be hard to make joyous, but never mind. I have at least seen that farm work can be made fine and ennobling, instead of being a sordid drudgery, and that is worth while, even though I may have to write a poem to express what I mean, instead of cultivating a field so that it will tell what I want to say as clearly as would the verses. I know that a true farmer who was master of the possibilities of the art he practises could do it, and for that reason I shall have a higher respect for farming. I may not be able to do it myself, but my failure will not prove that I am wrong. It will only prove that I cannot do the work as it should be done. Perhaps I have been hating work too long to take it in the right spirit, even after I have discovered its possibilities. But knowing what I do, I shall in future have nothing but pity for the man who can make of farm work nothing better than a dreary round of grinding work, and I am afraid I shall have little respect for the young man who starts at the present time if he develops into a slave. He has a chance that his father never had to make his life worth while. In the meantime, I am going at farm work with the feeling that it is a great art, in which a man can find enjoyment and self-expression, and if I find that I am wrong, I shall not be afraid to tell you so and to shoulder the blame. But if I find that there is both joy and profit in it, I shall certainly have my proper laugh at you who think that my fancies are absurd. I have much to get even for, and I shall not fail to rub it in if I get a chance.

Feb. 21.—George Grossmith has a story that never fails to delight his audiences—in England. He tells, with affected sympathy, of a conversation he once had with an American lady who had seen better days.

"We had everything the heart could wish for," she told him, "until my husband was caught in the [Pg 43] panic of '93. His business went to smash in a day. It took every cent we had to satisfy the creditors; but what hurt me the most was that we had to give up the old family mansion." Here she heaved a desolating sigh. "Yes, we had to give up the family mansion. It had been in the family for twelve years."

If you once heard an old British audience laugh at that you would never again doubt that the

good people at the seat of empire have a sense of humour. To the solid citizen who can trace back the ownership of his home to some follower of William the Conqueror, who slew the original Saxon owner on the threshold so as to clear the title, all new world pretensions to pride of ancestry and estate are wildly funny. Yet a word may be said in all seriousness in defence of landed pride here in Canada.

No one who has made a study of the pioneers of Ontario can doubt for a moment the inspiration of their toil. They wanted homes. They knew, as generations before them knew, what it meant to be tenants—subject to the whims and oppressions of landlords or their agents. They wanted homes that would be their own, and that would be inherited by their descendants. Their first aim was to secure shelter, food, and clothing for their families. Money-making was not only a secondary matter, but, in most cases, was out of the question. Until the railroads came there were no means of transportation and no markets. What the new clearings produced beyond the needs of the settlers was used to barter for necessities, or was given in payment for labour that cleared more land. In fact, some of the pioneers were as land-hungry as the farmer described by Henry Ward Beecher. His sole purpose in life was to "raise more hogs, to make more money, to buy more land, to raise more hogs, to make more money, to buy more land, to raise more hogs," etc.

An evidence of the home-making purpose of all this toil is the nature of the wills made by the pioneers. In almost every case they left to their descendants tracts of land, rather than money, [Pg 44] even though, in many instances, their farms had to be divided into small sections to attain their end. One of the earliest recollections of the writer is hearing some of the old pioneers regretting that it was no longer possible to entail their land so that it would always remain in the family.

How the work of the pioneers went astray is shown by an examination of the present ownership of the land. An inquiry into the history of fifty farms in one district brought out the fact that only eight are owned by descendants of the original settlers. The children raised on these farms have scattered to every part of the earth and their heritage has passed into the hands of strangers. If an old-home-week could bring back all who are living, there would be a notable gathering of lawyers, doctors, merchants, business men, and at least two multi-millionaires; but if the sturdy old home-makers could rise from the graveyard where they lie with their feet to the east, it is doubtful if they would be as cordial to those who sold their birthright, even to advantage, as they would be to those who clung to the land and cherished the name and memory of their forefathers. It is among the latter that one finds the pride of home that makes patriots. Their land means more to them than a source of profit. They know the history of every field, the kind of timber that was on it, and the toil with which it was cleared. They know where the deer runs were, and the beaver dams, and the knolls where the Indians used to camp. There is not an acre but has its little tradition, and they are bound to it all by the sentiments that unite to make a national sentiment. They are not able to trace back their titles to a Domesday Book. But what of it? Their homes have been in their families since they were homes, and perhaps ten generations hence that will be as much a source of pride as if they had been the spoils of warlike conquest.

Feb. 22.—After spending a couple of hours reading bulletins of the Department of Agriculture I felt the need of some light reading, and picked up Mr. Frank Yeigh's little encyclopædia of *Five Thousand Facts About Canada*. This is a book that deserves the comment that a Scotchman made [Pg 45] on the dictionary: "It has bonny tales, but they're unco short." Here is one of the little tales that fairly staggered me:

"Ontario ranks higher than any other province in field crops, being nearly forty per cent. of the whole, fairly double that of the next important, and greater than the three grain-growing provinces of the North-west combined."

Now, what do you think of that? I thought that, when compared with the clamorous west, we were raising only chicken-feed, and hardly enough of that. Here are a few more little tales that should be framed in every house in Ontario, and that all the school children should be forced to commit to memory:

"The value of agricultural produce has increased 60 per cent. during fifteen years.

"Three-quarters of the dairy produce of Canada comes from Ontario.

"The province produces 75 per cent. of all fruits grown in Canada, 60 per cent. of the plums, 70 per cent. of the apples, 80 per cent. of the small fruits and pears, and 99 per cent. of the peaches and grapes."

We should find out where that other peach tree and grape vine are and buy them up so that we could claim the whole 100 per cent. On top of all this we get these two amazing statements:

"There are about twenty million acres of good arable land left for settlement south of the 50th parallel of latitude.

"Ontario received in 1909-10, 46 out of every 129 of the total immigration into Canada."

As the total immigration for 1910 was 325,000, one cannot be blamed for asking why Ontario did not get more settlers. This province seems to be badly in need of a press agent. And why, in the name of all that is sensible, should any one want to leave Ontario when it offers such opportunities? If they must wander, why not wander about in Ontario? Let the people who are now having their sale bills printed and putting "owner removing to the west" at the bottom give [Pg 46] some thought to these facts before it is too late.

Feb. 24.—I have received so many inquiries about the education of Sheppy the collie that it seems time to report progress, although there has been very little. Sheppy is willing to go to the

barnyard without being dragged by a rope. He has even gone so far as to drive one cow across the yard, but it's seldom long before he remembers something and bolts back to the house. I am beginning to wonder if this is not a case where corporal punishment would be justified. Moral suasion seems to have no effect. And every day he is developing so much steam that he is in danger of getting into trouble unless he finds some useful outlet for his energies. Every day he has an outburst that would raise the countryside if these were the dog-days. He will start running wildly around the house, barking, with his head down, snapping at posts and trees, and he will keep up the performance for several minutes. Then he will stop as suddenly as he started and come up to any one who has been watching, evidently wanting to be petted and praised for his performance. Some people might think he was going mad, but I am convinced that his case should be diagnosed as Mr. Bumble diagnosed that of Oliver Twist. "It's meat." He is living too high and is in need of work. He is becoming quite expert at catching mice in the fields, but that is hardly the proper occupation for a dog with a pedigree. I know he should be trained to look after the children like those dogs we sometimes read about, but he gets altogether too much fun out of pulling off their caps and mits and running away with them to be allowed any position of responsibility. Oh, well, he'll grow old and be a serious dog quite soon enough. I guess I'll let him enjoy himself while he can. It is really worth while having one bit of irresponsible joyousness frolicking about the place. No one can look at Sheppy without accepting his invitations to have a play with him, and that of itself justifies his existence.

Feb. 25.—The quail seem to be wintering in good shape.

Yesterday a flock of over a dozen was seen, and when we were tapping a few trees in the sugar [Pg 47]
bush I saw tracks in the mud where it had been thawed by the heat of the sun. Although the quail here did not come up for their feed regularly, they always came after storms, and they had good old-fashioned shelter in the shape of brush heaps. I know where there are two more flocks in the neighbourhood that have been getting their feed regularly every day for months. The prospects are that we shall have plenty of quail this year. I am afraid the doves and meadow-larks have been killed by the storms. I never see them in the fields any more, and a short time ago Sheppy was seen playing with a dead meadow-lark. The crows have been with us most of the winter, though they kept very quiet. On the fine day when we tapped one was perched in the topmost branch of a "stag-topped" maple, and his tones were positively argumentative. I don't know whether he was trying to tell us that spring is at hand or was trying to tell us that we were rushing the season. Anyway he seemed very much in earnest. Outside of the crows, a few blue jays, and the sparrows, the country is wholly without bird-life. The snowbirds have disappeared, and so have the hawks that were hovering around most of the winter. I think I saw a grosbeak a few days ago, but I am not sure. Nevertheless the time has come when every one should be spouting Roberts' lines:

"Hark, the migrant hosts of June,
Marching nearer, noon by noon!"

The spring and the birds will soon be with us again, and I am glad of it. I am perfectly willing to confess that I am thoroughly tired of this long winter.

Feb. 26.—Land of Good Neighbours! How will that do as a descriptive title for Canada? We have heard much of the "Land o' Cakes" and something overmuch of the "Land of the Free and Home of the Brave." Why should we not have a title of our own that is at once descriptive and true? Canada is, above everything else, a land of good neighbours. If the pioneers had not been good [Pg 48]
neighbours the country would never have been settled and cleared. The almost superhuman work of clearing away the forests was not done by individuals, but by neighbourhoods. Every field was the scene of a logging bee, where good neighbours helped to roll the logs into heaps for the burning. No man could do such work unaided, so all worked together. Not only did this accomplish needed work, but it led to much social intercourse, mutual helpfulness, and enduring friendships. No one who has burrowed in the history of pioneer days or listened to the stories of the few and scattered survivors can help being struck by the neighbourly spirit that evidently existed everywhere. Was any one sick, the neighbours gathered and put in his crops for him or reaped it, as the case might be. Was a newcomer in need of seed grain, a neighbour would lend it and wait till harvest for his pay. Before the introduction of labour-saving machinery practically all heavy work was done by bees. They had logging bees, reaping bees, threshing bees, sewing bees, spinning bees, quilting bees, and bees for every kind of work. Both the men and the women helped one another in this way. Circumstances forced the pioneers to be good neighbours, and the results they achieved showed that they did their duty by one another.

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

    Chorus—

They worked their will and ate their fill,
  And rested from their labours.

God bless them all, both great and small,
  Who made our Land of Good Neighbours!
Was one too weak—they'd give a lift!
  Was seed grain lacked—they'd lend it!
Was there a row—the minister
  Would lecture them and end it.
In summer heat and winter cold
  They did their duty roundly;
They lived and died like men of faith,
  And now they're sleeping soundly.

  Chorus.

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

  Chorus."

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

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

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

[Pg 51]

"There is some soul of goodness in things evil,
Would men observingly distil it out;
For our bad neighbour makes us early stirrers,
Which is both healthful and good husbandry:
Besides, they are our outward consciences,

And preachers to us all, admonishing
That we should dress us fairly for our end.
Thus may we gather honey from the weed,
And make a moral of the devil himself."

Feb. 28.—We have had a fox-hunt. When we first heard of a fox in the neighbourhood, I mourned my lack of enthusiasm, and glanced back with regret to the days when I would have pursued it to the death. When in that philosophical mood I made the usual mistake of overlooking one important factor of the problem. It did not occur to me that the enthusiasm and faith that I had lost might still be burning in the heart of youth. Although I had no intention of hunting the fox, I had promptings of the old hunting spirit, and almost every time I crossed a track in the woods I would follow it as long as it did not wander too far from the direction in which I was going. One of these little tracking expeditions led me to a hollow oak stump, which the fox evidently used for a den from time to time. I looked into the hollow to see if Mr. Fox was at home, but he was not. But I found evidence of his recent occupancy in the half-eaten body of a rabbit. This dispelled the [Pg 52] last lingering doubt that the tracks were those of a fox, and when I told about my find the fat was in the fire. The boys were at once at a fever heat, and I had to promise that we would go after the fox the first thing in the morning. After that was settled they began to dispute about what they would buy with the price of the skin. As I think it over now I know I should have improved the occasion by telling them the story of the man who sold the lion's skin while the lion was still wearing it, and was eaten by the lion when he came to get it, but it did not occur to me. Somehow I never think of improving lectures at the proper time.

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

When the dawn became bright enough for us to be able to see the sights on the rifle, we started [Pg 53] across the fields to the woods. There were sparrows at the stable, but we did not bother with them. We were after big game, and sparrows did not interest us.

Passing through a patch of withered weeds we saw a lot of rabbit tracks and that made us pause, for rabbits are not to be despised, especially when you haven't managed to get one in a long time. We spent a few minutes in trying to disentangle the tracks, but were finally forced to the conclusion that the rabbits had all gone home to sleep. There was a moment of excitement when we saw a red squirrel, but as it was the only one that had been seen in the neighbourhood for over a year, I would not allow it to be molested. Anyway, he was a pretty wise red squirrel, for he got himself under cover within about ten seconds, and in that way settled the argument in my favour. Although red squirrels are usually impudent and saucy, this one was not taking any chances with human beings who were out so early carrying a gun. After leaving the red squirrel, we plodded straight to the woods where we found the little covering of snow full of tracks of many kinds. There were places where the black squirrels had been hunting for beechnuts so industriously that it looked as if a drove of pigs had been rooting around. Overhead in the trees a flock of blue jays were scolding and squawking, and as I could not remember whether blue jays are of the beneficial birds that should be protected we gave them the benefit of the doubt, and did not shoot at them, although they frequently offered tempting targets. A big hawk sailed out of the top of a tree before we were within range, and, anyway, we would not have shot at him, for hawks now have an excellent reputation on account of the work they do in killing mice. We had not gone far before we found the tracks of the fox, and then the real hunt began. It might have been much more exciting had it not been for a slight thaw on a previous afternoon which enabled us to see that all the fox tracks were, at least, a day old. Still they were fox tracks, and we [Pg 54] scouted about hunting for new ones, but without success. Beside a fence near a briar patch we found a rabbits' playground. There was a little space about a rod in diameter where the snow was beaten hard by their little feet. We remembered that in one of his nature stories Charles G. D. Roberts tells how the rabbits come to such places on moonlight nights, and jump around and slap the snow with their flat hind feet in the progress of some strange games that are popular with rabbits. Only a couple of times before have I come across playgrounds of this kind. They seem to be about as rare as the dancing floors of the elephants. But we were after the fox, and did not stay to study the exhibition. As we were unable to find fresh tracks I led the way to the hollow stump referred to above, and we held an inquest on the remains of the rabbit. The work was unquestionably that of a fox, but where was he? In feverish haste we crossed and recrossed the little patch of woods, investigating every stump and hollow log that might give shelter to a fox. Although there were tracks everywhere they did not seem to lead anywhere. At one log we found skunk tracks, but after a careful consultation decided not to visit the little housekeepers. We

would just make a purely formal call, and not try to establish either friendly or unfriendly relations. None of us felt inclined to take the risk of being forced to live as a hermit—the usual fate of an inexperienced hunter who tries conclusions with a specimen of "Mephitica," sub-family "Mustelidae." We called him his scientific name and let it go at that.

When we came to the tree where the chicken-killing hawks have had their nest for years, and persist in keeping it, although we shoot them up every summer, we were interested to find that the tree was dead, and that last summer the hawks had fooled us by building a new nest in the bushy top of a big tree near by. It seems that hawks never nest in a dead tree, possibly because it does not give them sufficient cover, or because there is a danger of the dead limbs breaking and [Pg 55] letting the nest tumble to the ground. By this time we had been forced to the conclusion that we were not going to find the fox, and the comments of the blue jays were so insulting that it was hard to keep from taking a shot at them. And then, and then—we headed straight for the house, and all burst through the door together asking in eager tones, "Is dinner ready?" If we didn't find the fox we found a fox's appetite.

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

MARCH [Pg 56]

March 1.—This has been a great winter for signs in the sky. We have had halos around both sun and moon, and both parhelia and paraselenae. (I looked those up in the dictionary. If I had not I would have called them sun-dogs and moon-dogs, but there is nothing like being scientific and correct.) I always understood that such things were signs of storms, but this year they did not seem to work right. We would have these exhibitions, and there would be no noticeable change in the weather.

In all the illustrations of these things that I have examined the straight lines that combine with the circles always run parallel to the horizon or at right angles to it. But one day a couple of weeks ago there was a halo around the sun that had a bright tangent line that was inclined towards the horizon at an angle of forty-five degrees. This moves me to say to the scientists, as my boys say to me: "Now, why was that?" Of ordinary sun-dogs at both sides of the sun and even above and below it we had many, sometimes with halos and sometimes without. Though I have often seen halos around the moon, this winter is the first time I have seen moon-dogs. They are the same as those around the sun, only fainter and without colour. Sometimes the sun would go down with a straight line reaching up from it like the tail of a comet. I am told that all these manifestations are due to ice crystals in the upper air, and I have no doubt there were plenty of them this year. But I should really like to know if that slanting line was good form. The books give no pictures of such lines, and say nothing about them.

To-day the boys and I took a walk to see how the wild things are wintering and were disappointed [Pg 57] to find no trace of the quail. There is one corner where there are weeds and briars that seemed to be their favourite shelter and feeding ground, but there was not a track to be seen. On making inquiries I find no one has seen them or any trace of them since the blizzard a couple of weeks ago. Before that there were two flocks on the farm, one of nine birds and one of sixteen. As they had brush-heaps in which to find shelter I thought they would come through the winter all right, but the deep drifts must have buried them somewhere. We used to be able to find their tracks at any time we looked for them and often we would flush the birds themselves. But though the quail have disappeared the mice do not seem to have been affected. Their tracks are everywhere, and in the edge of the woodlot we found a dead mole that had evidently found its way to the surface, only to be overcome by the cold. We saw one black squirrel that dodged around a big maple until we divided into two parties and went yelling around the tree in opposite ways. Then it jumped into a hole. While crossing a field we found an unaccountable track. It was merely a long straight line in the snow such as a boy makes with the whip when driving in a cutter. But there were no tracks beside it. We decided to investigate and after following the line about fifty yards came to a spot where an owl or hawk had stopped to tear up a rabbit. It had evidently been flying low with it, so that it dragged in the snow. We then followed the line in the opposite direction, where we found in the top of a corn-shock the form in which the rabbit had been sitting when captured. It must have been there for some time, for there were no rabbit tracks, though it was two days since the snow had fallen. Its enemy had swooped down on it and lifted it out of the form, but found it too heavy to carry to a tree, so stopped and had its meal on the snow.

Although it is over two weeks since Mr. Clement was here to show me how to prune the orchard, there have been only two days when it was possible to work at the trees. Zero weather with high [Pg 58] winds makes tree climbing about the coldest job that a man can tackle. Still there are twenty thoughtfully pruned and carefully scraped trees awaiting his inspection. If the weather moderates a little we shall soon be able to finish the job, for we seem to have got the hang of it. But though I feel sure that I have followed his instructions as I understood them, I am worrying

about it just as a schoolboy does about his homework. I want him to come and look them over and say whether they are right. It will soon be time for him to come again and do the first spraying, but everything depends on the weather. This winter seems to be in for making records of all kinds and there is no telling when it will be through with its tricks. But as soon as it gives me a chance I shall finish the pruning and await my fate. If he says that I did not do the work right I shall have to own up to it, and I hate to do that just as much as any one else.

March 4.—Having just read eighteen pioneer biographies and several pioneer novels of the approved kind, in which everything ends happily, and the hero goes into the ministry in the last chapter, I am tempted to-day to invite everybody to go back over fifty years with me and see what an old-fashioned spring in the woods was like. There is nothing to keep us here, anyway. Outside there is an east wind blowing. The day began with sleet and is ending with slush, and the drive to the post office was anything but a "joy-ride."

The impression I have gathered from the stories I have been reading is that a late spring in the old days was a real hardship. It meant more than a delay in getting in crops and spoiling the chances for a money-making harvest. The great question with the settlers during the first few years was not money, but food. A late spring meant, time and again, that they were forced to eat their seed grain and seed potatoes in order to preserve life. I have just read about one pioneer, and not one of the unthrifty kind either, who was forced to dig up the potatoes after they were planted in order to feed his family. In spite of all this, one of his sons is now an eminent doctor [Pg 59] and another a banker. When spring came to the woods there might be a few people who were glad to see the flowers, but there were more whose first search was for leeks, cow-cabbage, nettles, and other pot-herbs. Many had to live for months during the winter on potatoes. Those who could afford pork and oatmeal were already on the high-road to prosperity, and to many wheat bread was a luxury. The more I read and learn about pioneer life the more I am forced to the conclusion that much of the courage shown was the courage of despair. Having moved into the wilderness and built their log huts, there was absolutely nothing for them to do but to maintain life by every possible means. Many of the settlers were scores of miles from any place that could make a pretence to civilisation. Even if they struggled out, what could they hope for without money? The hospitality of civilisation soon wears thin to the penniless, and, even if they were too proud to confess failure, they would soon find that it was better to depend on the sometimes niggardly bounty of nature than on the bounty of fellow-men whose condition was but little better than their own. When men and women had to depend on the spring for food, as well as for warmth and opportunity, they had some reason to be despondent if she lingered a little longer than usual in the lap of winter.

When the spring finally came the settler was in many cases a prisoner on the patch of high ground which he had started to clear. It was not until government drains had been put through that there was much thought of clearing the low ground. If any of this low ground was cleared it was left under grass, the native redtop. For at least a month every spring it would be flooded most of the time, but I have been told that this flooding fertilised the ground, and that the hay crops were more wonderful than anything we see to-day. Even though the snow might melt during winter thaws, the water remained in the swamps, and when the spring "breaking-up" really began the country became a series of islands. I know of one place not a mile from here [Pg 60] where there is now a good gravel road that is passable at any time of the year. Fifty years ago people who had to pass that way were forced to use a raft for about three-quarters of a mile during the spring floods. That was on a public road, of course, and was a great improvement on the blazed trails through the woods which most people had to use. A pretty custom of those days was to have a pole wherever the trail crossed a creek or water-hole. The foot passenger was supposed to take this and vault over the water. No wonder vaulting with a pole used to be one of the popular sports on the Queen's Birthday and at the Fall Fair. Though the girls did not take part in the public exhibitions, I am assured that in the depths of the forest they often showed themselves just as expert as their brothers. Careful people when going on a journey of any length through the woods in the springtime took with them a strong, slender pole that they could use for balancing themselves when making their way through the swamps on fallen logs or to vault with when necessary. Another favourite way of crossing the old creeks was on logs, and as it was seldom that any one took the trouble to flatten them, considerable skill was needed by those who attempted a passage. And that reminds me of a story. One spring many years ago two young men were paying court to the same girl. Both had to cross the creek that wound before her home, and one of them had a bright idea. As soon as it was dark he hurried to the creek, carrying a pail of soft soap. Straddling the log, he worked his way backwards across and spread the slippery soap lavishly on the little bridge over which his rival was to follow. He then washed his hands and went to the house to press his suit. About an hour later he was quietly gratified to hear a loud splash in the swollen stream. This put so much courage in him that he pleaded his cause with complete success. Some time about midnight he tore himself away from his future bride and was so exultingly happy that he forgot all about the soaped log. There is no need telling you what happened.

Another thing that made the old-time late spring a disaster was the need of clearing the land. It [Pg 61] was during the winter that most of the chopping was done, and in the spring the brush and log heaps had to be burned off before any crop could be put in among the stumps. If the spring was late it was often hard to get the seed in the ground early enough.

About the only relaxation of those spring days when settlers were imprisoned on their islands was that of yelling. The young fellows, when they started out to "browse" their cattle in the morning, would let out a lusty whoop just to tell their neighbours that they were alive. Others would

answer them, and the "Good-morning" yell would pass through a settlement in much the same way that cock-crowing does now. You know how that goes if you ever happen to be awake early enough. First you hear a faint crowing away to the east. A few seconds later you hear it a little nearer, and almost before you realise what is going on your own pet Leghorns are hard at it. Then the crowing comes from the nearest barnyard to the west, and presently the noise dies away faintly in that direction. Possibly the cocks are telling one another that all is well, just as the settlers did.

What was perhaps the greatest hardship of all was mentioned in only one of the pioneer stories I have been reading. Possibly the reason why nothing was said about homesickness was that, while these stern people felt it, they considered it a weakness to be ashamed of. Yet homesickness is a very real sickness with a fine Latin name—nostalgia—and only a short time ago I read about American soldiers in the Philippines dying from it. The other day a young English emigrant in Toronto was so homesick that he stole a bicycle so that he might be deported. His case was one for a doctor rather than for a magistrate, but in the old days there was no deportation. If there had been some of those husky first settlers would have stolen the governor's mansion if necessary so as to get home. When conditions were at their worst in the old days in Ontario even a cave-dweller would have got homesick, but we who were born here know nothing of this, and it [Pg 62] is just as well. Now let us get back to our own late spring and be thankful. Still I don't want any more people telling me that this is nothing to springs they have known, and that they wouldn't be a bit surprised if we had another month of wintry weather. As the old proverb puts it: "Beware the fury of a patient man."

March 5.—More than once when coming in with an armful of wood that was cut and split just to keep the fire going, I have heard the remark: "If we ever get a year's wood cut, split, and piled, I shall have a photographer come and make a picture of it." So when word came that the buzz-saw men would be in the neighbourhood in a few days I felt a longing to see one of these pictures myself. I felt that it would be a great joy to take the bucksaw and axe and put them away in some safe place and then forget where I had put them. For almost a year we had been preparing spasmodically for a day with the buzz-saw. All the tops and little trees that we bought last winter had been cut and most of them had been hauled to a knoll in the woods and piled. But there was still a full day's work to do at hauling up the larger logs and skidding them in a heap. Having in my mind's eye a picture of that year's wood neatly piled and of an axe and bucksaw losing the brightness that comes from constant use, I agreed cheerfully to help at the skidding. Although the snow was a trifle deep, it was an ideal day for such work. The logs slipped over the ground as if they were greased and the air was too frosty for the snow to melt on your clothes. The woods protected us from the wind that whirled the snow in ghostly drifts across the fields and the work was hard enough to keep us comfortably warm. But before "snaking" up the logs we had to provide ourselves with handspikes, and that showed me how thoroughly the cattle have been destroying the forests. There was not a sapling to be found that was small enough to make a handspike. Every seedling that had sprouted in the past forty years had been nibbled down by the cows and sheep that had been allowed to run in the woods. We had to make handspikes from the [Pg 63] straightest limbs we could find. They were not like the blue beeches and ironwoods of earlier days, but they served our needs. The logs were not very big, anyway, and a two-inch handspike made from a maple limb can stand all the muscle I have to spare for heavy work.

Skidding up logs is not what you would call steady work. It is spasmodic, and it is the spasms that catch a fellow. While we were laying the first tier it was comparatively easy. It was no particular trick to pry loose the logs so that we could get chainhold, and most of my time was spent in walking from the pile to the scattered logs, with the handspike over my shoulder. I felt quite primitive, and thought I was getting a better appreciation of what it meant to be a pioneer. But the second tier made a difference. The logs had to be rolled up on skids, and that meant some moments of heavy lifting, pushing, and heaving with the handspikes. No matter how skilful a man may be at "soldiering" and at taking the little end of the log and doing the grunting while the other man takes the big end and does the lifting, there are bound to be times when he will have to put out every ounce of his strength to keep about a ton of maple from falling back on top of him. After one of those strenuous moments I suddenly remembered a triumphant phrase of cunningly wrought coarseness that described the effort I had put forth with a vigour and accuracy far beyond the possibilities of the vocabulary I am now using. I had heard it long ago from a moss-backed ruffian who had been lifting one of the old horsepowers they once used with thrashing machines. It was a phrase of more than Elizabethan frankness, but somehow it did not seem so bad out in the woods in connection with fierce physical action. Its robust humour could have been conceived only by an imaginative pioneer who knew hard work in all its phases, but, though everything connected with the pioneers is of interest to me, I am afraid I must allow that phrase to pass into oblivion. Still it had its value, for it reminded me of the fact that there were [Pg 64] men among the makers of Canada whose mental attitude would be more thoroughly appreciated by Burns than by Longfellow. Clearing the land was not a pink tea affair, and it is not surprising that some of the rough diamonds who did the work described it with brutal frankness.

The supreme moment of the day came after we had heaved a big, cranky, bowed log into its place at the top of the pile. A couple of times it almost slipped back, but by heaving and straining we made it go up. When it was in its place and we stopped, panting and breathless, I could see stars in every direction. My brain was absolutely vacant—every thought and idea crushed out of it, just as you might squeeze water out of a sponge. While the other man drove away to get another log I sat down to recover myself. Then came the flush of exaltation that always comes to every one when something has been accomplished. I was strangely in accord with the world of effort in which we are living. Not thinking, but accepting all things, for one great moment I was exalted

above the struggle. Somehow the things that I often rage against seemed intelligible and part of one great plan that is working out for the good of all. It was

"A momentary taste
Of being from the well within the waste."

Thinking it over afterwards, I understood what Thoreau meant when he wrote:

"I moments live who lived but years."

But it was some time before definite thoughts came back to me. Almost unconsciously I began noting my surroundings as part of a great picture or mood that I would wish to remember. I saw the grey sky and the snowflakes sifting down between me and the trees. I noticed a woodpecker busy on a lichened trunk and heard the distant clamour of cattle.

But when I thought from all things
A perfect charm was caught.
The little winds came begging
Lest they should be forgot.

[Pg 65]

In spite of the momentary physical exhaustion the feeling experienced was one of joyousness—a joyousness that comes to all men who accomplish a task, however humble. It was probably such moments that Bergson had in mind when he wrote:

"We seek efficiency, or, perhaps, it would be truer to say that we seek the immediate product of efficiency, which is joy. Joy is not pleasure, but the satisfaction of creation. Making money gives pleasure, no doubt, to the artist; his joy, however, comes only from seeing the picture grow under his brush, from feeling that he is bringing something new into the world. It is this joy which, in some form or other, man always seeks."

Man always seeks joy, and he can find it when skidding logs as easily as when painting a picture, and the effort in one case is as noble as in the other. Joy is always evanescent, but I clung to my moment as long as I could.

The poise of my soul is starry high,
And wild words rush to my lips
As the thought of the world goes racing by
Like sunshine after eclipse.

And then, and then I had to come back to the earth and tackle another log. But what does it matter? All things are in the day's work just the same, whether it be heaving on a handspike or doing paragraphs that are wickedly designed—to parody Shelley:

"To pump up oaths from financiers, and grind
The gentle spirits of our meek reviews."

In the everyday world where we drudge joylessly most of the time everything seems to be at sixes and sevens, and we could hardly endure it were it not for the moments when something jars us out of ourselves into accord with the great purpose of all things. And I firmly believe that every being that draws the breath of life has such moments, though he may not know how to give them expression. It is in such moments that we feel that all men are free and equal. The joy of the [Pg 66] ditcher who accomplishes his task supremely well is the same as that of the millionaire who puts through a successful deal, or of the artist or poet. It is nonsense to say that all the poetry of the world has been written. Every moment of joy is a living poem, and such moments come to all of us somehow, some time.

March 7.—When the quail came right up to the door I might have known that something good was going to happen. It was during the cold spell—the lion spell—in the beginning of March. Everything was buried under snow and at seven o'clock in the morning the thermometer had touched ten degrees below zero. I was doing the chores at the stable when I heard the quail whistling in the orchard and fully intended going to have a look at them, to see how they were wintering. I had not set out feed for them for, alas, there are enough weeds on the place and in the neighbourhood to feed them fat. But to resume. When I had finished the chores and was starting towards the house I struck the tracks of the quail, looking like a picture of loosely strung barbed wire on the snow. To my surprise I found that they were headed straight for the house. In growing amazement I followed them until they passed around the corner of the house and then I saw the marks of their wings on the snow where they had taken flight, within ten feet of the front door. I felt really disappointed when I found that they had paid me a visit and I had not been at home. I do not know of many from whom I would have so thoroughly enjoyed a little call. No one in the house had noticed them, but judging from the excitement of Sheppy, the dog, he must have seen them and perhaps had something to do with their flight. He kept running about nosing their tracks and barking. It made me feel that I am being accepted in the country, now that the quail are so friendly. They are very careful about their neighbours and it is not every one they are willing to chum with.

On the very next morning after the visit of the quail spring came. The temperature rose fifty degrees in a few hours, a warm wind drove from the south, and almost before we could realise [Pg 67] what was happening the snow was a memory. The crows had taken possession of the woods and

the sky and were talking crow politics till you couldn't hear yourself think. A couple of song sparrows fluttered around the orchard, but it was too early for them to begin singing. The first thing we knew winter was under foot, beaten to earth by the wind and the sun. Only in the frost under the soft mud was there any trace of it. Then some one said: "I'll bet the sap is running to-day." After a conference in which the prospects of this kind of weather lasting were fully discussed we got the brace and bit and the spiles and began to rinse the sap-buckets. Then we went to the woods and started to tap in earnest. Before the bit could be withdrawn from the first hole the sap was already trickling down the bark. There was no doubt of it! Sap was running! With the help of a little boy who was just tall enough to reach up and hang the buckets on the spiles we went at the work with a will and soon the "tink-tunk" of the falling drops could be heard in every direction. The grave little helper picked what he called "a big fat tree" for his very own so that he can have plenty of hot syrup and taffy. As we are making maple syrup strictly for our own use we tapped only fifty trees. Wood is so scarce that it makes maple syrup an expensive luxury and the current price would not pay for the fuel used, not to mention the labour and the investment in buckets and the boiling kettle. But, at the present writing, as they say on the editorial page, we have twenty pails of sap gathered, and bright and early to-morrow we are going to boil in. The sap was gathered in the twilight with a new moon, a little moon, shedding its blessing on us, and to-night it is freezing a little. It is perfect sugar-weather!

I simply will not write spring poetry! Nature may tempt me as much as she likes, but I will not yield! Never before did I have so much trouble keeping from this world-worn form of folly. It is simply hissing at the safety valve, but I am keeping a firm grip on myself. The flicker of the sunshine on the roofs and fences, the far blue of the sky, the twittering of the birds, the cackling [Pg 68] of the hens, the bawling of the cattle, the barking of the dogs, and the echoes that make the woods alive, all conspire to start my thoughts jigging and my words tinkling in rhyme. But I will not give in! I know, I feel that the world is flooded with the life impulse, with the "elan vital" of Bergson, but I have set my teeth and refuse to give in. The big, wise, absurd world laughs at spring poets and what I am enjoying these days is too good to be laughed at. I know that the life stirring in the innumerable roots of the grass and the myriad seeds and the swelling buds is the same life that is flushing me with joy, but I shall be silent at any cost. These favourites of Nature will expand in beauty and be living poems and no one will laugh at them. As I reach out and touch them with my finger tips I seem to feel the fire of life in them and my pulses beat to a new rhyme. And oh, it would be so easy to relieve my soul with a little lyric. A catchy refrain begins to beat in my head:

Sing! you freak of misery!—
If you can't sing, crow!!

No, I will not crow either! The world is full of people who are enjoying this spring glamour as much as I am and they are keeping quiet about it. I wonder if poetry should be written at all. Perhaps it should be lived and enjoyed. Who knows but the poet is simply a leaky vessel spilling out in words the lyrical fire that was meant to warm his heart and keep his pulses attune for the struggle of life. I seem to remember that Walt Whitman asserted somewhere that he had in himself all poems and all books. Who knows but that is true of all of us? And the wise people keep the poetry of life for their own use, knowing that all men have the same poetry in their souls if they will only relax themselves enough to enjoy it. In those beautiful spring days I feel sure that all my fellows of the world are moved with the same poetic urge that is thrilling me with its beauty. Why should I bother them with attempts to put in words what they already have in their hearts?

March 8.—With fuel so dear and maple syrup so cheap sugar-making is about the most peculiar [Pg 69] job a man can get at. The harder you work the more money you lose. It involves the whole problem of the producer and consumer, and if you try to think it out you are likely to get as fatally twisted as the man who was kicked down a spiral staircase. I didn't try to think it out, but as I have a sweet tooth and all the members of the family have sweet teeth I decided to make sugar—in moderation. Fifty trees are not likely to give enough sap to make more syrup than one family will need in a year and the work of boiling in will not be too hard for one leisurely man. Besides, the dead limbs that have fallen from the trees in the past year will furnish enough fuel. Taking sugar-making in this way it resolves itself into a kind of holiday in the woods and I am strong on holidays. My favourite saint is St. Kavin for

"His calendar unrolled
With new feast days every year."

When a barrelful of sap had been gathered I took the new boiling pan to the woods and prepared to enjoy myself. Now, don't interrupt to tell me that I should have an up-to-date evaporator and all that sort of thing. I know it would make the work easier and more scientific, but the initial cost would be too great. A sheet-iron pan made by the tinsmith is more within my range, and if it leaks at every rivet-hole to begin with, that is my affair. I can cure that by using furnace cement and by boiling some oatmeal in the pan before beginning with the sap. I also know that I should have an arch instead of a trench cut through a cradle-knoll for the fire, for I have read all the advertisements of the best appliances for making maple sugar, but a man must cut his coat according to his cloth, and even if my temper had "Fourteen rattles and a button on it" before I got that sieve of a pan working right I am not going to tell about it. No one heard the remarks I made except the birds and I shall take a chance on a bird of the air reporting the matter.

When I finally got the pan caulked and the sap boiling briskly the world began to look brighter. [Pg 70]

Practically all the birds had come back over night. Killdeers and meadow-larks were calling, song-sparrows and horned larks were singing, bluebirds were flashing past and shedding music, and the crows, blackbirds, jays, and robins were gossiping everywhere. A south wind was blowing just enough to make a good draught under the pan and the sun was looking down on everything "Fur's I cud look or listen" and finding it good. Now, most people, when their work is going right and they are feeling happy, begin to whistle. I do not. Trained musicians have told me in confidence that my whistling sounds "like a hog in a high wind" and I have long since given up the practice—by request. My favourite relaxation is to let a few lines of poetry begin drumming in my head. I let that inward voice which puts all our thoughts in shape for us sing or chant the poetry for me over and over until I have tasted all its sweetness. On the particular day I have in mind the poem that thrust itself on me was one of Poe's:

"In the fairest of our valleys,
  By good angels tenanted—"

But try as I would I could not recall the next two lines of the stanza. After repeating these two lines indefinitely, while my eyes and ears were taking in all that was going on about me in nature, I skipped to the next stanza which I could remember:

"Banners yellow, glorious, golden,
  From its roof did float and flow—
But this, all this, was in the olden
  Time long ago."

But Poe is not the poet for the open air and the woods. His gloomy imaginings began to overshadow the day:

"Dropping from out their condor wings
  Invisible woe."

As quickly as possible I shook off the spell of his haunting word magic. There have been times [Pg 71]
when I have given myself up to his morbid brooding, for like Vance Thompson I have

"Walked in Broadway, to and fro,
With the sombre ghost of Edgar Poe."

But he did not belong in the open sunshine. I had to seek another companion.

In the intervals of gathering brush for the fire and pouring sap into the steaming pan—which still leaked here and there, drat it!—I began to hunt for a poet companion to help me pass the time—not to improve the time, mark you, but to make it pass pleasantly. Naturally I thought of Shakespeare for he is supposed to fit everywhere, but I guess the wrong quotations came to me. Every quotation had a moral tagged to it—sermons in stones, books in the running brooks, etc. Under a roof Shakespeare can be uproariously humorous, wise, witty, sublime, but in the open air he seems to moralise everything "into a thousand similes," to be constantly gathering "honey from the weed" and making "a moral of the devil himself." I would have none of him. Whitman proved equally difficult. I could not attend to my work and at the same time "loaf and invite my soul." Neither could I chum with him in his more cosmical moods. To do that I would have to spurn the earth away with my toe and look at things from "the outer dark."

"I see a great round wonder rolling through space,
I see the shaded part on one side where the sleepers are sleeping,
  and the sunlit part on the other side."

But what would happen to the boiling syrup while I was taking such flights? It would be scorched and burned beyond a doubt. Moreover, I like to keep my feet on the earth—in good Canadian mud—even when indulging the wildest flights of imagination. I would have none of Whitman, even if he is the poet of outdoors. So one by one I tested many poets and rejected them all. They demanded too much.

After all, do the poets amount to so very much? Out in the woods I do not feel that they do. At their best they merely give us a point of view and a mood so that we can see and feel things as [Pg 72]
they did. But we all have moods and points of view of our own. Why shouldn't we use our own? You will soon find that every point of view overlooks as wonderful a world as any other. And you will find that your own moods attract the thoughts that belong to them as a magnet attracts steel filings. What if they are not the thoughts that you have seen in books? They are better, for they are your own. And that reminds me that we are inclined to make too much of books and even of thoughts. Books are all right to hold facts until we need them, just as a tool-chest holds tools. And thoughts are dangerous, whether they be our own or the thoughts of others, unless we keep them under control. Do you not remember Shelley's picture of one who

"Fled astray
With feeble steps o'er the world's wilderness,
And his own thoughts, along that rugged way,
Pursued, like raging hounds, their father and their prey."

On this perfect afternoon I did not want to be harried by thoughts, by my own or those of other men. I wanted to let the great sunshine and the earth smells, the sounds of wind and wing, and

the homely farm and woodland sights—spreading about me as far as the horizon—seep into my soul through my senses, so that on some future day of storms and sorrow I could recall it entire and regain something of its peace. Is it not wonderful how in this way the things of the material world are constantly entering our minds through our senses, while the things of the inner and immaterial world are constantly passing out into the material world through our words and actions? Our observations and our thoughts are forever being woven into a wonderful tapestry of life and we are a part of the pattern. As I realise that I seem to see the spirit that answered:

"Beside the roaring loom of Time I ply
And weave for God the garment that thou seest him by."

And so the afternoon passed, with the poets and without them, with thoughts and without them, [Pg 73] until the sun went down in gold and amber and my work was done. With the urge of spring in my heart and a strange music in my brain I bore home my spoils, feeling that the day had not been wasted.

Poets, O Poets! You have had your will!
My soul is ever vibrant to your song,
And in the glamour of your dreams I live.

Sages, O Sages! I have drunk my fill
At all the fountains that to Truth belong,
Thirsting for all you give—and cannot give.

Idly, slow-wafted by a magic sail,
I drift away in tranced ecstasy,
Sole to myself, to Life no more a thrall!

But in those hours supreme you ever fail!
You have no music for a soul made free,
No words for one who is at one with all!
Only a child, unconscious of all art,
Could show, unknowing, what is in my heart.

March 11.—"Now what on earth kind of mess are you making?"

Wasn't that a cheering remark to fling at a man who was having his crowded hour! When it startled and irritated me, I was busy being a pioneer of science, a prose poet, and the patient head of a family, all at the same time. Some people have their crowded hour of glorious life. That is the kind that poets sing about. Mine, as you will notice, was a crowded hour of simple life, and what it was worth will be set down hereinafter with humble truthfulness.

"Do you think that other people have nothing to do but wash saucepans for you to muss up? What do you think you are doing, anyway?"

The phrases of prose-poetry evaporated. The importance of the scientific discovery dwindled, and the dignified attitude necessary to the head of a family was seriously threatened.

"I'm just trying an experiment," I replied in guarded tones that covered a volcano of peevishness. [Pg 74] My crowded hour had come during the sugar weather. There had been a cold snap that froze the sap in the buckets and hung icicles from the spiles. I had wandered disconsolately through the bush to investigate the frosty situation, when suddenly I remembered a treat that had been the delight of my youth. Unhooking a bucket, I tilted it over, until the ice-cake loosened, and then a spoonful of clear, thick syrup slipped over the rim into my waiting lips. M-m-mmm, but it did taste good, and right there the idea occurred to me that caused all the trouble.

It was evident that the real sweetness of maple sap did not freeze at the same temperature as water. Now, the whole process of sugar-making consists of removing the water from the sap. This is done by ordinary, prosaic people by boiling it down until all the water has evaporated. Not good enough for me. I would do something unique, characteristic of the north, Canadian, wonderful! (You will notice that the prose-poetry began with the inception of the idea.) If the first freezing removed so much of the water, why couldn't it all be removed by successive freezings—purified in the alembics of frost—perfected in Nature's wind-swept laboratory. Sounds good to me. Here goes:

With me, like Richard, to think is to act. Taking a pail, I went from tree to tree, unhooked bucket after bucket, and secured a grudging spoonful from each. The temperature was ten degrees below freezing, a north wind was blowing as if it had a search warrant, snow was drifting, and long before I had visited all of the hundred trees we had tapped, my fingers were numb. But what of that? Would it not be something to make the Canadian climate perfect the most delicious of all Canadian products? Not even the realms of poetry could furnish anything to equal it. Keats' "Syrops tinct with cinnamon" would be insipid by comparison, and Shakespeare's "Poppies and mandragora, and all the drowsy syrops of the world" but a high-sounding phrase. Cheered by [Pg 75] such thoughts as these I kept on, in the words of Katherine Hale:

"With snow upon my shoulders,
And courage almost run"

—and also with chattering teeth. An hour of frostbitten industry yielded about a quart of crude

syrup, and without waiting to remove my ear-muffs, I raided the kitchen for saucepans. I was simply bubbling over with quotations of poetry, scientific enthusiasm, and phrases in the process of coining. And it was while in this tumultuous mood I was interrupted with the question recorded above. Was ever a man so interrupted?

"What kind of an experiment are you trying?" persisted the unsympathetic inquisitor.

"I am going to make maple syrup by a new process. I shall refine it by cold, instead of heat."

"What good will that do?"

"What good, woman? What good did it do Peary to go to the North Pole? I'll bet Mrs. Galvani stood around and asked just such fool questions when Galvani was making frogs' legs twitch with electricity. What good did that do! huh! It opened the way for all the modern developments of electricity. If it hadn't been for Galvani making frogs' legs twitch, we wouldn't have any Hydro-Electric Power scheme and you wouldn't be able to gossip with your neighbours over the telephone. Just you wait till I have pipe lines carrying the sap from every sugar bush to the Arctic regions, and am refining maple syrup for the whole world by the zero process. You won't ask me then, 'What's the use?' No, indeed! You will just stand 'round wearing diamonds and remarking that you don't see anything very wonderful about it all. Any one might have thought of it. It only happened that I thought of it first."

It will be a draught for Juno when she banquets. It will be a liqueur to be quaffed at the close of the feast from long-stemmed glasses of Venetian artistry. In each there shall be a flake of gold- [Pg 76]
leaf, beaten from the precious ores of Yukon or Larder Lake. This shall make it give its colour aright, and those who quaff——

"Well, of all the fool notions——" commented another observer.

It was thus, no doubt, that the people of Syracuse joshed Archimedes when he was fussing with the first lever, and making fool remarks about how he could move the world. Yet see what the lever has done for humanity. One after another the grown-ups about the place investigated what was going on, sniffed superior, and went in to warm themselves by the kitchen fire.

Surely this would be the opportunity of a lifetime. A description of frost-refined syrup could be made as eloquent as Ingersoll on whiskey, or Voorhees on the dog. Br-r-r—but it's cold! As the ice formed in the saucepans the thickening syrup was drained off with tender care, but not until the children came from school did I receive any sympathy. As they had no preconceived notions, it seemed quite logical and wonderful to them that syrup should be refined in this way. They forgot their cold fingers and toes in the kindling of their imaginations.

"We'll get a refrigerator to make our syrup with, won't we, father? That'll be better than an evaporator, won't it?"

"Certainly."

When in need of sympathy, go to the young! They are the only ones whose eyes can see the promised land. Moses was right in his dealings with the Israelites. He led them around through the wilderness until the older generation had died off. The older generation has been made up of doubters and knockers since the beginning of time. They all come from Missouri.

By this time it was so cold that the muse went on strike. For the last time the syrup was drained off from the ice, and with the children at my heels, I went into the house to enjoy my triumph. [Pg 77]
Since the truth must be told, this was a time when those who sat in the seats of the scornful were right. My frost-refined syrup was a sickishly sweet, colourless fluid of no distinction. In all probability it was not true maple syrup at all, but what the scientists call maple honey, a substance derived from maple sap, and which will not crystallise. Still, the Crowded Hour was not in vain. It enabled me to learn at first hand just what the pioneers of progress must have suffered when perfecting their inventions. It was a mere detail that my invention was no good.

March 15.—It is a great day, an expansive day, a large day. The first thing that impressed me about it was its size. I know it is not customary to describe a day in terms of space, but there seems to be no way out of it. This is not a day of the kind that can be enjoyed in a house, or a field, or even within the rim of the horizon. It reaches up to the great neighbourly sun, and spreads as wide as the imagination. It is a day that overwhelms me, but, on thinking it over, I have found the key to its mystery. When I got up this morning it was the sun that first fixed my attention. It came bustling over the horizon with the air of one about to start spring house-cleaning. It awakened the south wind, plucked the myriad icy fingers from the little rivulets and flooded the world with light and warmth. But it is hardly exact to speak of the sun as house-cleaning. It is really building a new home and using only the foundations and framework of the old. It is upholstering the hills, decorating the woods, and refurnishing the fields. In a few days it will recarpet the earth and tack down the green breadths with brass-headed dandelions. When that work is done we can get down to a consideration of the buds and flowers and birds and the exquisite little things of spring. To-day the invitation is to have an outing with the universe. Only the sun and his work are worth considering.

On a day like this it is hard to believe that the sun is ninety million miles away. Why, it is just up there in the sky, and is busy at our feet and all around us. I do not thank the astronomers for [Pg 78]
teaching me that it is so distant. I would much rather have the point of view of the Prince of Morocco, who protested:

"Mislike me not for my complexion,
The shadow'd livery of the burnish'd sun,

To whom I am a neighbour and near bred."

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

March 21.—Yesterday we began to cut the big maple into stove wood. The work was undertaken in a leisurely and proper way, and not with a view of piling up a record. This made it possible to take an interest in the tree as well as in the work, and there was much to repay observation. The tree stood over thirty inches on the stump, and, according to the rings of growth, must have been over one hundred and thirty years old; but the crosscut saw was in good condition, and as no one was in a hurry the work was not killing enough to be amusing. The butt of the tree was hollow and partly filled with the kind of rotten wood or punk that, I am told, was once used for tinder in the days of flint and steel.

After a couple of cuts had been dropped off, the hollow gave place to punk that was honeycombed with wormholes. The next cut brought to view a colony of winged ants, and in my [Pg 79] ignorance of entomology I supposed that they were responsible for the catacombs in which they lived. They were all torpid when brought to light by the splitting of the block, but they soon came to life in the sunshine and began crawling about. The next cut explained the mystery of the tunnels in which the ants lived, for it revealed a colony of boring worms. They had evidently done the carpentering for the ants, who had merely cleared up after them and taken possession, from which it appears that "Old Grub, time out o' mind the fairies' coachmaker," is also the house-builder for the winged ants. The next cut carried us beyond the grubs into solid wood that was as sound as a bone. As the trunk at this point was still two feet in thickness, and was as straight as a lead pencil for over fifty feet, a council was held, and it was decided that, with good maple flooring at present prices, it would be a shame to devote such a tree to stove wood. After arriving at this decision we went to the top and resumed work. We started to saw just below the hole into which I had so often seen the black squirrels disappear. The cut revealed a hollow of about a foot in diameter and four feet in length that was worthy of a special study in itself. In the bottom there was about two feet of rich brown mould that had evidently been formed by the rotting of leaves that had been carried in for squirrel nests for many years. There was a nest of dry leaves that had evidently been in use during the past winter, and, as the entrance was so small, all the leaves that had gone to making the deposit of mould must have been carried in by the squirrels, who had probably been occupying this retreat for fifty years or more. What interested me most was the cleanness of the walls of the upper part of the hollow. I was assured that this could only have been done by bees that had occupied it at one time. The fact that there was no old comb or any other trace of these inhabitants was explained by the fondness of mice for wax. It is said that when a colony of bees dies out the mice very quickly clear away every trace of honey and comb. It was certainly an ideal hive for wild bees, and the only wonder is that some of the swarms that [Pg 80] escaped last summer did not make a home in it.

The breaking-up of the mould brought to light a number of unexpected inhabitants in the shape of ordinary white grubs and wire-worms. They were likewise torpid, and waiting in cold storage for the return of spring. I also found some blue-bottle flies and a couple of very active black spiders that had evidently been living over fifty feet above the ground. Altogether, with its squirrels, ants, grubs, bugs, flies, and spiders, the big maple had been something of a world in itself.

While I was looking at the splendid trunk and wondering mildly whether it would be used to floor the chancel of a church or a profane dancing-hall, I suddenly recalled a delightful fable in blank verse that was written about fifteen years ago by Mr. John Lewis of *The Star*. It was never published, and I have lost my copy, but, fortunately, I can remember enough of it to show what a gem it was. He fabled, in good, workman-like verse, of a reporter who had been assigned to report many banquets until he loathed after-dinner speeches from the depth of his soul. At last, in desperation, he prayed that the gods would change him into a tree and place him in a forest, far from the haunts of men. The gods were kind and changed him into "a tree—a large deciduous tree." The transformed reporter, in his new-found happiness,

"Stretched his limbs
And yawned away the weariness of years—
And cast a generous shade."

But the period of contentment did not last long. A lumber-man who was at work in the woods saw the big tree and, calling his workmen, they cut it down, hauled it to a sawmill, and ripped it into planks. Then it was seasoned and made into a great table that was placed in a banqueting hall, and the poor reporter

"Knew the bitter of the answered prayer."

Speaking of banquets, I happened to look towards the butt of the tree and found that two spotted [Pg 81]

woodpeckers and a couple of sapsuckers were having the feast of their lives on the ants and grubs that had been routed out of their homes by our work. They were so busy and hungry that they let me approach to within a few yards of them without flying away. As I remember it, the chickadees used to be the first to a feast of this kind, but there was none in sight. As a matter of fact, I have not seen a chickadee this year, though they are not migrating birds. I am afraid that the woods are no longer dense enough for these busy, impudent little fellows. Other birds are quite plentiful, however. Every dead limb that can serve as a sounding-board now has its bachelor or widower woodpecker or highholder rattling out his love call until you would think that a sky-scraper was in course of erection in the woodlot, with the pneumatic riveters hard at work. At least two flocks of quail have wintered safely on this farm, and they must be mating now, for every morning they can be heard whistling "Bob White" from every point of the compass. Unless we have a wet summer, the place should be overrun with them next fall. The blue jays are not squawking as much as they were during the winter, so it is probable that they are also nesting, but the blackbirds and crows are still in flocks. A couple of weeks ago the nest of a horned lark with four eggs in it was found in the snow, but it was apparently deserted owing to the unusually cold weather.

This morning the hawks were circling over the old nest, and I am afraid that I shall once more have the unpleasant task of breaking up their housekeeping. For three years I have shot up their nest during the breeding season, but still they will not desert the old homestead. They must have been there for years, for the nest is now a huge pile of sticks about four feet in diameter, in the top of the tallest and most slippery beech tree within miles. As the owner does not live on the farm and has no young chickens to be destroyed, he does not want a valuable tree cut down, and the nest is so high that no one thinks of climbing to it and pulling it down.

APRIL

[Pg 82]

April 2.—Spring seems to be approaching this year in much the same way as the snail in the old school problem climbed to the top of the pole. He used to climb up two inches in the daytime and slip back one at night. Every approach of spring is followed by an immediate relapse, and on several occasions it seemed to advance only one inch in the daytime and then to slip back six inches at night. But it is certainly coming. Every time the sap begins running again it runs a little faster, and last Sunday it gushed out at a rate that was both wasteful and wicked. I have just heard of one good man who was so impressed by the waste that he sat up until twelve o'clock on Sunday night, and immediately after the clock struck he went out to the sugar-bush and gathered the sap by the light of a lantern. I can't help wondering if he was not really breaking the Sabbath in knowing anything about the condition of his sap-buckets, and especially in having his mind on the subject during the hours of waiting. It is a delicate point, and one on which we should have an authoritative ruling. But spring is really coming, and the imagination kindles at the thought. It is really no wonder that every one with a touch of poetry "rages on swift iambics" in the spring. After the season of dreariness and death the hosts of light and life come back to reconquer the earth. Marshalled and led by their great general, the sun, the birds come back with the south winds. The flowers, and every green herb, rouse and push through the warm soil; the leaves expand in the genial glow, and presently the world is all alive again. In a short time we get accustomed to the reign of life, and poetry languishes during the heat of summer. But while the [Pg 83] change is taking place the soul of man expands, and his thoughts begin to pulse in accord with the great rhythms of the universe. In such a state of exaltation poetry becomes as natural as breathing.

Of course the birds are back, and it is impossible to disregard them entirely. The boys shout the news to me whenever they see a returned traveller—bluebirds, killdeers, robins, meadow-larks: in short, "all the migrant hosts of June." But they need no announcer. Their songs and cries make their presence known. The song-sparrows are singing with a persistence that suggests that they have selected their summer homes and are satisfied. A few minutes ago a horned lark rested for a moment on a fence post and warbled in a hurried, excited way that suggested a brief respite from the cares of housekeeping. As their nests are frequently found when there is snow on the ground, his mate is probably brooding somewhere in the neighbourhood. Lucky birds! They have no "ne temere" decree to bother them, and the way they go over line fences shows that they have no idea of property rights. But, as I said, the birds are not the dominating attraction of the day. My mind constantly goes back to the sun and its boundless activity. If I were a painter I should want to paint the sunshine when it seems to be so alive as it is this morning. It is brushing away the snow, making the elm buds misty, sending countless rivulets whispering and lisping through the grass, and filling every nook and cranny with its flood of life. The sunshine we are having seems to be piled on the earth as high as the sun itself. The air is steeped in it, and wherever we turn we can see its "banners yellow, glorious, golden." Everything we look at reflects back the sunshine. The very songs of the birds seem to come to us freighted with sunshine—sunshine everywhere and over everything. Even the houses and barns across the fields look as if they had been awakened by it, and are cheery and cosy and hospitable. It is certainly a great day.

And it seems to be a day for big ideas. While gathering sap, I sampled some of the buckets and [Pg 84] noticed that some trees give much sweeter sap than others. Now, why shouldn't the Department of Forestry look into the matter of maple sugar production in a scientific way? The trees that give the sweetest sap must be of a better strain than the others, and by adopting selective methods,

why should it not be possible to develop sugar maples just as they are developing new brands of wheat? By taking seeds from the best trees and planting them, in about sixty years we should have another generation of trees ready to tap. We could then discover, or rather our descendants could, which of these inherited the strongest sugar-producing qualities, and seeds could be gathered from them for a new planting. By keeping up the work for a thousand years or so trees might be developed that would produce "real, old-fashioned" maple syrup direct from the spile without all this troublesome work of "boiling-in." Somehow on a day like this such an idea does not seem half so absurd as it will probably look in type. Canada is a young nation, with all the future before it. We are now laying the foundations of all the great things that are to be, so why should not something be done to develop the maple sugar industry? I wish I had thought of this sooner, so that I might have suggested it to the sugar-maker of the Donlands with a view to having the matter properly considered by Parliament. But the idea will keep. In an experiment that is to extend over a thousand years or so a year or two at the beginning will not matter much.

Does not the college song say, "The best of friends must part, must part?" After I had been chumming with my neighbour, the sun, for a few glorious hours its work carried it elsewhere and it moved westward, "trailing clouds of glory" as it moved. My helpers had long since gone to hunt for sandwiches—and had failed to return. Even the little boy whose part in sugar-making was purely decorative, making mudpies with snow frosting, had lost interest in his work and had gone [Pg 85] home. I was left alone with the kettle and the ravenous fire under it—and with a spring appetite. About the time when the sun was touching the horizon and the frost was coming back to undo its work in puny spitefulness I went home to supper, leaving a good fire blazing and the kettle boiling. After that came a session under the stars and the full moon, and then another trip across the fields, carrying a twelve-quart pail of syrup. Tired? Well, yes, but I had an outing in that wonderful sunshine. Besides, I have a pailful of the sunshine to use with future pancakes. Sugar-making has compensations.

April 5.—Have you ever watched a small boy trying to make a broad jump? He will go back and back, so as to get a good start, and when at last he tries he has to run so far before he reaches the mark that he is out of breath and can't jump. Well, that is exactly the fix I am in this morning. There is something I want to talk about, and I want to do it without appearing to be teaching a lesson or drawing a moral or preaching a lay sermon. I have gone so far back in my attempt to get a good start that for the past half hour I have been grumbling against Shakespeare for having made the Duke say that he could find

> "Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
> Sermons in stones and good in everything."

If I thought there was any truth in those lines I would lock myself in the house and pull down the blinds, so that I could not see the face of nature. I can enjoy nature only when I feel that nature is enjoying herself. Of course the explanation of Shakespeare's little sermon lies in the fact that the Duke was speaking in character, and he was a stodgy, inefficient person of the kind that are all the time going around spoiling the good things of life by drawing morals from them. That same Shakespeare had a little practice that casts a great light on the workings of his mind. He usually put his wisest philosophy into the mouths of his fools and his noblest sentiments into the mouths of his worst villains. It was the murderous king in *Hamlet* who mouthed about the divinity that [Pg 86] hedges the person of a King, and it was Iago who moralised about the stealing of one's purse being the stealing of trash. Because of this I don't believe that Shakespeare ever meant that "sermons-in-stones" stuff to cast a gloom over my open-air life in this glorious spring weather. It is my private opinion that he accepted life as he found it with more irresponsible joyousness than any other man that ever walked the earth, and if he let some of his characters drool improving sentiments it was because he found people doing such things, and found, moreover, that it was the people whose actions conformed to them the least whose sentiments were the most elevating.

But this is not what I intended talking about at all. However, I warned you in the opening sentences that I might not be able to make my jump after all. To do or say anything definite requires concentration, and how can a man concentrate his mind when the sun is shining and the south wind blowing and the birds singing and the children asking when we are to go fishing? Then there is the garden to be attended to and so many other things to be done that one doesn't know where to start. And all the while, as some poet has sung:

> "Nature's calling from the trout-brook,
> Calling: 'Whish!
> Son, you poor, tired, lazy feller,
> Come and fish!'"

But I mustn't go fishing. That would be flying right in the face of public opinion. Everybody is working as everybody should be. Instead of saying, with Hamlet, "I must be idle," I must say with the prosaic people who make up this workaday world, "Get busy! Get busy!"

April 7.—The other day when we were sawing the big maple a little thing happened that put me in a hopeful frame of mind. It was found that the saw did not have enough "set," and that if the work was to be completed with reasonable ease it must be fixed. My recollections of setting saws went back about twenty-five years, when the instrument used was a huge contraption made up of [Pg 87] screws, gauges, pincers, and such things that needed the management of an expert. It usually took a couple of hours to set the saw, and unless the thing was skilfully done it did more harm than good. But the situation had to be faced, and I went and got the most up-to-date setting tool.

To my surprise it was a little punch that a man might carry in his vest pocket. I was instructed to put it on the end of a tooth and give it a smart tap with a hammer. If I did that to every tooth the saw would be set perfectly. Full of incredulity I undertook the task, and in less than five minutes had the saw in perfect trim. Every tooth had the same amount of set, and the cut we made was as smooth as if it had been planed. Evidently the perfect tool for setting a saw has been developed, and nothing could be simpler. That started me to thinking about all the implements that are in use on the farm, and how simple they are when compared with the first inventions. The first mowers were so big and complex and heavy that they foundered scores of horses every spring. A team could hardly pull them across the field, and they made a noise like a boiler factory. The modern mower is so light and simple that one horse can pull it, and it doesn't make any more noise than a sewing machine. Apparently man makes all his first inventions in the most complex way possible, and it takes him years before he can hit on the simple and obvious way of doing things. A disreputable philosopher once said, "Nothing is so hard to see as the obvious," and I guess he was right. The touch of hope, I found, lay in the fact that whatever a man sets his mind to he will finally simplify, though he may begin with a bewildering tangle. Now, about the only thing that is getting more complex every day is the art of living. When we try to improve it we add something—put in a telephone or something of the kind—and keep on adding until we make life a burden. Perhaps that is because we have not yet given life sufficient thought. When conditions become intolerable perhaps we will begin to give them thought and be able in time to simplify them as we are simplifying everything else. Perfected living may yet be found to be as far [Pg 88] from the complex life of the present as the old cumbersome saw-setting tool was from the little punch that I used the other day. It is a cheering thought. Simplicity makes our work easier, and it may yet make our living more enjoyable. That is worth thinking about.

The number of green fields there are, as compared with those that are ruled off with brown furrows, brings up once more the question of the constant migration from the farms of Ontario. But I am coming to the conclusion that we are going about the problem of keeping the boy on the farm in the wrong way. Instead of trying to point out the advantages of farm life, we should devote some of our energy to showing the disadvantages of city life. The cities remind me of sticky fly-paper. They look so inviting from a distance, and when once you get your feet into them it is almost impossible to get out. And those who are already caught make such a great buzzing that every one within hearing thinks that the honey must be plentiful and fine. The buzzing is evidence of excitement, and the young people living the monotonous life of the country are just dying for excitement. Besides, the cities have an unfair advantage. They publish all the important newspapers, and of course a newspaper that does not constantly point with pride to the glories of its home would be lacking in public spirit. They paint everything in attractive colours, and the flies keep on flocking to the centre of attraction. I hope that some day we shall have a paper that will be edited and printed somewhere in the fields, and that will stand up for them as the city papers stand up for the streets.

April 9.—Unless something is done to relieve the scarcity of hired men we may hear of the revival of the press gang, and then the country will be no place for a man whose most strenuous work is done on a typewriter. Farmers are getting positively ravenous for help. And that reminds me that I haven't seen a tramp in two years. They used to be so plentiful along the lines of the railroads that they were a tax on charitably-disposed people, but now I doubt if a tramp could travel a mile [Pg 89] in any direction through the country without being gobbled up. He would find every avenue barred with work, and eager employers waylaying him at every corner. A man cannot be idle in the country now unless he has a farm of his own on which to loaf, and even then he must put up "No Trespass" signs. Perhaps that accounts for the migration of the poets to the cities. It would hardly be safe for them to be going around picking flowers, listening to the birds, and rolling up their eyes when the country is full of farm work that is crying to be attended to. And that reminds me that one of them, whose name I shall not betray, has these poignant lines in one of his poems:

> "I fear that work before me lies—
> Indeed, I see no option,
> Unless perhaps I advertise:
> 'An orphan for adoption.'"

April 12.—It seems that the apple trees get "that tired feeling" in the spring, just like the rest of us, and need a good tonic to put them in shape. As nearly as I could learn from Mr. Clement and Mr. Buchanan, that first application of lime-sulphur wash means much the same to the trees as a dosing of sulphur and molasses does to the boys, and I can tell you right here that it is a whole lot easier to administer. The trees can't squirm and howl and wriggle out of it. They just stand and take their medicine. The lime-sulphur kills the oyster-shell scale, insect eggs, fungi, microbes, etc., and acts as a general constitutional. And it is no particular trick to apply it. As a matter of fact, it looks to me to be about the easiest spring job on the farm. I say "looks," because all I did was to smoke my pipe and look on. Perhaps the other spring jobs seemed harder because I had to put on my overalls and pitch into them myself. But to a man sitting on the fence and smoking while the work is being done spraying doesn't seem a bit hard, even though it may be scientific. And even the science of it is not so very profound. They demonstrated the whole process to me, [Pg 90] from carrying the water in buckets to the boiler to spilling what was left over from the barrel when they were done. It was a complete and satisfying exhibition.

To begin with, they unloaded their boiler and explained how to make it and what it cost. It is made from pine boards and a sheet of zinc—the boards for the sides and ends and the zinc for the bottom. Whether it costs $2.50 or $2.80 I cannot remember, and I have lost the envelope on the back of which I made my notes. Anyway, it doesn't matter, for any one who is interested in the

work can get the bulletins on "Lime-sulphur Wash" and "Apple Orcharding" from the Department of Agriculture by sending a postal card asking for them. These bulletins contain full and exact explanations of everything that an orchardist needs to know, from preparing the ground for the planting of trees to the packing and marketing of apples. If you have only one tree in the back yard it will pay to get these booklets and they will tell you much more than I intend to take the trouble to tell. But let us get back to our work. After they had set up the boiler they put in it forty gallons of water, which they heated almost to the boiling point. Then they mixed a hundred pounds of sulphur with water till it made a smooth paste and added it to the water in the boiler. After it was thoroughly mixed they began to drop in stone lime until fifty pounds had been added, and the mixture became as much a witch's broth as the one described in *Macbeth*. I found myself unconsciously repeating:

"Double, double toil and trouble,
Boil, cauldron, boil and bubble."

It boiled and bubbled all right, but the toil and trouble were not particularly evident. All that was necessary was to keep the mess stirred up with a hoe and to keep it boiling for an hour. Even though making lime-sulphur wash comes under the head of science, I would rather undertake to cook a barrel of it than to make a pot of oatmeal porridge without getting it scorched. No one need be afraid of that part of the work.

When finished, the barrel of mixture, according to the most careful ciphering, cost just $2.80. [Pg 91] That included charges for both labour and wood—two things no farmer would think of mentioning. As for the labour, every farmer has a lot of it in his system that is bound to go to waste unless he employs it on some job like this, and he would never think of taking it into account. It is the same with the wood. Why put in a charge for wood when all you need is the tail-board of the gravel box or an armful of bed slats or anything else that is not being used at the time? Still, they insisted on counting in the wood, though they refused to add two cents for the extra tobacco I smoked while watching them and sniffing the brew. The barrel of mixture was strong enough to make eight barrels when diluted to the strength required for the trees. This makes the cost of each barrel of home-cooked wash thirty-five cents. This is an important item, as the commercial wash comes to eighty cents a barrel. It certainly pays the man who has a large orchard to prepare his own materials.

But it was when they began to apply the wash to the trees that I really got into touch with my scientists. After they had explained to me the workings of their spraying outfit, which had cost $27.50, they filled the barrel to which the spraying pump was attached and got busy; and right there they revealed the fact that scientists are just as human as the rest of us. The spraying outfit is fitted with two lines of hose, so that two men can administer the spray at the same time, but they were able to use only one line, as they had lost one of the nozzles. My heart opened to them at once. That was just the way things would be likely to happen if I had tried to do the work myself. And I had a decided advantage of them. If I had lost a nozzle I could blame it on the boys, but all they could do was to admit that they had lost it themselves. After this incident I was no longer abashed by the fact that the work being done was of the kind that is called scientific. The bane of my existence is perfect people who never make mistakes and who always do everything right. When I found that these scientists were human like myself I filled my pipe again and began [Pg 92] to take an interest in life. The one hose that was in working order ended in a bamboo pole with a tube inside it. This made it possible for the man doing the spraying to reach the top branches of the trees. Here again the work did not seem hard nor of a kind to need special training. Any one should be able to do it. The nozzle was spouting out a cloud of spray and all that was necessary was to direct it so that the cloud would touch every twig and branch of the tree. Of course, a man had to manage it so that he didn't get sprayed too much himself, for that lime-sulphur certainly had some "zip" to it. I got a couple of whiffs of it, and it is my private opinion that any microbe that could stand up against it without sneezing would be able to "stand unabashed amid the war of elements, the wreck of matter, and the crash of worlds."

After all, it was not the work of spraying that impressed me most about the visit of Mr. Clement, Mr. Buchanan, and Mr. Palmer. They did their work well, and no sensible man can doubt that such work is necessary and profitable. But what is coming over the world when three well-educated, cultured, ambitious young men are doing such work at all? They are of the type of clean-cut, intelligent young fellows that you would have found a few years ago preparing themselves for law or medicine or for a career in the world of business. But here they are teaching farming, talking farming, and looking forward to farming as their life-work. Ever since Cadmus invented the alphabet education has been looked upon as a door of escape from the drudgery of farm work. When I went to school no lesson impressed me more than the one about John Adams and his Latin grammar. When the boy found the grammar too hard his father gave him a job of ditching and he quickly went back to his studies and became President. Moral: Get an education and get out of doing farm work. But here are these young men with their good educations coming back to work the land. Are the farmers of the future to be men of this type? I can hardly believe it, and yet it should be true. Farming is one of the finest occupations in the [Pg 93] world if taken in moderation. But it will take more than science and profits to keep young men of this type on the land. They will need a very fine quality of philosophy to enable them to see the true value of things. They will have to learn how to realise the possibilities of their own souls while doing the humble daily tasks. I do not know whether they have a chair of philosophy in Guelph or not, but if they have it should be occupied by some one

"High-rife with old Philosophy

And mad with glimpses of futurity."

His course of lectures should be the most important in the college. His work would be to prepare us for a future in which the heavy burdens of the world will be borne by educated men who will understand their rights as well as their work. With such men behind the ploughs, the day of predatory big business will soon come to an end. The men who feed the world will no longer be the slaves of the cunning. But it is still so much easier to make a living by cleverness and cunning that it is hard to believe that the hard work of farming is to be taken over by men of education who will know their own worth and the worth of their work. It is a glorious dream, but the world will have to make more progress in philosophy than it has in science before it comes true. When my scientific friends finally completed their work and left me I felt lonesome and homesick for the outer world for the first time since coming back to the land. In spite of their enthusiasm about farming and farm work, I felt that they belonged to that world rather than to the world in which I am sojourning.

April 16.—"I've given up the danged farm," said a callow youth this morning in response to a civil question about the progress being made with the spring work. At present he is putting in his time as the village cut-up, and when it really becomes necessary for him to work he'll get a job as cook on a gravel train or as oiler in a garage. He'll live in a boiled horse boarding-house and fill himself with husks and other deleterious substances. The "danged" farm isn't swift enough for him. [Pg 94]

Unfortunately there are many in his class, though they express themselves differently. They are travelling the school and college route to the over-crowded professions or going to the city in search of a nice, clean job. "The danged farm" isn't good enough for them.

At this point the observer usually begins to pound the pulpit, but I am in no mood to usurp the prerogatives of the preacher. If fellows of this sort want to leave the country for the city, let them go. There are altogether too many useless people in the country now. There are men spoiling land who ought to be putting in their time as dock-wallopers or at some city occupation that requires no brains. At the same time, there are a lot of struggling doctors, lawyers, preachers, and business men in the cities who have just the education and brains needed to make the best kind of farmers. Don't make any mistake about it. The farming of the future is going to be the best of the learned professions, and the only one in which a man of brains and character can find scope for his individuality and abilities. Farming is about the only man's job left.

The city has changed as much as the country in the last twenty-five years, and it is no longer the place for a man of wholesome ambition. The change is due to two things—machines and organisation. The machines have made trades a thing of the past, and organisation is doing away with individual enterprise. There are no more trades where skilled artisans work in wood or metal or cloth or leather. There are machines now that do the work, and men and women can get jobs to wait on them. You cannot realise what it means to be the slave of such a machine unless you have been one or have seen such slaves at work. Some years ago I was conducted through one of the largest shoe factories in Lynn, Massachusetts, by its proud proprietor. I could not help noticing the clock-like regularity with which the men and women who were at work performed every motion. In making a shoe there are seventy-two separate operations, and each is made by a different operator with a machine. No one person in all that factory could make an entire shoe. The skill of each individual was confined to one operation, such as sewing in the tongue or pegging on the heel. While we were passing through the factory and the proprietor was explaining to me how things were done, not one of those workers paused or looked up. I commented on their unflagging industry. The proprietor smiled. "I have figured out to a nicety just how many operations can be made in a day by each machine, and have the speed regulated to perform just that number of operations. Of course, the operator can stop the machine if not ready to go on, but he is docked at the end of the day for each operation he misses." [Pg 95]

I never was so near being an anarchist in my life as I was while the memory of that incident was fresh in my mind. The workers in that factory were not simply slaves to their employer, but to merciless machines. And that is only a sample of what you can find in any industry that has been perfected along modern lines. In the factories work has none of the charm it had for the old-time artisan who performed every operation himself. It is simply machine-driven drudgery, and the man who thinks that kind of work preferable to work on a farm deserves no better employment.

So much for the physical workers. The case of the mental workers, while apparently better, is really worse, but the subject is a dangerous one to handle. Still enough may be said to suggest some lines of thought. The fact that almost all business enterprises are conducted by organisations or companies has entirely changed the positions of all employees, from office-boy to the president of the company. To parody Tennyson: "The individual withers, and the company is more and more." The shareholders, through their directors, adopt a money-making policy for their company, and that policy must be enforced, no matter how heartless it may be. For instance, I know of a lithographing company which has the excellent rule that it pays for only the work done by its employees. That seems all right, doesn't it? Well, one day I was lunching with the superintendent of manufacture and he was very much depressed. I asked what was troubling him, and he explained: [Pg 96]

"One of my best printers has had a hard winter of it on account of sickness in his family. He is an entirely sober, industrious fellow, but I know he has had a hard time to make both ends meet. Well, he had to stay out one day this week to bury his little girl, and when pay-day came he was docked for that day."

"Surely if you called the attention of the president to the case he would have fixed things."

"He couldn't do a thing. It is a rule of the company. All the president could do would be to do what I have done myself—open the man's envelope and put in the pay out of his own pocket."

Now, it is safe to say that not one pious shareholder of that company would justify the treatment that faithful printer would have received if the superintendent had not been foolishly soft-hearted, and yet, as a shareholder, each one would share in the increased dividends caused by such savings. That is only a trivial example of the results of organisation. Ruthless methods of competition and of increasing profits are not adopted from choice by the executive officers, but from necessity. As individuals they would not stoop to do the things they do as officers of a company. Above everything else the company must be successful. No one asks it to be charitable, or kind, or even moral. But every one insists that it must be efficient. As John D. Rockefeller, the greatest of all business organisers, blandly informed the Senatorial Commission which was investigating his business methods: "I am merely a clamourer for dividends." He had nothing to do with the methods by which dividends were secured. What he wanted was dividends, and the employee who failed to provide them would not be long in receiving his discharge. [Pg 97]

In the country matters are different. Such machinery as is used only serves to relieve farm work of its drudgery. Seedtime and harvest still have their olden charm. As for organisation, it will be many years before the farmers have enough of it to enable them to get the just returns from their labour. In all their work and business dealings the farmers are their own masters and need not be driven, either in matters of work or conscience. And the way scientific farming is developing the farmer's work can give as much scope to his brain power as any of the learned professions. Neither are the financial returns to be despised. A successful farmer can make as good an income as the average city man. When these things are understood as they should be I expect to see an exodus of intelligent men from the cities to the country, where they can develop themselves physically, mentally, morally, and financially. Indeed, a day may come when we shall hear people preaching: "Boys, don't leave the city."

April 19.—It is just possible that the hen has been studied too much from a utilitarian or practical point of view. If allowed to pass the succulent broiler stage she is regarded simply as an egg-producing machine, and after a useful life she sinks unsung into the pot-pie or fricassee. If instead of being born a hen she had been born a water wagtail, or some bird of no economic value, her charms and social habits would be embalmed in a Saturday editorial. Her cunning little ways would be closely observed and set down with delicate humour, and exceptional literary grace would be used to give her a niche in *The Globe's* gallery of nature friends. These thoughts were in my mind as I went out of the house this morning, and, as luck would have it, the first thing that caught my eye was a Buff Orpington that was pursuing the early worm to its lair in a flower bed. The fact that that flower bed is placed where no flower bed should be, and was so placed against my earnest protests, reconciled me to what was going on. I decided at once that [Pg 98] the time was favourable for a study of the hen. Betaking myself to a sunny corner of the coal box, I sat down and began to observe. The hen was of robust habit, but apparently in thorough athletic training. The soil in which she was scratching was of the kind that would be given a low classification by a constructive engineer or a Parliamentary investigating committee. It was a sandy loam, and I had to mind my eyes whenever she scattered it in my direction. The first outstanding fact that I gathered was that this particular hen had a definite method of procedure to which she adhered with remarkable singleness of purpose. Lowering her head, she examined the ground first with one eye and then with the other. Then she stepped forward with the confident air of a baseball star going to the bat, scratched once with one foot and then twice with the other. If she scratched first with the right foot she would scratch twice with the left, and *vice versa*. Then she would step back and carefully examine the field of her depredations. If no worm was in evidence she would step forward briskly and repeat the performance. As I had never read this in any book or paper dealing with the hen and her habits, I took out my notebook and began to secure material for a future scientific article. But I was doomed to disappointment. At this moment a door bulged open and an apparition with a broom swooped down on that hen. She fled squawking, and I discreetly slipped around the corner of the house. I might have found it hard to explain why that hen hadn't been shooed away.

There is a wild plum tree in blossom in the woods, the trees are showing faintly green, the meadows and wheatfields are vivid and, even though the weather is chilly, summer is really started. A change of the wind will make everything all right. At the same time no one has any grudge against the raw east wind that has been blowing lately, for it brought much-needed rain. When it comes to furnishing wet weather the east wind is very dependable. I knew it was blowing on Sunday morning when I wakened and heard the rain pelting on the tent. Being drowsy, I [Pg 99] decided to stay where I was until the shower passed, but after a couple of hours made up my mind that my case was much like that of the man who sat on the bank of a river and waited for the water to flow past so that he could cross. I should have been there for a day or more if a healthy appetite had not forced me out. It was a glorious rain and will do much to start the crops towards a prosperous harvest. Oats and barley are already showing through the ground and the battle with the weeds has commenced in the garden. The sky signs are now for fine weather and others besides the birds are feeling chirpy. I don't care if I never run to catch a street car again as long as I live.

This is the season of the pot-herb, the time when the winter-kept vegetables lose their flavour and hothouse products are too dear and too tasteless. Everybody hankers for something green, but how many take the trouble to get it? Nettles and sourdock are now at their best and only need to be picked. With the pioneers they were at once a medicine and a food, for the long

winters, with no vegetables, often bred scurvy and other disorders, so that their first care in the early spring was to feed lustily on greens. Nettles are coarse and have a peculiar brackish taste and yet are not unpalatable. Sourdock, however, is as good as the best spinach, and the only trouble is to get enough of it to satisfy a hungry family. It is to be found chiefly in low spots or around old buildings. It is so good that if it were not a native weed it would be cultivated as a herb. In the good old days its root was an important part of spring bitters. By the way, does any one make spring bitters any more? They were usually made by an infusion of the roots of burdocks, sourdocks, wild cherry and willow twigs, and anything else that tasted bad enough to be considered worthy of a place in the brew. After this concoction had been allowed to ferment, it could be guaranteed to kill or cure. The last time I tasted old-fashioned spring bitters was in the home of a retired farmer who had gathered the ingredients in the Humber Valley. He gave me a hospitable dose, and, though I made my escape as soon as possible, I was sick all the way from [Pg 100] North Toronto to twelve o'clock. People either do not need bitters any more or else they haven't the constitutions to stand them. The same applies to sulphur and molasses, of which I have not heard for many years, although it used to come as regularly as the spring. Although I am a stickler for old-time ways and things, I think I shall leave out all of the old spring dosing except the greens. An epicure would relish sourdock, and to-day I noticed some fresh green dandelions that will shortly be served as a salad. Even though the garden will not yield anything for weeks to come except blisters and backaches, there is plenty of good eating in the fields.

April 22.—"I saw a chickadee to-day," said a retired farmer, "and it reminded me of us fellows who have given up farming and moved into town."

"How?"

"Well, you know the fellows that write nature articles for the papers say that every fall the chickadees go crazy for a while. The theory is that they once used to migrate, and when migration time comes round they feel the old impulse to go south, but not strong enough to make them travel. It just churns them up, and they hustle around crazy-like, and don't know what to do with themselves. The spring affects us fellows in the same way. When the time for seeding comes around we feel that there's something we ought to be doing, and it isn't here for us to do, so we loaf around, feeling as lonesome as a lot of motherless colts. If you don't believe it, just fool around town for a while and talk with some of the gang. They don't know what's ailing them, but I do."

Of course, he was right, but these retired farmers resemble the chickadees in still another respect. Their migrating to town is really the result of an outgrown impulse. There was some excuse for a man who "retired" when the farm represented nothing but hard work, loneliness, and complete isolation from the active world. It was then an entirely laudable ambition for a man to make money and move to town, where he could live with some degree of comfort and enjoy [Pg 101] human companionship. But in the older parts of the country that day is past. Railroads, trolleys, and good roads have brought the farms as near to the life of things as the villages and towns were a few years ago. Many farmers nowadays get their mail daily; many get daily papers, and some have even gone so far as to have telephones. In fact, the farmer who is sufficiently "well off" to retire can get for himself on his farm much greater comforts than he can ever get on the back streets of any town or city, and at much less cost.

The question of cost is the one that gives the retired farmer the greatest surprise, and causes him the most trouble. But on this point let the man of experience speak:

"When I retired I thought I had everything figured out to perfection, and would end my days in peace and fatness; but I wasn't within a mile of the facts. I don't believe any one can figure out just what a farmer gets from his farm. To begin with, he gets most of his living—his potatoes, vegetables, eggs, milk, butter, meat, firewood, and such things; and he never thinks of them in the same way as he does when he has to pay money for them in town. Then, there are things he can do without and expenses he can dodge in the country that he can't avoid in town without getting a reputation for being mean. Not having lived the town life, he can't know about them in advance. That's why retired farmers are so often unpopular. People say they are against progress and can be counted on to vote against anything that's for the good of the town. Well, I guess that's about right. Things that are for the good of the town raise the taxes, and when one's income is at a dead level and the cost of living is going up every year one doesn't hanker for more expenses. With things going the way they are, there's many a retired farmer who has discovered that he has changed country prosperity for town poverty, and that doesn't make him feel generous and public-spirited."

"There's no place like the farm, after all!"

"O, ho! So you've got that notion in your head, have you? Well, let me tell you that if there is [Pg 102] another living creature more forlorn, buncoed, and bedevilled than the retired farmer it is the city or town man who tries farming as a peaceful and easy way to spend his declining years. Talk about miscalculating! He is the one that has it down to a fine thing. The city man thinks that if he has a farm clear of debt, good stock, and up-to-date implements he'll not only be able to sit under his own vine and fig tree, but to make money. It's a pretty dream: but it's seldom true. What the city man leaves out of the calculation is work—the hard, back-breaking, never-ending work it takes to run a farm. And when it comes to doing things he usually has about as much sense as a disappointed Brahma hen that sets on a crockery door-knob and tries to hatch out reversible egg-cups. He thinks all he has to do is to plant and let nature do the rest. Well, nature does it. Nature puts ten times as much steam in weeds as she does in turnips, and it looks as if she'd rather see her potato bugs plump and thrifty than anything else on the farm. After a man has tried farming

for a few years he finds that nature is less his friend than his enemy. The number of blights, bugs, worms, and caterpillars she has depending on her bounty is out of all reason. Nature, my son, needs more petting and coaxing than a woman to make her treat you half-decent, and it's ten to one she'll jilt you in the end. No, my son, the farm is no place for a man who isn't ready to get up at four o'clock in the morning and crow with the roosters, and then plug away all day and be thankful if he gets through with his chores by nine o'clock at night.

"Yes, I know, my middle name is Jeremiah, but if you don't believe me just have a look at some of these city farmers next market day. You'll know them by their untidy clothes. The first thing a city man thinks when he moves to the country is that he doesn't need to care how he dresses, and he doesn't. A respectable scarecrow wouldn't be seen with some of them. And they're just about as careless about everything else, though it is taking care of everything that makes it possible for [Pg 103] a man to get along on a farm at all. But what's the use of my talking? If you've made up your mind to have a try at farming nothing I can say will stop you; but don't forget that I told you."

From which it appears that in the never-ending debate regarding "Country Life *versus* City Life" much may be said on both sides—all of it bad. Even when eminent authorities are quoted the situation is not improved. Tolstoi assures us that "cities are places where humanity has commenced to rot," and Hawthorne put himself on record as believing that "the more a man turns over the clods the more like a clod his brain becomes." Thoreau considered country life ideal, because a man could provide for necessities with so little effort and have so much time for mental and spiritual growth, and Horace Greeley thought it admirable "if a man could only afford it." At the present time when so many teachers are shouting "Back to the soil" the merits of country life are more than ever in need of being investigated.

MAY

[Pg 104]

May 3.—After all the talking we have been doing it is just possible that there is nothing the matter with Ontario. Ontario may just be passing through a crisis. It is a rich province and is steadily growing richer. Now, in the richest counties, such as Middlesex, a change has commenced that may indicate the future of the province. The hundred-acre superstition is breaking down. Time was when a man who had less than a hundred acres, even though he had it clear of debt, was considered poor—a man who was trying to farm in cramped conditions. As soon as he could he would sell it, often at a sacrifice, and buy a hundred-acre farm with a nice, hand-welted mortgage on it. Then he could hold up his head in the community. In those brave days, before the passage of the McKinley bill, land in lots smaller than a hundred acres sold at a disadvantage. Now, however, the smaller lots, when in decent condition, bring the best prices. There are townships like Caradoc, where twenty-five acre farms are in the majority, and the people are getting rich and richer. One man can just about work twenty-five acres properly. In some cases they specialise on fruits or gardening, but in most cases they go in for mixed farming, and do it with a profit. They work their land well, manure it well, and get crops that would stagger the statisticians of the junior provinces. Ontario land is not the kind that a man can sow with the wind and reap with a whirlwind, and then go to the mushroom-growth capital and talk about having eighteen bushels to the acre. Ontario land is the kind that should be cultivated with a garden rake; and then it will yield forty or more bushels to the acre.

It is true that here and there one strikes a little land baron who owns three or four hundred, or [Pg 105] even a thousand acres, but that sort of thing is passing. If he has a family the land must be divided up among the children, either before or after the death of the owner, and if he has no family the land will eventually be sold in farm lots. Large holdings of land will not pay in Ontario unless they can be worked, and tenants are practically unknown. I do not know of a single tenant farmer in this district. With the breaking up of the land into small holdings Ontario will gradually become what nature intended it to be, a garden province raising fruits, vegetables, and other luxuries for the big, hurrying provinces that are making so much haste to get rich. The small-farm idea has a firm foothold in the Niagara Peninsula, and it is spreading. There is hardly an acre anywhere in the province that is not fitted for gardening or intensive farming, and in time the small farms will prevail everywhere. Then, instead of asking, "What's the matter with Ontario?" people will be saying, "Just look at Ontario!"

With the advent of the small farm the "good roads" problem is being solved. Where you find a group of twenty-five acre holdings you will find a stretch of good road. Improvements are not so burdensome where most of the farms have a frontage of only thirty rods. Even the roadwork or statute labour has more effect and comes nearer to giving good roads than in the large-farm districts. This is especially true where the use of the split-log drag is understood. There is no getting around the fact that perfected stone roads are expensive, and until a scheme has been hit on that will make them less burdensome it would be a good idea to expatiate on the merits of the split-log drag. It makes even earth roads passable for most of the year, but its use requires a certain amount of public spirit, and a public-spirited citizen is a man whose motives are suspected. Moreover, he is a very rare creature. It may be accepted as a truism that every stretch of good road in the country leads to the home of a public-spirited citizen, but the [Pg 106] stretches are few. When you find one it is usually worth while to find out the story of how it came to be built so as to get a light on human nature. You will usually find that some energetic man, like the celebrated monk of Siberia, of mud became weary and wearier, until at last he began to stir up his neighbours and the township council in the matter. In collecting money from his

neighbours, besides those who were willing to help, he struck two classes of those who lack public spirit. First, and these are plentiful, he struck the men who do not want to contribute for fear some one else, even a passing stranger, may get some benefit from their contributions without paying for it. Then there is the totally yellow type of man who is glad to know that the work is going on, but refuses to contribute a cent because he knows that his neighbours are going to put it through anyway, and he will get the benefit of it without helping. This type of man usually has a perverted sense of humour, and whenever the matter is referred to laughs loudly at the way he got the start of his neighbours. When the truly public-spirited man gets the necessary money collected, and gets the council to contribute its share, he usually has to keep an eye on the work until it is completed, and altogether contributes in time and money three or four times as much as any one else. But if he gets a good road built he is fully repaid for his efforts. He finds in the end that the work paid, even if done from selfish motives. But his good neighbours will not let matters rest there. They see back of his public-spirited efforts some design for getting himself elected councillor or something of that sort. For a man to do a thing wholly for the good of the community is too incredible. Where the small farms prevail public-spirited citizens are naturally more plentiful, as the population is greater, and the good-roads movement is thereby the gainer.

"Fair weather cometh out of the north," says the Book of Job, and fortified by this text I shall venture to say something about the spring weather. The last time I spoke about signs of fair weather it settled down and rained steadily for two weeks. But the clouds have blown away, [Pg 107] clearing from the north, and to-day a fine, exhilarating north wind is blowing. Those who are weather-wise say that fine weather is at hand. We have had much rain, but not too much for the hay and wheat. The ground is as full of water as a soaked sponge, the wells are full to the brim, and all the streams are either overflowing their banks or full to the level of the ground. Enthusiasts say that never before has there been a better prospect of a good harvest. The fruit trees are crowded with blossoms that have not yet opened. The garden, looked at across the chicken-wire fence, shows the seeds and weeds all sprouting lustily, but the ground is too wet for any work to be done. A couple of days like to-day, however, will make things fit for hoeing and weeding.

I understand that there is a fortune awaiting the man who can hit on a sure plan for wintering bees. As an unsolved mystery it ranks with the bottle that cannot be refilled. Every sort of plan has been tried from burying the hives in pits or putting them in cellars to leaving them in the wind-swept open. Some years they winter successfully in one way and next year will all die off under exactly the same conditions. All kinds of plans have proven successful at different times, and then again have failed. A few weeks ago I helped to move a couple of hives that seemed strong and thrifty. They were heavy with honey, and it looked as if they had wintered properly. A week later every bee was dead and the hives were empty of honey. They had been attacked by robbers and cleaned out. How is it that they were unable to protect themselves? Wintering the bees seems to be the big unsolved problem of bee-keeping. If it were not for that bee-keepers would get rich too quickly, for when once a hive gets started properly on its summer work it does nothing but make money. This summer I expect to learn more about bee-keeping, for the bees are to be handled according to instructions furnished by the Agricultural College at Guelph. We are going to follow those instructions to the letter, even if we have to build a bee-house so as to "tack [Pg 108] the instructions on the inside of the door," as advised in the circular.

The hen, when not kept within bounds, and when raised on the same farm as a garden, is a nuisance, but you can't help respecting her when you are asked to make yourself useful by gathering the eggs and find that you need a couple of twelve-quart pails to do the chore. With eggs at prevailing prices that sort of thing makes you feel that the Mint at Ottawa doesn't amount to so very much after all. But I have a dreadful secret to tell. All the poultry experts will call it heresy, and some poultry editor may hold me up to the scorn of the whole chicken-raising world, but I am going to tell it. This year the incubators have been loaned to ambitious amateurs, and all the chickens on this farm have been hatched out by nice, motherly old hens. They didn't have to have some one sit up nights with them, and they brought out a chicken from every egg but two. Besides, the chickens are so strong and healthy they have their feathers and are beginning to look like broilers at three weeks old. Of course, this is dreadfully unscientific. But it is "a condition, not a theory, that confronts us." Perhaps if I get time to look into the matter I may find that nature's way of raising chickens is scientific after all. Anyway, it is practical, and less than half the trouble.

May 6.—Spring is here at last, joyous, effervescent, carolling, busy spring. The fields, the streams, and the air are full of it. It is harder to watch than a three-ring circus. Every nook and cranny has its side show. The world is alive, alive, alive. The downpour of rain a few days ago delayed seeding, so that I had time to look about me while the miracles of nature were being performed. On going to the woodlot I was surprised to find the mayflowers, adder's-tongues, trilliums, Dutchman's breeches, and hepaticas already in bloom and the violets just opening. By giving shelter from the winds and letting the sunlight through their bare branches, the trees seem to make a natural forcing bed for the flowers, so that the woods stir to life earlier than the [Pg 109] fields and gardens. And now the leaves are coming out. The beeches are red, the maples a yellow green, and the elms misty and undefinable. The pastures and wheat fields are a vivid green, contrasting beautifully with the cool, brown earth of the ploughed land. The birds are so busy with their housekeeping that they hardly have time to sing, but when they do sing they throw their whole souls into it. One afternoon I heard so much music coming from the top of an elm that I had to investigate. I thought all the birds must have put through a merger in music and were celebrating, but I found that one solitary brown thrasher was doing it all. I knew that it belongs to the mocking-bird family, but as it is a newcomer in this district I had never before heard it give

an exhibition of its powers. It made an amazingly joyous racket for a while, varying its imitations with original bits of its own. And it expressed exactly what I was feeling at the time.

I wonder just what the poets mean when they speak of spring as being "balmy." Steamy would describe the condition of the air this morning for purposes of prose. It has the warmth and moisture of air in a greenhouse and is laden with earthy odours. The spring crops are going in with a rush, for the season is so late that every day counts. To-day we are discing corn-ground for oats, and this afternoon I am going to hitch a bag over my shoulder and sow the grain, just as they do in the great paintings for which American millionaires pay such fabulous prices. I am not doing it for artistic effect either. I would much rather do it after the manner of the O. A. C. and use a common, everyday seed drill, but, with only ten acres of spring seeding to do, it would not pay a struggling farmer to buy a seed drill, and every drill in the neighbourhood has a previous engagement this morning. A man doesn't need a drill many days in the year, but on those days he needs it mightily. I wish I had the use of one, but, since I have not, the work must be done by hand. Anyway it will be an experience, and it is a method of doing the work that has been much [Pg 110] praised in both prose and verse as well as in pictures. If I am not mistaken, there are several popular hymns on the subject, and I know that there is a song in one of the kindergarten books. I shall look it up in a few minutes, so that I shall be able to sing at my work as a farmer should. I have no conceit, however, that my singing will help to make the day more musical, but it may scare away the hens and keep them from following me too closely and picking up the scattered grain. But in weather like this everything goes. It even sounds good to hear the men in the fields yelling at the horses and the women scolding at the hens as they chase them out of their gardens. And it is all because it is spring, spring, spring!

Speaking of hens in gardens reminds me that about the meanest job the hired man and I tackled this spring was changing the location of the garden and moving the chicken wire that was around it. That stuff could kink, twist, bend, break, and otherwise make itself objectionable in more ways than anything I ever had to deal with. Why doesn't some one invent a kind of chicken wire that can be moved when necessary? Of course, we moved it, by brute strength, but now that it is in place again it looks as if it had been rammed through a corn-sheller and then tramped on by the cows. Still it will turn hens, and perhaps when the wild cucumber vines and gourds begin to climb over it, it will not look so bad. And while on the subject of fences let me "put myself on record," as the politicians say, as believing that inventors still have a fruitful field ahead of them inventing farm fences. Rail fences are going out entirely because of the scarcity of timber, and board fences are going for the same reason. There are many kinds of wire fences on the market, all guaranteed to be horse-high and skunk-tight. Most of them are all right for a year or two and then they begin to sag and wires begin to break. Patching and stretching them when they begin to give out is no job for a man with a feverish temper. Besides, it is work that has to be done when farm work is beginning to rush, and a man in a hurry is usually irritable. And beyond all [Pg 111] this I wonder what on earth people are going to do when they finally have to take down useless wire fences and put up new ones. You can't burn the old ones or roll them into reasonable compass. I doubt if the collectors of old iron can do anything with them. So what is to be done? The wire fences on the average Canadian farm would clutter up acres of ground if taken off to make way for new ones, and a piece of unemployed fence wire lying in the grass is about the trippingest, scratchiest thing a man can run into accidentally on a dark night or drive into with a team in the daytime. I think our inventors would make more money if they turned their attention from flying machines to wire fences for a while. This country is always going to need wire fencing, and millions of miles of it, and what is needed is a kind that will be serviceable and movable and that can be done away with when useless.

Word has just come that the trees are at the railway station, and that means more hustle. The thousand I planted in the woodlot last year did so well that this spring I got ambitious to finish the job of reforestation, and I sent for two thousand and five hundred. Wishing to get as great a variety as possible, so that some would be sure to thrive. I asked for white pine, Scotch pine, locust, catalpa, white elm, white maple, walnut, red oak, and chestnut. They are sending the whole list, and, as last year's work proved to me that planting three hundred trees a day is good, heavy work for a man and a boy, I expect we shall be fairly busy. In fact, as I think of the seeding and the trees, I feel like parodying Shakespeare and protesting lest

> "This great sea of jobs rushing upon me
> O'erbear the shore of my mortality,
> And drown me with their sweetness."

That last word hardly applies in my case, but there are a lot of people in the country who claim to like work, so I shall let it stand for their benefit. I wonder if it would not be possible for the Forestry Department to devise a method of planting trees at a different season of the year. If they [Pg 112] can be planted only in the spring, during seeding-time, the work of reforestation will never make much progress among the farmers of the country. Few of them have enough help to enable them to do the real spring work without taking on other jobs like this. And they are all the more reluctant to undertake the work because of the belief that a man who plants trees will never get any returns from his work. Of course that point of view is all wrong, but it is very prevalent. A man who plants trees for the benefit of his descendants is doing as much for them as if he put money in the bank for their use. It is just as wise an investment as any other that a man can make. But I am not going to argue out that question in such a busy time as this. If I think of it I'll take it up in the winter when there is little to occupy our minds. Just now I shall plant trees, and explain afterwards. Moreover, I had better get started or people will think I am guilty of "terminological inexactitudes" when I talk about being busy. This is no time to be sitting in the

house pounding at a typewriter. I should be outside, getting sun-burned and hustling about the thousand and one things that are to be done. If the wonderful things that will be happening in all nature during the next few days are to be sympathetically described this spring, some one else will have to be assigned to the job. As far as I am concerned there is nothing in sight but work, work, work.

May 9.—Two thousand five hundred trees are altogether too many for one farmer to undertake to plant in one season. There are too many other things to do at the time when the trees should be planted. Yet, nevertheless, and notwithstanding, the two thousand five hundred that I ordered are planted to the last seedling, and we still live. Moreover, that job of reforestation is done, and all that remains to do is to put a permanent fence around the woodlot and let nature take her course. There are twenty-four varieties of trees in that three acres, and if this year's planting does as well as last year's there should be a fine coppice before we are much older. While the [Pg 113] government trees are doing well, I am especially interested to find that the whole woodlot is now swarming with sugar maple seedlings. The fact that the cattle have been kept out for the past couple of years has given the natural growth a chance, and there are places where the little maples are growing as thickly as they can push from the ground. I think it would be a fair estimate to say that there are ten maple seedlings to every seedling I have planted. Between this year and last year we have planted over thirty-five hundred trees, so the outlook for a future timber limit is fairly rosy, though I have no doubt wise people are right in saying that "I'll never live to see any good come from all this work." That all may be, but there is a kind of satisfaction in doing some work that you know you will never derive any benefit from. It is a pleasant variation from the usual method of doing work from which you are expecting great profits and then getting bumped.

The expert who sent me the pasture mixture to sow in the oat field did not furnish plans and specifications for getting the stuff into the ground. Some of the seeds seemed to be nothing but fluff and fuzz, and when I tried to sow them with a hand seeder they took the wings of the morning and I don't know where they landed. Being anxious to confine the stuff I was sowing to Middlesex county, I waited for a dead calm, in the hope that if I got the stuff floating over the field some of it would gradually settle down where it was needed. There were seven varieties of seed in the mixture, each of a different specific gravity, and I don't think it would be possible for any one to distribute it properly over the ground unless he put it in the same as the women folk sometimes put in garden seeds—by poking each seed into the ground with the finger. As that process would be rather slow, and would be likely to take up the rest of the summer, I decided against it. The hand-seeder had to be discarded, too, because I couldn't get the seed to feed through it evenly. After many trials and false starts, I finally had to go back to the old system of broadcasting and scatter the stuff by hand. Yesterday was an ideal day for such work. We had a [Pg 114] series of thunderstorms, and for about an hour before each storm there was a lull:

> "That strange silence which before a storm
> Shakes the forest leaves without a breath."

I was able to sift the seed over the ground in the still air, but after each storm the mud got stickier and heavier until it seemed that I was pulling up about as much oats at each step as I was putting in of grass seed. Sowing may be an artistic job, but as I thought it over I couldn't just remember how Millet represented the feet of the peasant in his celebrated picture. After yesterday's experience I feel safe in assuming that "The Sower" was not wearing patent leather pumps.

The orchard is certainly looking fine. The blossoms are just opening and on most of the trees they are plentiful enough to satisfy any one. Mr. Clement came over last week and sprayed them thoroughly with lime sulphur and arsenate of lead. The purpose of this was to destroy the insects that feed on the blossoms and to kill the leaf-curl worms. It was surprising to find how many of these creatures were commencing their ravages before the spraying had begun. I should never have noticed them in making a casual observation, but Mr. Clement ferreted them out for me and showed how they were feeding fat on my profits from the orchard. While he went on with the spraying I went poking around looking for matters of interest and found that the Baldwins were showing signs of some kind of blight. The leaves and blossoms were blackening as if they had been touched by frost. Mr. Clement said that he had never before observed anything like it. It seemed to be something new. A couple of days later he wrote to tell me that in Elgin county the lower branches of the Baldwins are affected in the same way and as yet no one has been able to offer an explanation. But I guess I hadn't better say much about this. Apparently I was the first to discover this blight, and it would be just like these scientific men to name it after me. I freely admit that they have a lot to get even with me for, but I hope that they will not take any such fiendish revenge as that. I don't want to go down to history in the same class with the man Bright [Pg 115] who first developed Bright's disease. I rather wish I hadn't noticed that blight.

When I heard that morels were being found in the neighbourhood I simply couldn't restrain myself. The call of the fungus is something I cannot resist. Although I was tired enough from sowing that grass seed and dragging my feet out of the mud I put off milking for half an hour to make a search through the long grass by the roadside. Although I had once or twice enjoyed a dish of morels I had never managed to find a specimen, but last night luck was with me and I got seven beauties. When I tasted them before I regarded them as a rather feeble substitute for mushrooms, but they had a tang of their own that appealed to my palate. This time they were served differently and proved a supreme success. Some one had heard that to be at their best morels should be stewed in cream, and that was the way we had them for breakfast. While

altogether different, they were every bit as delicious as the finest mushroom, and from now on if any morel within a radius of a mile escapes me it will be because I have become so practical a farmer that I no longer take any interest in the enjoyments of life. I have never seen morels on the bill of fare of any restaurant, but I can assure the epicures that they are missing something.

May 11.—Say, it isn't fair of the banks to spring an important move like the Royal-Trader merger when a fellow is too busy with his spring work to give it proper attention. They might have known that I would want to look into the business in a careful and leisurely way, and here they go and put through their deal when I am all fussed up with other things. But that is a way they have. Most of the privileges they enjoy they got when no one was watching them. But we'll get around to them again one of these fine days, and perhaps, as Shakespeare says:

"Use them for our mirth.
 Yea, for our laughter when we are waspish."

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I am glad I undertook to plant those trees in the woodlot this year. It is so satisfyingly ridiculous a thing to do that wise people have no time to criticise the way I am putting in the rest of my crops. It is more amusing than having the orchard attended to by the latest scientific methods. But I must be fair on this point. Although there were a few people who laughed noisily when they heard that I was going to place the orchard in the hands of experts, there are many others who are anxious to know just how the work is being done, and who openly envy me for having been able to arrange with the Department of Agriculture to give the demonstration. Some have gone so far as to prune their trees this year, and several professional pruners found all the work they wanted to do in this district. But I am afraid this will not help the cause of orcharding very much, for none of the trees are being sprayed, and the result is likely to be of a kind that would need the pen of Joel the son of Pethuel to describe properly. What the codling worm leaves, the caterpillar will destroy, and so on, and so on. You will remember the text.

The glorious spring we are having just now makes me feel in my bones that there is something about the season of growth that the scientists have not yet discovered. When everything is alive, from the grain of mustard seed to the mighty oak, and everything is bursting into life and bloom, I always feel that there are other forces at work besides heat and moisture. Wherever I turn, things seem to be flooded with life, as if life were a form of force like electricity—something too all-pervading and subtle to be isolated by scientific investigators. Life seems to be something apart from the chemical changes that take place in the seeds—something that compels these changes, but does not enter into the combination itself. At this season of the year the world seems to be flooded with an abounding vitality not noticeable at other times. As yet the scientists have not been able to make any more of it than have the poets, but it seems very real.

May 14.—Last night I had only three hours' sleep, and all on account of that orchard. After an [Pg 117] unexpected and wholly unseasonable snowstorm, the weather turned cold, and the signs all pointed to a sharp frost. An hour after sunset the thermometer registered thirty-four degrees above zero—just two degrees above the freezing point. I began to worry at once. I have seldom been more interested in anything than I am in that orchard, and it is not entirely because I am hoping for a profitable crop. This is the first time I have ever had a chance to follow closely the art of fruit-producing, and I am profoundly interested in the work because of the light it throws on man's partnership with nature. Mr. Clement has undertaken his share of the task in such a hearty fashion that I do not want to have anything interrupt us until the demonstration has been completed. So, as I said, when frost threatened I began to worry. It seemed as if the whole experiment might be defeated by a slight change in temperature. Every few minutes I went and consulted the thermometer, and it was slowly but surely edging closer to the danger-point. Not knowing what to do, I decided that I must do something. It was impossible to get after the experts at that hour of the night, and I was perfectly willing to do anything, however foolish, to save the buds so that our work of apple-producing might go on. Racking my memory for something that would give me guidance, I remembered having read somewhere that the vine-growers in France, when threatened by frost, build fires in their vineyards. On mentioning this, some one remembered that one hard summer, in pioneer days, one of our neighbours saved his corn from a June frost by lighting all the brush heaps and stumps in his fields, and that year he was the only man in the district who had corn. Some one else remembered having heard that out West they sometimes save part of their crop by making smudges that will lay a blanket of smoke over the fields. Of course, I hadn't seen anything in the bulletins or farm papers about that sort of thing, but I didn't hesitate. I was perfectly willing to do a dozen fool things, if one of them would [Pg 118] by any chance protect the buds from frost. It didn't matter to me if I lit a torch that would cause laughter from Niagara to Lambton. I am getting used to being laughed at, and, as a very prominent Canadian educationist wrote when a fellow professor lost his pet dog,

"Vot did I told him? I dunno!
  I neffer said a vort!
 For ven von's leetle dog vos dead,
  A leetle more don't hurt."

A little more laughing wouldn't hurt me any, so I hunted up a bundle of rags and the coal-oil can and started for the orchard. Up to that time I had been rather ashamed of the fact that, owing to the rush of work, we hadn't been able to clear away the brush that had been pruned from the trees, but last night I was glad it was still there. It was in neat piles, anyway, and that made it handier to get at. As there was not a breath of air stirring, I selected a spot in the middle of the orchard, where I would not be in danger of scorching any of the trees, started my fire of rags and

oil, and began to pile the green brush on it. In a few minutes I had a bonfire that would have been big enough to celebrate a victory of the people over the Big Interests. The night was so still that the flame and smoke went straight up into the air. But there was not enough smoke. Going to the stable, I got a forkful of wet straw and carried it to my bonfire. After throwing it on the fire, I had an excellent illustration of what Milton meant by the phrase:

"Cast forth
Redounding smoke and ruddy flame."

In a few minutes there was a most satisfying blanket of smoke hanging over the trees and rolling through their branches. Of course, I knew that there was no frost as yet, but I had demonstrated to my own satisfaction that if it did come I could make all the smoke that was necessary. By this time it was almost twelve o'clock, so I set the alarm for three a.m., and turned in with an easy [Pg 119] conscience. It is always just before sunrise that a frost strikes hardest, and I would get up and be ready for it. At three o'clock the alarm went off with a wholly unnecessary jangle, and after I had explained to the aroused and protesting family what the rumpus was all about, I took a peep at the thermometer. The mercury stood exactly at the freezing point. In a few minutes I had four bonfires, half smothered with wet straw, throwing up clouds of smoke. By the time the dawn began to appear in the east, the thermometer had shaded below the freezing point, and water in a pan by the door was slightly coated with ice. This made me redouble my efforts, and I certainly did get up a glorious fog. If those buds could be saved, I was going to save them. I kept up the good work until six o'clock, when the sun's heat began to be felt. Then I had breakfast and waited for Mr. Clement, like a little curly-headed boy who had done all his homework. I forgot to mention that to-day was the day decided on for the second spraying of the trees.

When Mr. Clement finally came, I couldn't wait to get his horses unhitched until I had told him what I had done, and what do you think? He just roared and laughed! Now I don't think that's fair. Scientific farmers have no business laughing at the rest of us. It is their business to do fussy things and let us laugh at them. Still, he wasn't so very bad about it. He soon let me see that what amused him was my enthusiasm about the work. He assured me that the situation might have been one where what I had done would have been exactly the right thing. At this stage, however, there is little danger of the blossoms being destroyed by frost. It is usually a frost that comes after the fruit is set that causes trouble, and, if two weeks from now there should be a cold snap, I should be doing exactly the right thing in making a blanket of smoke for the trees. It was very kind of him to spare my feelings in this way, but still I wish he hadn't been quite so much amused, and that his eyes didn't twinkle every time the matter was referred to during the day. [Pg 120] Although I am getting pretty thoroughly seasoned, I still have feelings.

I don't care even if my bonfires were not needed, and if I did lose a few hours' sleep. I have done a whole lot of more foolish things than that, and got away with them by simply looking solemn. Moreover, I have more than once lost a night's sleep, and it wasn't always by sitting up with a sick friend, either. Any time during the early summer, if you waken up before daylight and see a big light in the sky down in this direction, you needn't imagine that somebody's buildings are being burned. It will probably be me having bonfires in my orchard. Mr. Clement admitted that it would be all right, and I don't care a bit if he did grin a little at the time. We are going to make a success of that orchard if it is humanly possible, and I had my reward for last night's exploit in another way. I had a chance to hear the wonderful concert of the birds that greets the dawn, long before even the most industrious of us humans is stirring. But I am not going to say much about that just now. I am too much hurried to deal with anything so poetic. It will serve as a subject for a special article later on.

May 16.—Last week I made up my mind to write an article founded on experience, but I found that *The Farmer's Advocate* has to some extent anticipated me. It has an editorial dealing with the subject I had in view, but, instead of giving up my article, I shall quote what *The Advocate* says, and then proceed with my own thoughts on the same point:

"One of the greatest mistakes a farmer can make is yielding to that insidious tendency to dull his mental energy by sheer physical exhaustion. There are so many things to do about a farm, and so few hands to do them, that, unless one is careful, he finds himself working on into the night, when he should be resting, if not sleeping. Morning comes apace, finding his senses heavy; but necessity, that stern prompter, opens his eyelids and drives him through another round of duty. Day after day this continues, till unconsciously he slips into a routine, and, despite natural inclinations and resolutions to the contrary, gradually settles into ruts. He loses his mental grasp [Pg 121] and outlook, becomes the slave of his own work, drags through it as best he may, with dulled perception, flagging enterprise, and dull-grey outlook, where nothing matters much but grimly holding on. The future holds nothing of promise, and only the old ways are safe."

Farm papers are usually so unrelentingly practical that it is good to find one sounding so healthy a note of warning.

While planting trees and gardening I went at the work with a grim determination to get it done. Only when the task was completed and I had time and energy to reflect did I realise to what a complete blank I had reduced the most enjoyable season of the year. I remember that on the first day I went to the woods the buds were swelling on the trees. When the work was done the trees were in full leaf and the ground was covered with wild flowers, but I had not noticed the progress of the change. During this strenuous period I observed nothing, enjoyed nothing, thought nothing, read nothing. I reduced myself to a mere machine, capable of nothing but work and weariness. It was only when the rush was over that I realised how insensate and inanimate I had

been. While I had been slaving a coronation scene more wonderful than that which is about to take place in London had been in progress, but I had seen nothing of it. Nature was being crowned with flowers, and the fields and trees had put on their wonderful green mantles for the great occasion, but I had been indifferent. As I thought of this I suddenly realised that I had simply reduced myself to the condition that is habitual with nine farmers out of every ten in this beautiful country. I understood for the first time why farmers as a class are so apathetic to the wonders by which they are surrounded. Living more closely in touch with nature than any one else, they probably enjoy her beauty less than any one else. Even the city man who goes for an occasional stroll in the park enjoys nature more than they do.

This point of view suddenly changed my attitude towards a number of things I was inclined to admire. When the report of the Ontario Agricultural College came to me through the mail a couple of days ago I found it hideously practical. It is full of information that if applied will greatly increase the prosperity of the country, but in my present frame of mind I am not sure that that is what we stand most in need of. What is the use of reducing the cow to a butter-fat machine, the hen to an egg machine, and so on, if the men who look after them are to be reduced to work machines? Mr. James' assertion that the products of Ontario can be doubled in ten years does not look so good to me as it did. If he proposed to show how as much as is being produced in Ontario could be produced with half the amount of labour I should like it better. It is this everlasting effort to produce more, instead of to enjoy more, that is robbing life of all its charms. They need a professor of leisure in connection with the Agricultural Department to teach the value of leisure on the farm, how to secure it and how to enjoy it. Work has become a mania and people are trying madly to do more than their share. Instead of saying, "Build thee greater mansions, O my soul!" the farmer is raging to build greater bank barns and the Department of Agriculture is doing all in its power to help him do it and to show him how to fill them. Now I understand why days of idleness are so irksome to so many people. It is not always because they are greedy for gain and cannot bear to think that time is being lost. It is because they habitually stupefy themselves with work as with a powerful narcotic, and find it painful to have their minds awake. When the mind is given a chance it is apt to show how useless so much of our striving is, and we have to stupefy it again so as to escape from its accusations. I am even inclined to suspect that those who are trying to educate the farmers are defeating their own purposes. By showing how to make work more profitable they are inducing people to work harder, and in that way they have their minds less open to new ideas and better methods. The professor of leisure could correct this by forcing home the truth that the end of all work is to win leisure. It is in our hours of leisure that we enjoy ourselves and grow. But the world has been reduced to such a condition by work that we need to be taught how to enjoy ourselves and grow. There is certainly a great field for the new professor.

There is thunder in the air to-day, and everybody is hoping for a good brisk rain—that will not delay the work too much. The spring crops, as well as the gardens, need a good watering, and my trees would be the better of a good warm soaking. I looked them over yesterday, and they seem to be doing pretty well. Practically all the butternut and ash trees are in full leaf, though some of the ash seem to be withering. The walnut buds are swelling, but few of them are in leaf. As for the pine and cedar, I am somewhat puzzled. They are not showing any signs of new growth. In fact they are looking discouragingly like the hang-over Christmas decorations in the Town Hall, but perhaps that is their way, and in due season they will begin to make progress. Anyway, my conscience is clear. I planted them according to instructions, and reduced myself to what Markham calls "a brother to the ox" while doing it. They will probably turn out all right, but I wish they would hurry and put forth the "tender leaves of hope."

It is hard to believe that there are so many wildflowers in the woods, but an hour among the trees with the boy who is engaged in nature study was a liberal education. He had been rooting around making a disturbance of the kind described by the Rocky Mountain guide as having been made by "a wild hawg or a scientist," when I happened along, thirsting for information. He had found twenty-two varieties and he introduced me to all of them, but I am afraid that I shall not be able to recall their college names when I meet them again. I was already familiar with the Indian turnip, which the big boys used to think it was great fun to get the little boys to bite at, and I could still feel my tongue ache and shrivel as I recognised it. I also knew the violet and phlox, but Solomon's seal and mitre-wort and foam-flowers and many others were new to me. Now that it is becoming fashionable to rail at the educational authorities, I want to hand them a little bouquet—of wildflowers. Nature study, at least, is all right, even though it doesn't teach the children to work.

For fear that no one else in this busy world will notice the fact, I want to publish the glorious news that the apple trees are beginning to blossom. The plum and pear trees are already in full bloom, and the fields and woods are fresh and green and flooded with spring perfumes. It is no time for any one to be indoors, or for any one who is outdoors to be oblivious to the beauties by which he is surrounded. Get outdoors and waken up! There is health to be had for the taking, and enjoyment is free to all. Even the birds that are hatching out their eggs in the old-fashioned way, instead of using up-to-date incubators, seem to be getting something out of life, for they insist on singing all the time the sun shines and sometimes they waken up in the night to tell how happy they are. The frogs—but before I forget it there are some things I want to find out about frogs. Does thunder kill tadpoles? The nature student had a lot of frogs' eggs hatching out in an old pan. I noticed them swimming about just before a thunderstorm came up, and after it was over they were all lying dead in the bottom of the pan. Did the thunder kill them? Another thing I noticed was that, although the frogs in the ponds were all indulging in their "Pandean chorus," they suddenly stopped when the storm began to threaten. At the same time the tree-toads began to

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croak. They never croak except before a storm, I am told. Now that I have rid myself of the curse of work for this spring and have scolded about it for a page or so I shall begin to look into important matters like this and try to enjoy life again.

May 19.—This letter is going to be written under difficulties. To begin with, I have only a vague idea of what I am going to write about, for a beautiful May morning is altogether too distracting for a man to be able to concentrate his thoughts. All the senses are being delicately catered to by spring delights. A balmy breeze is puffing through the open door, laden with fresh odours; [Pg 125] snatches of bird-song assail my ears, and whenever I raise my eyes from the paper the mellow sunlight invites me to wander in the garden or orchard. As for the sense of taste, my briar-root pipe is at its best. By yielding to the allurement of any of the senses I could enjoy myself to the full. In addition to this a clutch of hens' eggs was hatched out last night in a barrel at the foot of the garden, and the duck eggs are chipped. I am not particularly interested in this, but a little boy is more interested than I can pretend to be in anything and he insists on giving me bulletins every few minutes.

"One of the chickens has its head stuck out froo the old hen's fevvers."

"Yes, yes! Run along now. Can't you see that I am busy?"

There are a lot of minnows in the creek a few rods away, and they are dividing his attention somewhat. This morning he had a mess of chub about the size of sardines for breakfast and he thinks I should go fishing to provide food for the family. He is so serious about it all that it is a shame to smile at him, especially when I have nothing better to do than to write nonsense. But there are times when even writing nonsense seems like hard work, and this is one of them. It would be much better if the people who are in the habit of reading newspapers were to go out and devote the time it takes to read a column or so of print to enjoying nature for themselves. Why not stop right now and spend a few minutes in the open air with every sense alert to what is going on around you? I would if I could.

There have been hours this spring when I have felt like criticising Wordsworth, even though he, above all others, is the poet of nature. There is one familiar quotation from his poems that has done more to set nature-lovers wrong than anything else in the language. If I could, I would verify it to make sure that it is quoted as he meant it, but for some unaccountable reason my copy of his poems, which I thought was complete, does not contain "Peter Bell." It is many years since [Pg 126] I read the poem, but the impression that sticks in my memory is the popular one that Peter was regarded as an undesirable citizen because:

> "A primrose by a river's brim
> A yellow primrose was to him,
> And it was nothing more."

Now it seems to me that if Peter realised that, he reached the highest point possible to a poet. A flower in itself is more wonderful than anything that can be imagined about it. It is a beautiful part of the universal mystery—just as wonderful and mysterious as a constellation. The primrose is perfect in itself and its charm is not increased by the fact that men have "sought out many inventions" about it. To the scientist it is a gamopetalous plant, to the politician the emblem of an aristocratic political league, and to the student curious in ancient philosophy a possible key to the Pythagorean system. There you have "inventions" with a vengeance, but in reality it is simply a yellow primrose, and it is nothing more. If Peter Bell was able to look at it in that simple way he achieved an intellectual feat that is almost impossible to us in this age of profound explanations that explain nothing.

"What's that?"

"The chicken that had its head sticking through the fevvers tumbled out, and the old hen pushed it back under her with her beak."

"Good for her. Run along now."

But it will not do to scold Wordsworth too much for this mistake about Peter Bell, for he shows in other poems that when he was at his best he regarded things from Peter's simple point of view:

> "My heart leaps up when I behold
> A rainbow in the sky;
> So was it when my life began;
> So is it now I am a man;
> So be it when I shall grow old,
> Or let me die!"

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There is nothing in that to suggest that he considered a rainbow as anything but a rainbow. There is no hint of a study of the laws of refraction or of the symbolism which makes the rainbow a pledge that the world will never again be destroyed by water. In fact, we might parody Peter Bell and say:

> A rainbow on the horizon's rim
> A glorious rainbow was to him,
> And it was nothing more.

Because Wordsworth, the man, accepted the rainbow as he did when a child he gave us a perfect gem of poetry. And everything else in the world is just as poetical if approached in the same

childlike spirit. But this is almost impossible because of the "many inventions."

But the primroses and rainbows are not the only things that are made hard to see rightly because of "many inventions." It is no longer possible to see our fellow-men simply as men. Just ask any one to describe some man of his acquaintance for you. You will probably find that he will begin by telling you whether he is well off. Then he will tell you what political party he belongs to. After that he will tell you what church he attends. The man will possibly be described as well-to-do, a Grit and a Presbyterian. Now, that is not a description of a man. Wealth, partisanship, sectarianism are simply "inventions." A man may be a man for a' that.

"What's the trouble now?"

"The old hen stepped on a chicken."

"Well, wrap it up in a cloth and put it in a basket by the kitchen stove and see if it will get better."

Let me see. Where were we at? Oh, yes, we were trying to describe a man. How would it do to go back to Solomon's study of the matter? He said that man was made upright. "But they have sought out many inventions." Wouldn't we get a better idea of a man if he were described as upright, generous, good-natured, neighbourly? These are all qualities, not "inventions." But I do not think I ever heard a man described in that way. We all seem to think of the "inventions" first. [Pg 128] It is just as hard to consider a man as a man as it is to consider a primrose as a yellow primrose.

As I read over what I have written I seem to discover a great truth. When a man has nothing else to say he naturally begins to moralise. But I am going to stop. The old hen is squawking and the little boy is calling. She is probably moralising, too, if the tone of her voice tells anything. She is probably saying that since the "invention" of incubators chickens are not what they used to be when she was young. And human children are more troublesome. It is a strange world that we live in and it is hard to get the right attitude towards it. But I think we shall make a great advance towards enjoying it when we realise that things are what they are and not what people imagine they are. The sunshine is good and the warm breeze is good and the flowers are good and the birds are good, and, if possible, for the rest of this glorious day I am not going to bother my head about what they may possibly be on a last analysis or what they perhaps stand for. I am weary of the "many inventions."

May 20.—If a man could only know as much before he starts a job as he does after it has been finished, work would be a great deal easier. I thought I had everything just right when starting to plant the new orchard, but I learned a few things. We planted cherry trees for fillers, and I thought it would be no trick to get them in right after the apple trees were planted. We made a fairly good job of planting the apple trees. Though the rows are not so straight that a rifle bullet would nick every tree, they are not so bad. Here and there one may be out an inch or two, but the stretched and marked wire kept us fairly straight in spite of the rolling ground. It is only when you look across the field corner-ways that you notice the little mistakes. But the great mistake was in imagining that if I got the apple trees in straight I should have no trouble putting in the fillers by sighting along the rows of apple trees. This had to be done by sighting along the rows that showed corner-ways, and, as they revealed all the mistakes of the apple-tree planting, these [Pg 129] mistakes were multiplied in planting the cherry trees. After the first couple of rows of fillers had been put in, I thought they would help me in sighting, but matters kept getting worse steadily. As Nature has not fitted me with enough eyes to enable me to sight in six different directions at once, the problem was too deep for me. I know that we should have planted the fillers after each row of apple trees, and there were twenty-foot marks on the wire for that purpose, but nobody told me. When we found out it was too late to do things right, for the planted trees made it practically impossible to shift the wire for each row. So we put in the cherry trees as best we could, and I danced around like a hen on a hot griddle trying to sight in six different directions without delaying the work of planting. The result is not what you would call a fancy job of planting, but I have seen worse. In fact the trees are in better line than in most of the orchards I know of, but they should be right. Of course, the fillers will be cut out some time in the future and the orchard will then look all right, but I shall have to wait a good many years before it looks as I should like to have it.

Planting the young orchard was not the joyous job I had expected, for there was less hope in the work than I would have liked. The trees arrived in such condition that it seems hardly possible that even a decent percentage of them will live. The box in which they were packed was broken, most of the packing had fallen out, and they were as dry as last year's brush. They had been twelve days coming from Welland, and had been exposed to the hottest weather of the season. They might have been delivered with a wheel-barrow as quickly as they were delivered by the railways. People who saw them at the station advised me not to accept delivery, but I called up the nurseries and the manager asked me to try to save the trees. He advised soaking them over night, and then heeling them in a wet place. This was done, and with the help of two men who have had experience in planting we put in the trees according to the directions of the [Pg 130] nurserymen. I was anxious to give the trees a chance, not only because I did not want to see so large a shipment destroyed, but because we have been preparing to plant this orchard for the past year. Last fall a clover sod was ploughed under, and preparations made to give the young orchard every chance. If I rejected the trees a whole year would be lost, and the work would have to be done over again. The nurserymen promised me fair treatment if I would plant the trees, and now I am waiting to see the result. Though the trees were thoroughly soaked before planting, ten days ago, and have had two good showers of rain since they were planted, I cannot find a bud that has even swollen. If they do not grow it will mean a lot of wasted work.

May 23.—Getting out to grass is certainly the event of the year for the animals on the farm. I

know, because I have a strong fellow-feeling for them. When the sun begins to get warm, and the grass starts to grow, I get impatient for the time when I can fling myself at full length on the sod without being scolded for taking chances of catching cold. When the cows were allowed out for the first time they could hardly wait to go through the gate before they started to graze, and for a couple of hours they kept at it as if their lives depended on getting a good meal. But presently something stampeded the young cattle, and the whole bunch began running, bunting one another, and jumping around as if indulging in a foolish sort of sun dance to celebrate their freedom. When this was over, the red cow started on her annual inspection of the fences. The thorn hedge, woven with barbed wire, baffled her, as it did last year, and I thought everything was all right. The next time I looked she was in the clover field. The spring flood had loosened things around the government drain. After driving her out I fixed this break in the fence, only to find that she was in the field again. She had found a place where the wire fence had been cut to haul out wood and had managed to push through. Turning her out again I made a thorough job of mending this, and that ended the trouble. She made a complete round of the field, stuck her head [Pg 131] over every fence and bawled, but that was all. Now I can go about my work without giving a thought to the fences. The red cow and I examined and tested them thoroughly on the first day and fixed them for the summer. Really, the red cow is a great help. If it were not for her I might be bothered with fences all season, but one day is enough. She examines the fences thoroughly and after she finds the weak spots I fix them up. If her calves take after her I shall be able to advertise a new strain of useful stock. No farmer should be without one of these fence-testing cows to help him keep his farm in shape and protect his crops.

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

When the driver got out for the first time she went through the gate on the run. She ate quietly for a couple of minutes, then lay down and had a most satisfactory roll. When she got up she took [Pg 132] a look around the field, squealed, jumped into the air, and began to give an exhibition of energy that I didn't think was in her system. She must have had it in cold storage all winter, for she hadn't been using much of it on the road. She galloped, kicked, and snorted, and I sat down and tried to figure out whether she was snorting at the kick or kicking at the snort. But like many another problem I have tackled, it was too deep for me. There were times when she had all four feet in the air at once, and looked as if she could have kept four more going. She would gallop round in a circle, then come to a sudden stop and snort. When the echo of the snort came back from the woods, it would scare her so that she would start off on the gallop again. After she had relieved herself and galloped around the field in this way about a dozen times, she finally settled down and began to eat. After watching this exhibition I made up my mind that there will be more speed in my drives to the post office in the future. I thought she was troubled with "that tired feeling" that comes to all of us in the spring, but now I shall have no compunction about using the whip. She has simply been loafing on me.

JUNE [Pg 133]

June 4.—Everything that has been done in the orchard has been wonderfully interesting, but the third spraying was a revelation. When Mr. Clement began "squirting Death through a hose" at the blossoms, I regarded the operation as part of the ordinary routine, and little suspected that back of the work lay one of those romances of science that are lost in commonplace reports, instead of glowing on the pages of a poet. As usual, a chance question brought out the wonderful fact that kindled my imagination. A teacher had asked the nature student to bring to school a specimen of the codling moth, and when I tried to help him, and looked up the literature on the subject, I found that the codling moth flies by night, and that many experienced orchardists have never seen one. Then I asked if it would be possible to capture a codling moth at this time of the year.

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

Instantly I became a living interrogation mark, and during the next few minutes learned a story that illustrates better than anything I have yet found the patient work that is being done by our scientists, and the wonderful skill with which they adapt their methods to the processes of Nature in order to accomplish results. Here is a case where they meet Nature on her own ground, and conquer her by a subtlety equal to her own. It is a triumph of science that should be observed by Faber and described by Maeterlinck. Having studied out the processes of an apple's

development and the codling worm's method of attack, they prepare a death-trap for an insect that is as yet unborn. While the calyx of the blossom is open, they saturate it with a spray of [Pg 134] arsenate of lead. As the young apple develops, the calyx closes and folds within itself the charge of poison where it cannot be washed out by the rain. Weeks later the young codling worm is hatched from the egg deposited on some near-by twig by the moth, and, obeying a compelling instinct, crawls up the stem of the little apple, makes its way to the calyx, and begins to eat its way into the fruit. Then it meets with the lurking death that has been placed in its path by the ingenuity of man. Could anything be more skilful or more carefully thought out? The orchardist makes Nature herself "commend the ingredients of the poisoned chalice" to the lips of her destroying creatures. Here is something that surpasses the craft of the poisoners of the Dark Ages. It is fabled that they could administer their death-dealing "Aqua Tofana" in the perfume of a rose, and that Cæsar Borgia could destroy an enemy by poisoning one side of a knife, dividing a peach with it, and then eating his own half with relish, while his unsuspecting guest took certain death from the other. But the Borgias, de Medicis, and Brinvilliers were clumsy poisoners when compared with the scientists who protect the bounties of Nature from the ravages of her prodigal hordes. Poisoning the blossom for the unborn insect that would prey on the fruit is surely the masterpiece of protective science. In my excitement, I forgot to ask if it is known who devised this plan, but probably it was developed bit by bit, scientist after scientist adding his portion, until the scheme was perfect. This marvel is now one of the commonplaces of farm work. I wonder how many more stories just like it are back of the methods and formulas by which man is slowly learning to control the forces of Nature for his profit.

The orchard is right up to date. It has been given its three sprayings, and has been fertilised and ploughed. Of course, I have never watched an orchard closely until now, but those who should know assure me that there has never been such a showing for apples as there is this year. The little apples are now formed, and it is easy to find trees on which four and five blossoms out of [Pg 135] each cluster of six have been fertilised. If even a small percentage of the apples that are already formed reach maturity, practically every tree in the orchard will be loaded. In fact, it has been suggested that there are so many apples the fruit will be small unless it is thinned out later in the season. If the insects that prey on the young fruit only worked with discretion they might be helpful in thinning it out. I wonder if the scientists cannot find some way of training the larvæ that feed on the blossoms to take only a just proportion of them. Nature provides enough for them and for man if they could only work in unison. But I am afraid that the war of extermination must go on, for I doubt if they can do anything along this line, even though they are so wonderfully skilful.

A couple of days ago a sharp-eyed boy found something on the apple trees to which he called my attention. There were little clusters of eggs on the under side of the branches—little yellow things about the size of pin-points. I am so anxious to find out what they are that I am going to clip off a few pieces of bark, put them in a pill-box, and send them over to Mr. Clement. But perhaps, instead of being the eggs of some injurious insect, they may be the eggs of something useful. I wonder if I should take all the eggs when sending them, or should I leave a nest-egg? In doing these scientific things, the ordinary man is always afraid he may not be right. But as the eggs seem fairly plentiful, I guess I can risk it. Anyway, I want to find out all about everything that is happening to those trees.

This has been a great year for gardening. Although it has been a late spring, we are already having plenty of lettuce, radishes, and young onions, and the work needed to make a garden was not missed. One thing that interests me is to find that the cabbage, cauliflower, and tomato plants I am getting from seeds sown in the open are growing so rapidly that they promise to do better than the hothouse plants that were put out for an early crop. Apparently, there is little to [Pg 136] be gained by forcing plants for ordinary gardening, though it may be useful in market gardening when every day counts in getting the high prices at the beginning of the season. We have over thirty varieties of vegetables in the garden this year, ranging from the bulky squash to the small, savoury herbs, and when vegetarians call to see us this summer we shall always be ready to give them a dinner fit for a cow—I mean a king.

June 7.—I have just had an hour of pure enjoyment, and that was worth while, even though the experience did not have a happy ending. The day being fine, and the work being well in hand, I went for a walk about the farm. I was delighted to find the oats doing so well, and had my first thrill when I realised that they were my oats. Then I went to look at the hay—my hay—and found that most of the field gives promise of a good crop. Then I looked at the corn—my corn—and saw that it is coming through the ground in fine style, even though the seed grain used was open to suspicion. The potatoes—my potatoes—are already through the ground, and the pasture—my pasture—is rich and plentiful. The garden—my (I mean our) garden—is already producing daily salads, and we shall have spinach in a few days. By the time I got back to the house my chest measurement was at least six inches greater than when I started out. Then I foolishly took up an account book—her account book—and began to look over the expenses—my expenses. Before I had added them up, I collapsed like a torn balloon and curled up like a codling worm that has sampled the arsenate. I hardly had enough energy left to heave a sigh. The item for labour was appalling. Then, there was seed grain and tools, and a score of other things that I didn't count on when beginning the work. It wouldn't do to show that expense account to people who are thinking of coming back to the land, or they would never come, and the farmers would lose a chance of profitably unloading farrow cows and wind-broken horses on them when they are stocking up. I wish that account book hadn't been lying in so prominent a place. It spoiled the [Pg 137] day's enjoyment.

When I am inclined to be despondent about other things, I go and look at the orchard. Thanks to the Department of Agriculture, it is not crushed under an expense account, and the prospects are good for a bumper crop. The little apples—my little apples—are swelling rapidly, and beginning to look like ready money. But I find that on some branches not a single blossom was fertilised. This makes me think that there are a few things that the orchardist will have to do before he will get the fullest results. Depending on insects to do the fertilising seems very haphazard, if not unscientific. I wonder how it would do to collect the pollen from the blossoms with a vacuum cleaner, and then put it where it is needed with a sand-blast? It might be fussy work, but it shouldn't be much worse than spraying. I shall ask Mr. Clement about it the next time I see him. I am hopeful that, if I keep on investigating in the proper spirit, I may yet hit on something that will be a real contribution to the science of farming. The trouble so far has been that the scientists take all my suggestions as jokes. But never mind. A day will come.

June 10.—After the corn had pushed its way through the ground there was urgent need of a dead crow to hang in the cornfield. Since men began to cultivate corn crows have been taking toll of the crops, and many and various have been the scarecrows that have been devised to keep them out of the fields. I have seen stuffed figures made to represent awesome and dangerous men and women, windmills with clappers on them, pieces of tin or mirrors hung so that they would revolve and send out sudden flashes of light, bells hung so that they would ring whenever the wind stirred, and many other frightful contrivances. Indeed, I think that scarecrows might be studied carefully by antiquarians and philosophers, and if one took in at the same time all the social, political, theological, artistic, and financial scarecrows that have been flaunted before mankind it should be possible for a new Teuffelsdroch to compile another *Sartor Resartus* for the [Pg 138] amusement and edification of mankind. But the need for a working scarecrow that would keep the crows from pulling up my corn was so immediate that I had no time to take up this aspect of the problem. Long experience has taught people that no scarecrow can compare with a dead crow hung conspicuously in the field. As soon as the crows see it they call a mass meeting and caw fiercely against the cruelty of farmers. After they have scolded until they are tired and hungry they go away from that field of death and light in the field of some neighbour who uses ordinary scarecrows. This involves a nice question of morals which I leave to more subtle brains and more tender consciences. If scaring the crows from my field sends them to pillage the field of my neighbour am I to blame for the damage they do? This is a point to be thought out in the long winter evenings. At this busy time I simply realised the need of scaring the crows from my own field, and taking the rifle I wandered away to the woods.

It was a beautiful, lazy summer afternoon, with thunder in the air, and I was glad that crow-hunting is about the most leisurely occupation known to man. If you stir around the watchful crows will see you and keep out of range, but if you hide in a good place and keep perfectly still a crow may light in some stag-topped tree and wait long enough for you to get a shot at him. The woodlot is a narrow strip, not too dense, and when hiding in the middle of it I would have almost every tree within range. I could hear young crows cawing and squawking in one corner of the patch, and knew it might be possible to sneak up on them, but that meant an amount of exertion that neither suited the day nor my mood. Selecting a cradle knoll under a shady tree, where I had a good view of the woods, I made myself comfortable and began to wait. A killdeer began to scream and flap around, and that called my attention to the watering pond beside me. It is a hollow scooped out of the earth, with a quicksand bottom, that gives an unfailing supply of fresh, cold water. There were lily pads on the edge, and a couple of dragon-flies were flashing back and [Pg 139] forth over the surface. On a muddy spot at the far side there was a cluster of yellow cabbage butterflies, and here and there I could see the staring eyes of a frog. The time, the place, and the materials were all at hand for a nature study, and I could think of no better way of passing the time. Rousing myself to observe the life about me, I was delighted to see a mudturtle on the bottom of the pond. It was partly concealed by some lily pads and to the eyes of a casual observer might pass for a waterlogged piece of board. Although mudturtles have not figured much in literature, I was at once reminded of an almost appropriate quotation:

"Sabrina, fair!
Listen, where thou art sitting,
Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,
In twisted braids of lilies knitting
The loose train of thine amber dripping hair."

Of course, the mudturtle didn't have any hair, but otherwise the quotation was satisfactory.

I do not think I have ever seen a comprehensive essay on the turtle, although there is enough scattered information to make a book. Since the earliest times turtle eggs have been the stay of shipwrecked mariners and marooned pirates, though I do not think I should care for them as a steady diet. I remember finding some turtle eggs buried in a sand bank beside a deep hole in the railroad ditch, and they looked like ping-pong balls, though ping-pong was not invented until many years after I had made my find. Though I knew that many of the heroes of my early reading had lived on turtle eggs for years I did not try them. Hen's eggs were too cheap and plentiful at the time. But to go back to the dawn of history, the turtle has at all times appealed to the imagination. The ancients believed that the earth was based on the back of a gigantic turtle—a most comfortable belief, for the turtle moves so slowly and cautiously that there would be no danger that it would be joggled off. It is also interesting to note that turtle soup dates back to [Pg 140] prehistoric times. Then, again, we have terrapin, the most aristocratic of turtles, whose flesh is so highly prized by epicures that restaurateurs cannot get enough of it and are compelled to serve stewed muskrat as a substitute. This reflection reminded me of a tale of woe I once heard from a

celebrated magazine editor in New York. He and a champion prize-fighter had gone out to dinner together, and in looking over the bill of fare they were startled to see "Terrapin, 25." As neither of them had tasted terrapin before they decided that this was the time to try it, and they ordered two portions. It was so good that they repeated the order. Then they asked for their checks. Each received a check calling for $5. There was a row and explanations, and it turned out that there had been a misprint on the bill of fare. Terrapin cost $2.50 a portion and not twenty-five cents. They had to pay, and as it was a lean time, between fights, with the prize-fighter, and as editors are always poor, their banquet cut deep into their resources. The editor had just got back to his desk when I called on him, and I don't think I ever saw a man with five dollars' worth of epicurean food inside of him who looked so downcast and discouraged. And he was in such an ugly temper that he rejected a poem I offered him without holding it "for further consideration." Just as I had finished chuckling over this recollection and was switching to turtle soup and other phases of the turtle question a young crow lit in a tree a few rods away and squawked. It is needless to go into the details of the tragedy. He is now hanging by one leg in the middle of the cornfield, and the indignant crows are all going to other people's fields for their breakfasts. Strange to say my conscience does not trouble me greatly about this development.

Before starting home with my crow I returned to my study of Sabrina. I wanted her to give me an exhibition of swimming. Besides, it seemed to me that it was a long time since she had breathed. Although turtles are perfectly at home under water, they are forced to come to the surface sometimes to breathe. I do not remember seeing anywhere just how long a turtle can stay under [Pg 141] water. I have seen them come up to breathe, and they are very skilful in doing it. They push up their noses beside a lily-pad and make no more disturbance than a rising bubble. But it seemed as if my turtle would never come up. I had been watching it for fully half an hour and it had not stirred. As I had performed my mission to the woods, I finally got impatient and, picking up a stick, I threw it into the water right above the turtle. It never stirred. Then I went closer and made the startling discovery that it was not a turtle after all. It was simply a waterlogged piece of board. But do you think I am going to throw away this nature study of the turtle for that reason? I should say not. You may take it for what it is worth, and I would not be afraid to bet that a lot of the nature studies I have read in the papers have no more foundation in fact than this one.

June 13.—A few days ago I heard a good farmer—one who enjoys farming and has done well at it—say that there are three times when a field looks good.

"The first time is in the spring when you have finished putting in the grain and have run the slip-furrows and have done all you can to make sure of a good crop. The second time is when the crop is all in the shock in good shape, and the third time is when the stubble is bare and you have your harvest safe in the barn."

I have not been able to discipline myself sufficiently to confine my enjoyment to stated periods. Besides the time when the work of putting in the crop is done, I thought it looked fine when the first showing of green spread over the field, and every time I have passed it seemed good to see a few inches added to the growth, and it listens fine to have real farmers say with a wise look as they sweep the oat field with a critical eye: "Those oats of yours have a splendid colour." In fact when things are going well it strikes me that a good field of grain looks good at any time. But this dip into real farming is making me see crops with other eyes. In the past I have contented myself [Pg 142] with admiring the delicate green and the ripple of the waving grain in the sunshine. Though I can still enjoy that phase, I now catch myself looking at the crops with a calculating eye, using my best judgment as to the probable yield and the prospect of getting back the cost of the labour and seed grain needed to bring the field to its present interesting appearance. Moreover, I am beginning to realise what it must mean to a farmer to have all his capital and hope of profits wrapped up in his fields. His interest cannot help being the keenest of all, and he cannot help noting little changes for good or bad that would escape the eye of the casual observer. He glances at his fields in much the same way as an investor looks at the financial column of the papers; and when the daily paper comes home he looks at the weather reports and the markets before he does at the political news or the editorial page. I am beginning to learn that a man can get no grasp of farm problems until they become vital to him by the actual work of farming. There may be great men who can take columns of crop reports and statistics and figure out the kind of laws that would mean even-handed justice to the farmer, but the nearer I get to the soil the less faith I have in the learned conclusions of our moulders of public opinion. It is impossible to realise all the hopes and fears, benefits and mishaps of farming unless one has done it as farmers are forced to do it—for a living. When his crop shows signs of failure he cannot reorganise, issue a batch of watered stock, and unload his failure on the investing public. All he can do is to gather up all he can and go in debt while waiting for another year.

There are always proverbs in the making in the country. The experience that men have with the changing phases of farm work gradually crystallises into phrases and neat sentences and becomes a part of the folk-wisdom of the world. Yesterday a man favoured me with a bit that seems new and original.

"Corn is a crop that likes company," he said with a smile. Then he went on to explain. "If you want a good crop of corn you must keep company with it most of the summer, and I have noticed [Pg 143] that it is very particular about the kind of company it keeps. The kind it seems to like best is that of an intelligent, industrious, able-bodied man who will go out to see it early in the morning and stay with it all day long. If he likes the corn and keeps it well cultivated and keeps down the weeds it will show its appreciation by giving a good crop; but if corn is left too much to itself it will soon begin to look lonesome and discouraged and will not have the heart to put on big ears."

I haven't started with our little corn patch as yet, but after such a talk as that I know what is

ahead of me.

There is a little patch of bindweed on the place—a memento of some chicken feed purchased a couple of winters ago—and I have been looking into the question of how to get rid of it. The cultivation I gave it last year when the field was under corn simply encouraged its growth. As nearly as I can find out, the only sure way to kill bindweed is to build a barn with a cellar about eight feet deep on the spot and then put down a solid cement floor. But I am told that unless one is careful it will poke up around the foundations. As we are not ready to put up a bank barn yet, I guess I shall have to go after the pest in some other way. Sowing with salt has been recommended, and covering the patch a couple of feet deep with straw. The last plan appeals to me most, as it does not involve much labour, and the labour is of a clean and easy kind. Anyway I have convinced myself that I shall only be wasting my time to try ordinary cultivation unless I do it every day or two for the whole summer. As I have plans for doing other things besides fighting bindweed I guess the straw cure will be tried.

Among other things I find that farming greatly increases a man's interest in weeds. Almost every day I find a new variety, and, according to the government weed-book, each variety is worse than the last. The Canadian thistle, which used to be spudded in youthful days, no longer seems a pest [Pg 144] when compared with some of the other kinds. Thistles can be discouraged by cultivation, and we are so used to them that we know how to go about the job, but the new things that are coming into the country with every batch of mill feed or seed grain are usually mysteries as to their habits until they have been firmly established. Having secured a copy of the government weed-book, the nature-student has been hunting for the plants described, and between the railroad right of way and the neighbouring fields has found almost every noxious weed described. None of them has a serious hold as yet, but they only need a season of neglect to become a nuisance. I hear that the alfalfa seed that was last sown in this section brought with it a new weed that has not been classified, but appears to be in every way undesirable. The farmers are pulling it out on suspicion. With seed grain, chicken feed, and mill feed carrying weed seeds to the farms and the stock cars on the railroads scattering them along the right of way, it is beginning to look as if the weeds would get very evenly distributed through the country. Last summer when travelling between London and Hamilton I was amazed to see wild mustard covering whole farms, and hundreds of them. In this section this weed has been kept confined to one spot for the past fifty years, and, though it is plentiful enough on that spot, it has not been allowed to spread. Even the babies know wild mustard when they see it and never fail to pull it out. That is the way to fight a weed, but with a couple of dozen new kinds making head in the country it is getting beyond the babies.

I am beginning to wonder if sports and games are epidemic. Last winter the country was devastated by an attack of checkers that still rages in obscure corners, and now the good old game of horse-shoes is with us. It may be that people have been playing it all along and I did not notice, but, anyway, it is being played everywhere just now. They are pitching horse-shoes in the villages after six o'clock, and in driving through the country one can see the boys and hired men at it on the farms. In these later days the hired man stops work at six o'clock, and has time to [Pg 145] play horse-shoes while his employer milks the cows. This no doubt seems unnatural to farmers of the old school, but hired men are now so scarce that they are able to insist on working regular hours—which is entirely just and proper. Perhaps, after a while, farmers will come to regard milking as part of the farm work instead of a chore, and will have it done during the regular working hours. It would be a good thing if they would, and then they could try their hands at horse-shoes themselves. It is a good old game, derived from the disc-throwing of the ancients, and it furnishes a healthful relaxation from heavy work. I haven't heard of any tournaments as yet, but no doubt prizes will be offered at the fall fairs where prizes are given for sports. It is good to see some one in the country taking time to have some fun, even though it may be left to the hired men to set the necessary good example.

June 15.—Last week a correspondent wrote: "I am trying to live the simple life as you do." Then he went on to describe his little garden and lawn and trees, so that I positively envied him. Then the humour of the situation began to dawn on me. Here is a worthy fellow-countryman who is trying to live my life as he gathers it from these letters. That is surely a terrible responsibility to put on me, but it shows an almost universal tendency. Apparently everybody thinks that some one else is getting more out of life than he is. We are all trying to live some one else's life instead of our own, but I don't like the feeling that any one else is trying to live mine. If I had a chance to whisper a few things to this man in confidence he might change his mind. Anyway, he had better try living his own life, and not be trying to imitate what he imagines is the life of another man. That other man has troubles of his own.

How many farmers know the full extent of their possessions? Most of them know how many acres they own and the probable value of their crops, stock, and investments, but that is only a small part of their heritage. The laws of property deal only with such things as can be handled and [Pg 146] trafficked in, but the farmer is rich in many things besides these. His powers of enjoyment are not "fobbed with the rusty curb of old Father Antic, the law." Every sense is catered to by things that are as free to him as the air. The sunshine, the cooling breeze, the odour of flowers and the music of birds have no regard for line fences, however carefully they may be surveyed, and the view from the hilltop that takes in a score of farms and the little village with its church spires belongs to him as surely as if he had a deed for it properly registered. The ownership of his senses extends beyond the boundaries of his farm in every direction. The ancient philosopher who thanked the rich man for sharing his wealth with him when he showed him his stores of gold and jewels uttered a truth whose full significance we should all try to appreciate. The farmer who

has a beautiful clump of trees by his house or a well-cared-for piece of woodland shares it with every one whose eye it pleases. The country girl who has a garden of flowers confers a favour on every one who passes that way, whether friend or stranger. In the same way the man who has an untidy farm with tumbled-down buildings and ragged fences does an injury to the whole countryside. He maintains an eyesore that offends every one of taste who is forced to see it.

The man does not really own his farm who does not know all its pleasant places and its possibilities of enjoyment. He should know the shadiest tree under which to read a book or spend an hour in day-dreaming. It would do him no harm to know where the hepaticas bloom first and what green aisles of the woods are heavy with the incense of phlox. He should be acquainted with the robins that return to the same nest year after year, and should be familiar with every view worth pausing to look at when driving about the country attending to his affairs. They all belong to him, and it is his own fault if he does not enjoy them. The greatest advantage of owning a farm is that it gives a man the freedom of the whole country. The "no trespass" signs have no terrors for the eye that is open to beauty, and the enjoying mind takes its own wherever it finds it. It is [Pg 147] all very well to have everything on your farm as it should be, so that you will get the best results from your labour, but if you value the piece of ground that you own merely for the crops it will yield you should not be encumbering it, but, as Mark Twain said, "should be under it, inspiring the cabbages."

June 17.—It is all right to go and hook your chin over the top wire of the fence and do mental arithmetic about how much corn a five-acre field should yield, and how many chickens the corn will feed, and what the cornstalks will be worth for cattle fodder, and what crop should be put in after the corn, but if you are going to have a crop of any kind you must drain the land. After the heaviest of that series of showers we had last week I went out to look at the field where the corn had been trying for the past two weeks to get through the ground while the crows and blackbirds have been doing all they can to help it, when I noticed that one of the slip furrows had not been cleaned out. The rain had started the water flowing from the woods, and if there was to be any corn on the piece of flat land through which the furrow passes it must be cleaned out so that the water would drain off and not drown the crop. Like Davy Crockett, "I seen my duty and I done it." The long-handled shovel was hunted up, and presently I was returning to the field quoting that classic which every schoolboy once knew:—

> "Honest John Tompkins, the hedger and ditcher,
> Who, though he was poor, never wished to be richer."

Memory also gave back the fine moral tale about John Adams and his Latin grammar. The President in embryo found ditching so hard that to get away from it he started off with a rush that finally landed him in the White House. Because of this, ditching has long been regarded as one of the finest things in the world to urge young men to higher things. They have been known to work so hard to get away from ditching that they have become multi-millionaires and ministers [Pg 148] and school teachers and such like.

The land through which the slip furrow passes is dead level, and, having been loosened by ploughing and harrowing, about an acre of it was as soft as mortar and as sticky as a bad reputation. Some one had told me once that when ditching one should begin at the top of the drain and work down with the water. That enabled me to start from the strip of sod at the edge of the woods. The first little dam of sod and earth in the furrow was as far out as I could reach with the long-handled shovel while standing dry shod. After making a couple of foolish pokes I straightened up to consider the situation. It was much the same kind of position you find yourself in when your golf ball falls in the water hazard that an unfeeling greens committee has located somewhere about the sixth hole. (Farmers who play golf will understand just what I mean.) You make a swipe or two at it with your niblick and only manage to get mud on your face and drive it deeper among the grass roots. Then you forget about your nice new golf shoes and wade in to root it out and you say things that no one would print and think things that no one would say, and when you finally get the ball into play again you wonder whether you will leave your shoes there and go home barefoot or wear them home and let your wife plant ferns in them as part of her scheme of ornamental gardening. Before getting back to the ditching I want to suggest to the rules committees of all golf clubs that there are times and places when a duffer at least should be allowed to use a long-handled shovel. But, to resume, I saw that there was no dainty way to do ditching and stepped in. The removal of a couple of shovelfuls set free a pond that flowed down into another, greatly adding to its size. The obstruction that held this pond was removed in its turn and a still larger one was formed. After this process had been repeated several times I saw that I would either have to swim or get a boat, so I decided to pull for the shore. It was then I noticed my new shoes for the first time. When I looked down I could still see the knots on the [Pg 149] laces. Every time I stepped I seemed to be tearing myself up by the roots, but at last the wire fence was reached. Some one ought to get out a patent on wire fences as mud scrapers. They are worth ten times as much as the kind you usually find rusting with disuse beside the farmhouse door. Housewives would do well to have the yard fenced with wire and then the men folks would have no excuse for going into the house without cleaning their boots. But this will never do. All the time we're talking that pond out in the field is getting to look more and more like a lake. Feeling very light-footed, I pranced down to the outlet of the furrow and began operations from that end. Each little pond as it was opened flowed away, and I was able to finish the job without swimming. Possibly the drain-viewers would not report favourably on my kind of ditching, but it is one of the peculiarities of water that it will flow crooked just as readily as it will flow straight.

Now for the most important matter of all. While I was ditching Opportunity knocked at my door. I

had a chance to make a fortune, and let it slip away with the oily water in the furrow. Just about the place where the mud was the stickiest and my thoughts were the worst I saw a pool of water that was unmistakably covered with oil. You know this is the district where there was an oil craze in the days when Bothwell and Petrolia were to the speculative what Cobalt is now. It is suspected that oil exists under many parts of Ontario, and just now there are strange stories about the mysterious doings of the Standard Oil Company. It is said to be boring in various quarters, and whenever oil is struck the well is plugged and the matter hushed up until the land in the neighbourhood has been acquired. And here I had discovered surface indications of oil! On careful examination I found that the oil-bearing water was coming out of a crawfish hole! Doesn't that fire your imagination? During the dry spell last year a crawfish kept going down and down and down—you know they always go down until they reach water—until at last he struck oil, and [Pg 150] the oil gushed to the surface. Think of what a story that would make in a prospectus! Every farmer knows what a crawfish is, and what a hole it will bore, and what could be more likely than that a crawfish should strike oil? "The Crawfish Oil Co., Ltd." That title nicely lithographed on good bond paper should catch the farmers every time. They are just about ripe for another killing, anyway. The lawsuits resulting from the last promotion they were mixed up in are about all settled, and unless somebody takes their money away from them soon they will find throwing it at knot-holes in the fences. I really think I could float "Crawfish, Ltd.," in Toronto if I were not interested in the crops. The right man should be able to clean up quite a pile before Saturday Night got after him, and when that happened he could live up to his title and do the crawfish act. He could crawl into his hole and pull it in after him.

June 18.—It is all very well for Mr. Nash to go around lecturing to the Farmers' Institutes about the value of hawks and telling the boys that they shouldn't shoot them, but when a pair of hen hawks extend their sphere of influence over the chicken yard things are not the same. This is especially true when their taste runs to young turkeys. It is possible to keep chickens penned up until they are able to take care of themselves, but turkeys still have so much of the wild nature in them that they must be allowed to run at large at least part of the time and then the hawks do their deadliest. Judging from the experience of last week it takes about four Christmas dinners to satisfy one brood of young hawks for a day. Which is it going to be? Are poor city people to be deprived of the Christmas dinner or are we to get along without mousing hawks? The Agricultural Department may be able to prove to a nicety that each hawk is worth $17.83 to the farmer, but each young turkey means a possible two-dollar bill, and it doesn't take long at that rate for a hungry hawk to eat its head off. The Department of Agriculture might do more foolish things than to issue a report on hawks *v.* turkeys. In the meantime, I have oiled up the shotgun [Pg 151] and laid in a store of ammunition. I don't know how to realise in cash on the $17.83 that each hawk is worth to me, but I do know how to sell turkeys.

The fine weather to-day has brought to light an unexpected state of affairs in the fields. During the wet, cold days of the past weeks every one seemed to think that all growth had stopped. On the contrary, everything seems to have been growing lustily. The hay is knee-deep, and the pasture up to the horns of the cattle. That old expression about the pasture being "up to the horns" should probably be retired on a pension, as all respectable cattle are now dehorned. Spring crops could not possibly look more promising, and as the comet seems to be safely out of the way the harvest will probably come to us as usual. Nature certainly does seem to have a way of carrying out her share of the yearly contract. Man gives the seed and the labour and she seldom fails to give growth and the harvest. It is about the only kind of contract into which man enters in which the party of the second part can always be depended on to deal fairly.

June 20.—One day last week a big maple in the woodlot came crashing down when not a breath of air was stirring. As the idea was fixed in my mind that trees are never uprooted except by high winds and storms, it was a surprise to have one topple over when everything in nature was quiet. On going to investigate I found that an apparently sound tree over two feet in diameter had fallen and "lay full many a rood." An examination revealed the fact that it was dead in the heart and the decay showed even in the broken branches, though it was covered with leaves and clusters of winged seeds. The upturned roots that rose like a wall showed that all the central roots had rotted off and, except for the live fibres at the outer rim, the tree had merely been sitting on the ground. It was easy to see what had caused the disaster. The ground was so thoroughly saturated with water that the little roots had lost their grip on the sand and mould, and as the tree had [Pg 152] always leaned a little to the south-west it finally lost its balance and went over. After having braved the storms and winds for at least a century it had tumbled over on a still summer morning—a clear case of arboreal euthanasia. The hole from which its roots had been lifted had immediately filled with water, showing plainly how its foundations had been sapped. While looking at the wrecked giant I remembered having read in one of John Burroughs' essays that when one is in the great natural forests branches can be heard breaking off and trees falling even on the stillest days. When the trees mature they must go down like the grass that numbers less days than they do years. Turning from the fallen patriarch I took some satisfaction in finding that the young trees I planted this spring are looking thrifty and give abundant promise of filling any gaps that occur among the veterans of the woodlot. This has been an ideal year for tree-planting, as there have been plenty of showers, and at no time has the weather been scorchingly hot. Every seedling I examined was making a good growth, and it looks as if most of the two thousand and five hundred that were planted with much groaning and backaches have a fair chance of living. All the catalpas were winter-killed at the top, but they are putting out a strong growth from the root, and the pines, soft maples, white ashes, chestnuts, and elms are doing wonderfully. The chestnuts, with their brightly varnished leaves, are looking especially attractive. I guess we can spare the big maple that fell, and cut it into firewood without undue mourning.

I wish I had a gift for statistics. If I had I think I could learnedly evolve a lesson from this business of farming and would be able to discourse on it profitably. Now that the rush of seeding is over, I am beginning to wonder vaguely who is going to get the profits from this work. As nearly as I can figure it out I shall be lucky if I get back the money invested in rent, seed grain, and labour and perhaps a day labourer's wages for myself: and yet, if all goes well, there should be enough of the raw materials of food—oats, corn, potatoes, apples, and garden truck— [Pg 153] produced to feed several old-fashioned families. There should be a fine profit for that, even if the consumers got it at a little over the cost of production. Who is going to get the profits? There is a great chance for some one who has a proper grasp of business conditions to reverse the story of Macaulay's charwoman who set so many obedient workers in motion when she ordered her dish of tea. He should take the case of the farmer and show how many people he helps to make profits when he tills his land. Let us consider the orchard for a moment. When we got busy with that we had to buy sulphur and lime and no doubt had to pay prices that would give dividends on watered stock in a sulphur trust and a lime trust. I do not know whether those commodities are handled by trusts, but if they are not it is because some promoter has overlooked an opportunity. That one act of getting materials for the lime sulphur spray would cause activity among the sulphur miners of Sicily and the lime burners of Canada. It would also give employment to sailors and railroad workers and swell the profits of corporations that must make profits in spite of extravagance and wastefulness. To protect themselves they create monopolies and charge as much as the traffic will bear, and the man who uses their material must pay his share of it all. But I should be writing all summer if I tried to suggest even a few of those who will be helped by the work of the farmer. Let us pass on to the final stage. When the apples are ready to be sold barrels must be secured from some probable cooperage trust that gets its materials from a lumber trust and a nail trust. The apples must be shipped over a railroad that was built in a way that made millions for promoters and contractors and the freight rates must pay dividends on what was stolen and wasted as well as on what was legitimately invested. As nearly as I can see it, the farmer's profits must go to pay every form of waste and extravagance and extortion in the business world. And the part of this burden that he is not able to bear is placed on the ultimate consumer of his products, who, as a rule, cannot afford it any more than the farmer. Looking at matters in this [Pg 154] way, it amazes me to think that every attempt to regulate the operations of the banks and Big Business at once meets with such an outcry of protest. Surely those who have to bear the burdens should have something to say about the amount of these burdens. The farmer of the present day is compelled to use as much intelligence, education, thrift, and business foresight as any business man if he is to keep his head above water and he is compelled to bear the whole burden of his own mistakes and waste and extravagance. Why should not business men be placed on the same footing? If you take the trouble to figure it out you will find that the burden of every failure and mismanagement in the business world finally falls on the farmers and consumers of the country. Business men may fail and lose all, but in the end every cent of their losses must be paid to society as a whole by the workers. It is about time that our captains of industry and finance were awakened from their dreams. Those who make their profits from the white shirt business of distribution should be compelled to bear burdens as well as the men who do the cowhide boot and overall work of production. The farmer is compelled to take what is offered for his products and pay what he is asked for what he buys. As it is impossible for farmers to protect themselves by forming a trust and securing a monopoly of the necessaries of life, it seems to me that they are quite within their rights in demanding that others be prevented from doing such things. They have to do all their work on a competitive basis, and there is no reason that others should not be forced to do the same. The ghastly joke of the whole unjust arrangement is that it is largely the money of the farmers, deposited in the branch banks, that is used to finance corporations that stifle competition and make the farmers pay profits on their watered stock and mismanagement. This system has been the growth of only the past few years. I wonder how long it is going to keep on growing.

The season of picnics is once more at hand, and the Sunday school children are on the tiptoe of [Pg 155] anticipation. Before the business goes any further I wish to protest in the most public and emphatic way against these new-fangled, snobbish, strife-breeding basket picnics. There are no picnics like the old-fashioned kind where they set up rough board tables of interminable length and piled on them the dainties of the countryside. Social distinctions were wiped out and for one day all men were free and equal and the children usurped the reins of power. At these basket picnics you are apt to see the freckle-faced boy standing somewhere outside the hunger-line, waiting for some one to hand him a sandwich or a cruller that is chiefly hole. In the happier days of my earliest recollections matters were different. The freckle-faced boy edged between the legs of the grown-ups, and got a seat at the first table at the right hand of the minister. That was not because he of the freckles reverenced the cloth. By no means. He knew that from the point of vantage which he occupied he would get the second helping of every good thing that was provided. The woman who had a particularly succulent custard pie or a pound of cake that was all raisins would invariably begin by offering the first slice to the minister, and then he of the snub nose and freckles would be right in line for the second helping. Rah! for the old-fashioned picnics. At least the boys and ministers approved of them, and, come to think of it, it is no wonder that Hufeland, in his *Encyclopædia of Insurance*, mentioned ministers as especially unfavourable risks, because so many of them die young from indigestion. His tables were prepared before the coming of the basket picnics. The cloth may have succumbed, but the snub-nosed boy throve mightily. Rah! for the long tables! Rah! for the free lemonade, and down with your basket picnics.

June 21.—Riding on a disc-harrow is another of those jobs that give a man a chance to think. There are eight acres of young orchard to be kept in a thorough state of cultivation, and, beyond keeping the horses moving and watching the rows of little trees so as to avoid barking them when [Pg 156]

passing, there is nothing to do. In fact, if a man didn't do a little thinking it would be a positively lazy job. Of course, a real farmer would have something to think about, for farming has degenerated into such a bug-fight that a man has to be thinking all the time about the best way to overcome the pests that threaten his crops. When a farmer thinks of all the insects and blights that attack his fruit, grain, vegetables, and even live stock, he can hardly be blamed if he feels sometimes that the work of creation was overdone. Why were all these pests created anyway? If I had started to think along farming lines I would have had the blues in no time, but the sun was warm and the air was full of the happiness of birds, and so I settled down to a peaceful meditation on Diogenes. Now, do not jump to the conclusion that I was in a cynical humour, for the fact is that seldom have I been more cheerful. It was the sunshine that made me think of the old Greek. You remember what he replied when Alexander the Great asked if he could do anything to oblige him.

"Yes," said Diogenes. "Stand from between me and the sun."

No doubt the sunlight in front of his tub felt just as good to him as it did to me in the orchard and I could sympathise with his objection to having the radiating comfort cut off by a burly military person. As I turned this over in my mind I got a new light on Diogenes. I realised that he is another of the maligned characters of history. Just because

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

have been justifying their own bilious outlook on life by misinterpreting his sayings they have done him a grievous wrong. His objection to having Alexander stand between him and the sun was one of the wisest things ever uttered. What are all our conquerors and captains of industry and great men doing but standing between us and the sun? Diogenes had stripped life to its essentials and was showing the people of Athens how a free-souled philosopher should live. With [Pg 157] a tub for shelter, a piece of cloth for covering, and a crust to eat, he had all that a man must have physically, and by employing his ample leisure in developing his own personality he was able to make himself bulk as large in history as the slaughtering Alexander. If he allowed himself to be misled by ambition or false ideals of any kind he would lose his place in the sun. Just think it over a little. Is not the corporation which keeps you working at a desk standing between you and the sun? Are not the false ideals that keep you working from morning till night so that you have no time to enjoy the sunshine standing between you and the sun? The social conditions that have been imposed upon us by the ambitious leaders in thought and progress are keeping us all from our places in the sun. Even nations are beginning to realise this, and Germany, like Diogenes, has been asking Great Britain to stand from between her and the sun. Without sunshine we cannot live, and it is one of the few things that it is hard to get too much of. So, instead of thinking of Diogenes as a snarling cynic, I feel that I could put up an excellent argument to show that his reply to Alexander was made with philosophical gentleness. Alexander was standing between everybody and the sun at that time. The philosopher merely expressed a great truth in a symbolical way. He taught a lesson that all the world would do well to learn. At the present time there are a great many people standing between us and the sun. I wonder if we shall ever pluck up the courage of Diogenes and politely ask them to stand aside.

Then there is the story of Diogenes going about the streets of Athens at noonday, carrying a lantern and explaining to those who questioned him that he was hunting for an honest man. How wonderfully that illustrates the gentleness and humility of this misrepresented man! I know that is not the usual explanation, but once more people have missed the point. If you look into the matter carefully you will see that I am right. The people of Athens were doubtless much like [Pg 158] ourselves, and Diogenes was trying to teach them a lesson that they needed, and that was too deep for them. Now, if you wanted to hunt for an honest man, how would you go about it? Be perfectly honest for once, and confess. You would not go into the street with a lantern at noonday as Diogenes did. You would go into the bedroom and hunt for your honest man with a looking-glass! There might be some little qualms as those familiar features stared back at you, but on the whole you would feel that the object of your search had been found. There might be some slight twinges of conscience about your sharp deals, but "business is business," and you would feel that in spite of everything you were justified in hunting for an honest man in your looking-glass. As the people of Athens were doubtless of the same mind, Diogenes administered a beautiful rebuke by going out to hunt for an honest man with a lantern. He knew himself too well to follow the popular method of using a looking-glass. By going out with a lantern he showed that he was too honest to pose as an honest man himself, and, furthermore, made it clear that if an honest man could be found he would be one whose conduct could bear the full light of the sun and of all our lanterns and tallow dips besides. In no other way could he show so clearly his high appreciation of a truly honest man. Really, I do not understand how people could be so blind as to regard Diogenes as a snarling cynic. He was humble regarding his own merits and ready to bow down to real goodness if it could be found. You may think he could have found his honest man without making such stir, but if you stop searching in your looking-glass you may find the task just as hard as he did.

Another story that has been quoted to show the arrogance of this kindly soul is the one about the time when he was taken captive and sold as a slave. When asked what he could do for any one who bought him he replied:

"I can govern men."

There is wisdom for you again. Only the man who has served is fit to govern. Only a man who [Pg 159]

knows what it means to be a slave is fit to be entrusted with the government of others. If Diogenes had been set to rule over the land he would know it from the foundations up, for he himself had been a slave. The Big Interests of his time could not fool him about the way they treated the lower classes. He would know from experience. He could understand the need for old age pensions and government insurance and all that sort of thing. History would be worth reading if we had a few men like Diogenes as rulers. Your Alexanders regarded the lower classes simply as "food for powder" or Greek fire or whatever they use in fighting their battles. Diogenes, the ex-slave, would know that life is sweet to the slave as to the conqueror and would govern himself and others accordingly. The world certainly lost a great ruler when the foolish people of his time failed to take the wise philosopher of the slave market at his word.

By the time I had thought this out the day's work was done. The orchard had been thoroughly disced so that the warmth could get down to the roots of the little trees and I myself was so warmed through that I could see nothing but good, even in Diogenes, who has been regarded at all times as a savage railer at humanity. I am afraid that too many of our thinkers work in the gloom of libraries instead of in nature's great sun parlour. If they would take their problems out into the sunshine it might be healthier for them and for all of us. We should try to think things out with no one standing between us and the sun.

June 22.—This week I have a dog story to tell, and a beautiful moral goes with it. Sheppy, the collie, did something that should give him a high place in the rank of intelligent dogs, but no one will give him credit for it. Unfortunately, Sheppy's range of virtues is very limited. No one had the time or knew how to train him properly, and beyond keeping the hens away from the house and chasing the cows from the wire fence near by, he does nothing of value. It seems impossible to make him understand what is wanted when the cows are to be brought home at milking time, and [Pg 160] even when he does go after them he always goes at their heads and turns them back. Taken by and large, Sheppy, although well bred, is just about as useless a dog as there is in the country. And yet he did something out of the ordinary. The other night, when the boys got home from the village, it was found that a parcel had been dropped from the buggy. Besides it was known that it must have been dropped some distance up the road for it was missed quite awhile before they got home. As it was too late and dark for any one to go after it that night it was arranged that a boy should go back over the road before five o'clock in the morning to hunt for the parcel. As Sheppy was around at that time he undoubtedly heard these arrangements being made, but no one thought anything of that. But in the morning we got a surprise. Just as the boy was going to start on his trip Sheppy came to the door with the parcel in his mouth. He usually goes out for a run around the farm when he is turned out in the morning, but he seldom goes any distance along the road, and he has never been trained to fetch and carry like other dogs. Now will some one kindly explain how he came to bring home that parcel at that particular minute. He has never before carried anything home. If he had been one of those wonderful dogs we sometimes hear so much about this achievement would add to his fame. Every one would be sure that he had understood all that was being said and had gone after that parcel, but as there is nothing in his past life to justify such a theory no one will give him credit. As a matter of fact, I do not believe myself that he understood and went after the parcel. The fact remains, however, that he brought it home in his mouth in good condition just as if he were one of the good dogs that always do the right thing at the right time.

Speaking of the intelligence of dumb creatures, I had an exhibition when discing the orchard that is worth recording. When going over the ground for the first time a couple of killdeers made a lot of excitement in one corner of the field. They fluttered ahead of the horses, screaming and [Pg 161] pretending to be wounded as is their habit when any one approaches their nests. I left the horses standing and hunted carefully over several lands in the hope that I might find their nest and avoid crushing the eggs, but I could not locate it and finally had to go on with my work without minding their protests. When giving the same corner a stroke of the disc a couple of days ago a killdeer suddenly stood up with outstretched wings and tail, about a foot from the end of the disc. I stopped the horses, and for several minutes that bird stood there and delivered a lecture on squatter rights and the laws of homesteading and the suffragette movement. It was very convincing both to me and to the little boy who was riding on my knee. The bird made no attempt to lead me away from the nest. She simply stood over her eggs and scolded. She even refused to move when I touched her with the end of the buggy whip while trying to point out to the little boy the earth-grey eggs, over which she was standing. Even when we were so close to them it was hard to distinguish them from the clods, and it was no wonder that I missed them in the previous search. It is probable, however, that the disc destroyed the first setting, and that these were new eggs. What impressed me was that I had never seen a killdeer act in this way before. Had she made up her mind that I was probably a reasonable being and only needed to have matters explained to me? Anyway she stuck to her nest and each time I passed with the disc, and later when I came along with the corn marker, she simply stood up and gave me another lecture. Though the disc passed her within a foot on each side she refused to leave, though she made some very pointed remarks about being disturbed so much.

One morning recently I had a lively couple of minutes with a pair of blue jays and other birds that they had called to their assistance. The children had called my attention to a young blue jay that was under one of the apple trees, and I thought I would pick up the youngster to examine him more closely, but as soon as I touched him he started to squawk and things began to happen. One [Pg 162] blue jay struck me back of the ear with beak and claws and managed to draw blood. At the same instant the other struck me full in the face. As I beat them away a couple of robins that had evidently been attracted by the noise also began to make swoop at my head. As this was the first time I had ever seen birds of another variety turn in to help I stopped to watch the robins, that

were making just as much noise as if I were trying to get one of their fledglings instead of the blue jays'. By the time they had quieted down the blue jays had managed to get their youngsters away to a place of safety. Now I have always had it in my head that the jays and robins are natural enemies, but they seemed to forget all private grudges when a common enemy appeared on the scene. It is interesting to reflect that although these jays would protect their young at the risk of their own lives, in a few weeks, after the brooding season is over, they would probably rob their own young of any dainty morsel just as quickly as they would another bird.

June 23.—All ye who listen with credulity to the whispers of fancy, or pursue with eagerness the phantoms of hope, who believe that the deficiencies of to-day will be made up by the morrow, and that age will fulfil the promises of youth, attend to the history of a wayfarer dwelling in the country. There's Johnson for you, somewhat "scratched." But what would you? You can't expect a man to remember to a syllable the reverberating "history of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia," but as this letter is addressed to exactly the same class of dreamers as was that ponderous, pot-boiling classic there is a colourable excuse for borrowing its resounding invocation. To be more explicit, it is addressed to all ye who dream of holidays in the country, or pursue with eagerness the hope of a rustic home; who believe that you still have it in you to be successful farmers, or that you will spend your age amid the scenes of your youth. For your benefit and inspiration an attempt will be made to describe life in the country as it is to-day.

To-day the country is at its most wonderful. Nature has "all her bravery on." Every field is full of promise. Wherever the eye turns there is life and beauty. The thick woods are rich with flower-haunted shades that invite to picnics; the clover fields are steaming with perfume and thronged with murmuring bees; the birds are clamorous with their young, and the bland, rain-washed air has a tang of real ozone, not of "that blending of the odours of tarred rope and decaying fish that passes for ozone at seaside resorts." Above all is the blue sky, unfathomably deep and flecked with wind-shepherded clouds that keep the shadows hurrying on their uncharted quest. The leaves are all whispering; flies are droning fitfully, and everything invites to indolence and the unthinking peace that refreshes and revives. It is true that those who work are busy in the fields cultivating the corn or hoeing, and finding the occasional glimpses of the sun uncomfortably hot. But their pride is to "scorn delights and live laborious days," and this year the prospects are that they shall have their reward. The prospects for all kinds of crops are of the best, and the "growing weather" is simply perfect. [Pg 163]

At this point there was an interruption in the form of an order to go out into the garden and pick a salad. Breaking off crisp lettuce leaves, pulling young onions—Yes! ONIONS! That's what I said—and rooting out radishes can hardly be classed as work, but the chore involved stooping over in the hot sun for a few minutes, and the discovery was made that a cool breeze cannot be half appreciated unless one's brow is at least reddened with the sweat of honest toil. Besides, a salad always tastes better if one has helped in its preparation.

The visit to the garden revealed prospects of much good eating. The early peas are already heavily podded and in a week or so will be ready to garnish broilers or lamb chops. There is also an excellent promise of butter beans and new potatoes, and the melon and cucumber vines are spreading bravely. The cabbage, cauliflower, and tomato plants are thrifty, and on the whole the time seems opportune for putting to the test the teachings of G. Bernard Shaw. But although he affects to be one of those who elect to [Pg 164]

> "Sit a guest with Daniel at his pulse,"

he produces an amount of satire that provokes a suspicion that a vegetarian diet is productive of bile. Perhaps it will be as well to exercise moderation in the consumption of vegetables. Besides, those broilers are getting plumper and looking more tempting every day, and the best doctors approve of a mixed diet.

After dinner the clouds began to hang lower and almost without warning it began to rain. It was a real "growing shower," the rain seeming to ooze out of the warm air and fall without storming. It began from a wispy cloud that did not seem of much importance, gathered rapidly, and poured steadily for half an hour. It lacked the majesty of a June thunderstorm, but had distinct charms of its own. The birds chirped and sang throughout the downpour and the cattle pastured as if they found it refreshing. When it had passed and drifted away with a broken rainbow on its back it left a world wonderfully bejewelled and "bedewed with liquid odours." Those who had been driven to the shelter of the shade trees in the cornfield protested that they could see the corn growing during the shower. Anyway, the already fresh fields were made still fresher and the delights of the morning were multiplied.

"There will be wild strawberries along the railroad," was the announcement after the shower, and an investigation brought results. The berrypickers got a couple of quarts of small but juicy and full-flavoured berries, and now there is a "trifling, foolish" shortcake "toward"—not one of those with layers of cake laid on rows of white indurated knobs that passes for strawberry shortcake at our best restaurants, but a fat shortcake made of biscuit dough, split open, buttered, filled and smothered with crushed wild strawberries, each of which has more flavour than a basketful of your big, watery, tame berries. Also there will be plenty of fresh cream—but why make you envious! [Pg 165]

Wherefore, all ye who were addressed in the opening sentence and have pursued the narrative thus far, you may rest assured that the country is still all that you have dreamed. In fact it is probably more. Not only has it all its olden joys, but many of its discomforts and drawbacks have disappeared. There is nothing of value in the city that you cannot have in the country, and even

the cities themselves have been brought near by improved transportation. The village stores and groceries now sell fruits and delicacies that could be secured a few years ago only in the best city markets. There are churches and good schools everywhere and facilities for every reasonable enjoyment. And above all there is the glorious country itself, with its fresh air, green fields, cool woods, and stainless summer skies. Days like this make one forget the storms and winter weather, but modern homes and good roads are making these less trying. Every year conditions are improving and every year the farmers are enjoying more and more "the glorious right of being independent." Those who dream of a country life do well, and it is to be hoped that some day their dreams may come true. A few days like this can make up for years in the city.

June 25.—Last week I undertook to drive about fifty miles across country to attend a picnic. Of course, I didn't finish the drive, but what of that? If I didn't try to do foolish things once in a while I wouldn't have any fun. Those perfectly correct people who always know the right thing to do and how to do it—oh, well, what's the use? I could lecture at them from now until next election and couldn't make even a dent on their self-satisfied complacency. And after a fellow has been at a really enjoyable picnic is no time to start scolding. As intimated above, I did not finish the drive. At Watford the automobiles became altogether too plentiful, and after I had been given my choice of driving the horse over an eight-rail fence or plunging down a fifteen-foot embankment, I lost all my enthusiasm about sight-seeing from a buggy. The driver was even more fussed up about it [Pg 166] than I was, but the man with the automobile was more considerate than most of those I have encountered. He stopped his snorting contraption until the horse was led past, and, after patching up a breeching strap, I was able to proceed. I make no attempt to tell what my feelings were at the time. I simply purred gently and thanked the owner of the car for being so kind. I am unable to understand the exact point of view of the driver in regard to motor cars. She will let four or five pass without doing more than dropping one ear forward, and then when the next one comes along she goes into hysterics. As the crop of motor cars this year is unusually heavy, I seldom move abroad without moments of excitement, and the things I say under my breath remind people who go out with me of the odour that a motor car leaves trailing behind it. If it were not for the automobiles nothing could be pleasanter than a ride through the country at this season of the year. The weather was not too hot, there were clouds drifting over, and the air was deliciously pure and clear. When we approached Watford, the flat plain gave way to gentle undulations and the farmhouses had the home-like appearance one finds only in old settlements. The roads were better—and—and the automobiles were more plentiful.

After a night of kindly hospitality near Watford, the picnic people took pity and came after me with an automobile. When the time came for me to embark, I felt much the same as Mazeppa did when they tied him on the wild horse.

"Bring forth the car!" The car was brought.
  In truth it was a nifty make,
  Such as a financier would take;
It seemed as if the speed of thought
  Were in its wheels; but it was wild.
Wild as a grafter when he's caught,
  Or wild as——when he's riled.
'Twas but a month it had been bought,
And snorting, likewise raising Cain,
And struggling fiercely, but in vain, [Pg 167]
In the full foam of wrath and dread,
To me the choo-choo car was led.
They loosed it with a sudden crash—
And banged the door and laughed aloud.
Away, away, and on we dash!
Torrents less rapid and less rash!

A swift turn around an unexpected corner brought my heart into my mouth so suddenly that it knocked the cigar out of my teeth and when I collected myself my thoughts were parodying Dickens instead of Byron.

Honk! Honk! Past fields of alsike and red clover that give forth a perfume inviting enough to make a man envy Nebuchadnezzar, who ate grass like an ox. Past orchards innocent alike of the pruning knife and the sweet influences of lime-sulphur. Over a culvert that catapults the passenger so high in the air that he gets a bird's-eye view of half of Warwick township.

Honk! Honk! The road slips beneath us like a flowing stream. A woman hoeing in a field of sugar-beets straightens her back to look at us for a moment and waves her hand—or did she shake her fist at us? I really didn't have time to see.

Honk! Honk! On, ever on, at a speed that makes it easier to imagine what Lambton will be than to see what it looks like now. I discreetly avoided looking at the speedometer to see how fast we were going. No, your honour, I do not know what our speed was. We might have been going ten miles an hour. In fact, I feel pretty sure we were. You say the constable says we were exceeding the speed limit? I really cannot say. Honk! Honk!

Honk! Honk! Through the leafy town of Forest, past the fine new school and out into the country again. Past fields of tomatoes planted under contract with the benign Canners' combine. Past new orchards that give glorious promise for the future. Past old orchards that are thoughtfully cared for. Over stretches of fertile soil that needs only a press agent to make it rank with the best

boomed sections of the west. Around a corner and into a lane that winds along the crest of a gully brimming with trees, past a cosy farmhouse, through a barn yard and out over the sod to the top of the embankment, where we stop dazzled by a first view of Lake Huron and the wonderful lake shore valley, where they have orchards equal to those of the Niagara Peninsula. High above the orchards of apples and peaches we admired their foliage and guessed at their treasures of fruit. It was a wonderful trip, through a wonderful country, and the view of the lake and the valley gave it a fitting climax. [Pg 168]

After the picnic was over the trip was repeated with the very material difference that comes from being familiar with an automobile. I was able to revel in the speed and the sense of freedom one gets from being in a conveyance that makes miles seem trifles. I cannot understand why men should want airships when they can have automobiles. The only trouble was with farmers who will persist in getting in the way with their skittish horses. I had a chance to see that an automobile driver can be considerate and yet not be able to do much good. Some horses are so cranky that they should never be taken out of a box stall. Why can't horses be trained to pass automobiles without trying to wriggle out of the harness? Well, here we are. And now we must start home in the buggy. I am hardly in my seat before I begin looking behind and before to see if there are any of those confounded automobiles in sight. Who owns the roads, anyway, the farmers or the men with cars?

I quite realise that I got somewhat mixed in my emotions by changing from a buggy to an automobile and then back again. The gist of the matter is that no country can stand that is half horse and half car. If the farmers could all afford cars the problem would be solved. How would it do to cut out the special privileges that enable others to afford automobiles at the expense of the farmers? Then the farmers could have them. The question is respectfully suggested for the consideration of the gentlemen of the Automobile Club.

June 30.—This is the strawberry season, and the jam-kettles are bubbling odorously and cheerfully. Both children and grown-ups are putting in their spare time in the berry patches, and aching backs and sun-blistered necks are the subjects of much conversation and the objects of much tender attention. The tame berries are plentiful and well flavoured, and as for the wild berries—um—er—well, the weather is too hot for one to drop into poetry. But right here shall be recorded a real live item of news. According to some newspapers, and all cheap magazines, our railroads produce no fruit but melons. All wrong! The Grand Trunk Railroad produces wild strawberries that are all substance and flavour, and have less water than an old-fashioned issue of stock. But if there is any place this side of Death Valley where the sun beats hotter than on the railroad banks, let that place be desolate. And as for railroad mosquitoes, they are as hungry as cormorants, and so big that when they suck blood you can feel your heart shrivel. As lobbyists they would be a success. [Pg 169]

Speaking of big mosquitoes reminds me of a scare I got a few nights ago. I was just falling asleep, after a day of light work and heavy eating, when a mosquito began to hum about my head. I fanned it away gently, hoping it would go and bite some one else and leave me in peace, but it still persisted. As I tried to sleep the humming grew louder, louder, louder, until I began to wonder drowsily if there were any winged elephants in the neighbourhood. Memory, half aroused, brought up a tag from Milton about "the gryphon" that "with winged speed pursues the Arimaspian," and still the humming grew louder and louder. At last I started bolt upright, wide awake, only to find that what I was listening to was a passing freight train. I also found that under cover of the noise the mosquito had bitten me on the side of the neck.

A couple of nights ago a weasel visited one of the chicken brooders, and now, as Mark Twain suggests about certain people, he is "under the ground inspiring the cabbages." His fate was richly deserved. After glutting himself with blood he kept on from mere lust of killing, until he had destroyed twenty-six young chickens. A sharp bite at the base of the skull did the work, and then he had the impudence to curl up and go to sleep in a cosy corner of the brooder. When disturbed in the morning he sought refuge under the floor of a chicken house, and there was a hurried call for the shotgun. A minute or two later his evil head and long, snaky neck appeared from a hole in a corner, and a charge of bird-shot, properly distributed, put an end to his depredations. Fortunately this kind of vermin is not plentiful or chicken-raising would be impossible, as a weasel is said to be able to squeeze himself through any crack that is not air-tight. At first there was some talk of making a purse from his skin, for there is an old superstition that a weasel-skin purse will never be empty, but the odour of the creature was discouraging. Money kept in a purse made from its skin would certainly be "tainted money," so the idea was abandoned. [Pg 170]

At this point it may as well be confessed that chicken-farming does not grow in favour under continued observation. It pays, of course, but the amount of attention required becomes tiresome. The grown hens are all right, needing food and water only three times a day, and the task of gathering the eggs is only a pastime, but young chickens are a constant source of worry and bother. They must be fed five or six times a day on a varied diet and they require different food at different stages of their growth. The result is that when there have been several settings some one must be busy all the time preparing food or feeding them. If their brooders are not kept at exactly the right temperature they may "bunch" and trample one another to death, just like a mob of intelligent human beings. Their brooders need constant cleaning, and they must be looked after when it storms, for they don't know enough to go in when it rains; in short some one must

be pottering about among them all the time.

Bee-keeping, on the contrary, grows in favour the more it is studied. Bees are clean, orderly, and [Pg 171] industrious. They require attention only when swarming, and hiving a swarm is interesting rather than troublesome. If provided with plenty of room they will gather honey with a singleness of purpose that leaves no excuse for the enterprising Yankee who tried to cross his bees with fire-flies so that they would work all night. Some of the colonies under observation have gathered fully fifty pounds of honey already this season and they are to be provided with more space for their activities. So many stories are current, all of them well authenticated, about men achieving prosperity through keeping bees, it is a wonder that more people do not go into the business. This may be due to the fact that some localities are not so favourable to bee-keeping as others, but wherever white clover is plentiful bee-keeping can be made an easy source of profit. A bee-keeper may get stung physically once in a while, though the danger of this can be reduced to a minimum by proper care, but he is in little danger of being "stung" financially.

With the celebration of Dominion Day this week, and Orange celebrations less than two weeks off, the air is full of athletic talk. Practising Marathon runners are to be seen every evening speeding along the country roads, and the merits of rival baseball pitchers are hotly contested. Scientific baseball now afflicts the country as well as the cities, and the "twirler" who has "a bundle of curves in his mitt" is as much of a hero just now as the successful candidate on the day after election. One local hero is said to squeeze the ball so hard that when he turns it loose on its erratic course it crosses the plate looking no bigger than a huckleberry. Every enterprising country paper now has its baseball reporter, who is as perfect a master of the necessary slang as was N. P. Caylor, who is said to have invented much of the current lingo, when reporting for The *New York Herald*. Personally he was meek and unobtrusive, but to read his reports one would imagine he had a voice like a fog-horn, and ought to be suppressed as a public nuisance. The reports of country matches now show as few runs as reports of the work of league teams, and the [Pg 172] old-fashioned lover of excitement sighs for the days when the Longwood road boys held the pasture lot against all comers. In those days there were no score-cards, and the honest man who kept tally did it by making a notch with his jack-knife on the top rail of a snake fence for each run. Sometimes he worked his way along two panels before the game was over. While on this subject there is a fact to be noted that should make men who do the eminent thinking for the editorial pages walk humbly. The most popular daily papers are those whose sporting news is the fullest and most accurate. Let the editors-in-chief think of that

"In silence and alone
And weigh against a grain of sand the glory of a throne."

[Pg 173]

JULY

July 2.—For some reason I feel it in my bones that I am about due for a comprehensive stinging by the bees. It is not in the nature of things that my present immunity should last forever. As a boy I used blue clay mud and three kinds of leaves chewed together as a cure for bee stings just as often as any boy in the country. Bumble bees jabbed me with or without provocation. On one unforgettable occasion I accumulated twenty-seven yellow-jacket stings by jumping from the top of a log and putting a foot through their nest. One of these stings was on the bony spot back of my right ear, and in my personal annals of pain it takes the first place. In fact, my memory is well stocked with bee, wasp, hornet, and yellow-jacket stings, and yet for the past two years I have been meddling with bees without being stung once. This immunity dates from a day when several hundred thousand bees started to rob some stored honey and I started to head them off by trying to close the holes through which they were getting at it. Being somewhat excited I did not pay any attention to them when they lit on me, and by the time I got the holes closed bees were walking all over me. They were on my hands and face as well as on my clothes and I didn't get stung once. I have been told that when bees are robbing they are so intent on the work in hand that they never sting. Besides, I had not startled them by jumping and trying to brush them off. Anyway, since that experience, I have not been afraid of the bees and have moved among them unscathed, but it seems too good to last.

Day before yesterday the cry rose that the bees from the one hive which escaped winter before [Pg 174] last were swarming. When I went out to look at them the air was full of bees, and they were humming like a thrashing machine. Presently they began to cluster on a branch of a spruce tree and I went back to the house to get a veil, coat, and gloves. Though I have been on good terms with the bees, I did not propose to take any unnecessary chances. But by the time I had equipped myself for the task I found that they were all going back into the parent hive. Evidently the queen had forgotten something. Her hat was not on straight or she was not satisfied with her travelling outfit. Anyway, she and her followers went back and the swarming was postponed for that day. After this manifestation the hive was carefully watched, and shortly before noon yesterday they swarmed again. This time they lit on a little plum tree about five feet high. As I had everything ready from the day before I was soon in shape to attend to the hiving. A white sheet was spread on the ground under the tree and a hive that had been well cleaned and provided with honey frames was placed at the edge of the sheet. Then I took the garden rake and shook the tree. The bees tumbled on the sheet and started for the hive, and for a few minutes it looked as if the operation were going to be successful. But after a while the bees that had entered the hive began to crawl out and cluster on the outside. Evidently the hive did not suit them. Perhaps they wanted better ventilation, open plumbing, and stationary bath-tubs. Modern bees are becoming so human that it is hard to satisfy them. I remember the day when bees were satisfied if you offered

them a section of gum-tree with a couple of cross-bars in it, but now they turn up their noses at a hive made of planed and matched lumber, nicely painted and furnished with all the modern improvements. And this swarm seemed particularly nifty.

When it became evident that they were not going to accept the hive that had been offered I prepared another and placed it on the edge of the sheet. While this was being done the bees reassembled on the little tree and I shook them down again. By this time I was almost smothered [Pg 175] by the veil, and as the bees showed no intention of attacking me I took it off and went at my work bare-faced and bare-handed. I shifted the new hive to a more attractive position and they investigated it as they did the first. It did not suit them at all and they all trooped back to the little tree. While this work was in progress the bees frequently lit on my hands and face but did not sting me, though they made me feel creepy. When they refused the two hives I was completely stumped and sent for an experienced bee-keeper to come and help me. He brought a hive that was filled with comb from which the honey had been extracted last season. He put this in the place of my first hive and shook the tree again. They began to cluster on the sheet at the root of the tree, so he took a broom and swept them gently towards the hive. This time they all went into the hive and everything seemed all right. But it was not. Nothing would satisfy those bees. They probably wanted a hive with a southern exposure and this one faced to the north. Anyway, a few minutes after being hived, they were all in the air and moving in a confused cloud towards the woods. Somebody yelled at me to throw water among them and I went after them with a pail of water and a dipper, but there was no result. Some one began pounding on a tin pan in old-fashioned style and there was racket and excitement to spare. I am told that making a noise does no good, but the fact remains that when the pounding on the pan was at its worst the bees settled on a fence post. We had a council of war and decided to try them with a double hive, empty frames below and the empty comb above. The sheet and hive were placed again and as the post could not be shaken the other man took a tin pail and whisk broom and dusted about a pailful of bees off the post. He poured them in front of the hive like so much corn, and though working without protection of any kind was not stung. This encouraged me so much that when I was asked to take the whisk and dust them off the other side of the post I did not flinch. Of course the fence was between me and the hive, and this gave me a sense of security that lasted [Pg 176] until I stopped long enough to think and then I reflected that a wire fence does not amount to much as a protection from bees. But this swarm must have been unusually full-fed and good-natured, for with all the handling they got they did not sting any one. When they were all in the two-story hive we lifted it gently and put an excluder, a sheet of zinc with perforations that will admit workers but not the queen, on the bottom of the hive. This would make it impossible for the queen to get out and they will probably settle down and stay with us. I am told that in a day or so we can investigate and find out which story of the hive the bees have decided to occupy. Then we can remove the other and let them settle down to the job of collecting honey.

If all goes well there should be a great yield of honey in this district, for white clover has never been known to be so plentiful. Every pasture field is white with it, and on still hot afternoons the air is heavy with the sweet, cloying clover perfume. There are quite a number of farmers who are keeping bees as a side-line, and there are some professional bee-keepers in the district who devote their whole time to the work. Personally I think bee-keeping is just about the finest and most profitable form of light occupation that a man or woman can undertake. But perhaps when the time comes to get properly stung I'll change my mind. I know it is altogether against the tenets of the New Thought to even think of such things, for I am vibrating adverse suggestions into the ether and some day they may come home to roost. But with the memory of past stinging in my mind I cannot believe that I am permanently immune. And when I do get stung I feel sure that I can write a spirited article about it. In fact I feel that if I had been stung while hiving these bees there would be more ginger in this article. A bee sting stimulates the language faculty and gives even a man of sluggish disposition a marvellous command of effective words. I quite realise that if I were a true literary artist I should go out and deliberately get stung, but there is a limit [Pg 177] to the sacrifices that I am willing to make for art.

July 4.—The problem of the high cost of living is now acute, and the discussion has become so general that it may be regarded as open to all. For that reason I shall venture to offer a solution.

But before offering my suggestion I propose to clear the ground by calling attention to a few fundamental truths. In spite of the Shorter Catechism, the chief end of man is to make a living. If he is to continue to live he must have food, clothing, and shelter. Moreover, he must be guarded in his right to these necessaries when he has acquired them. In primitive states of society the problem of securing food and then guarding it from plunderers came home to every man. In the brave days when our ancestors "lived upon oysters and foes" the thrifty householder, or cave-dweller, either had to go tonging oysters himself or spearing for some one who had already tonged his winter supply. In this way society gradually became divided into food producers and fighters. The fighters "recognised their own where they saw it" and proceeded to help themselves, and if a few lives were lost in the transaction that only added to their glory. It is simply appalling to read how human life was regarded when fighting and killing was still a private matter. It was a dull day when a mail-clad knight did not slaughter some one, and no one thought of questioning his right. It is only necessary to glance through some of the old romances and histories to understand what I mean. Take the case of Percy, "The Hotspur of the North." "He that kills me some six or seven dozen of Scots at a breakfast, washes his hands, and says to his wife: 'Fie upon this quiet life! I want work.'

"'O, my sweet Harry,' says she. 'How many hast thou killed to-day?'

"'Give my roan horse a drench,' says he; and answers, 'Some fourteen'—an hour after; 'a trifle, a

trifle.'"

As civilisation advanced it was found that it was better to protect a number of producers from [Pg 178]
others and levy tribute from them. In this way a military aristocracy was developed, and the producers, whose work was really the most important of all in the human problem of existence, became the serfs or slaves of their military over-lords. The fighters gave protection and did the high-toned killing while the serfs produced the necessary food and clothing and attended to all the sloppy work. Developing along these lines it was presently found that killing was too dangerous a matter to leave to individuals, so it was taken over by the state, which organised armies, diplomatic corps, and all the other machinery of good government. The problem of protection was completely solved to the satisfaction of able and peaceful lawyers, and in some cases, when enemies were plentiful and threatening, the government established a system of conscription, by which all the able-bodied men were trained to military service, so that if at any time they should be needed for the protection of their country they could go into service at once. This development has not yet reached the new world, though we are not without military sages who advocate it. Certainly a country where military conscription is enforced is at all times ready to defend itself against encroachments and plunder.

But while the aristocratic and military side of the problem of existence was being solved the business of food production was left to private enterprise. The common people had to produce for their own living, and naturally produced a surplus which went to feed others who made themselves useful in more delightful occupations, and to pay the taxes needed to carry on the government which protected people in their rights. Now a condition is arising in which the amount of food produced is not sufficient to enable the state to progress harmoniously. People in the more delightful occupations find they have to devote altogether too much energy to earning a living. We seem to be reaching a state where men are struggling wildly to earn money with which to buy food that no longer exists. There is much talk of going back to the land, where people are [Pg 179]
supposed to produce the necessaries of life with the least possible expenditure of energy, but few of us go and still fewer of us like it when we do go. We find that the work of securing the means of subsistence from Nature is heavy and mussy, and, after all, requires an amount of knowledge and training that is surprising to the city man. But if the people now on the land are unable to produce the food of the nation something must be done. We cannot legislate people back to the land, for that would be trespassing on the rights of the individual. But I see no reason why we should not learn a little from the solution of the military and more aristocratic side of the human problem. Protection and production were of equal importance in the beginning, and why should they not be equal now?

Why should we not have economic conscription instead of military conscription, now that the problem of feeding has become more important than the problem of defence? Why should not every young man and woman in the country be compelled to spend, say, three years in the production of the necessaries of life? This would not only help to relieve the present situation, but would undoubtedly increase the number of intelligent producers and restore society to a normal balance. It has been said that "an army travels on its belly," and this is equally true of a nation. If a nation can resort to conscription to keep up its fighting efficiency, what is to prevent it from resorting to the same means to keep up its feeding efficiency? The two ideas are parallel in principle, only the question of feeding has lagged behind that of protection. This seems to be a time to bring them abreast, and the new world, being the field of economic battles rather than of military battles, should face the situation squarely.

Of course there would be objections on the part of the food producers when the state started in rivalry to them, but we have only to glance back over history to see how universal were the objections to the state taking over the business of fighting and killing. Even yet there are nations where the individual claims the right of the duel to avenge his private wrongs, but the state has [Pg 180]
established a fairly complete monopoly of killing. In the economic work which I propose it would not be so grasping. It would merely undertake to fit every individual for the struggle of existence. In fact this step would be nothing more than the extension of our present system of compulsory education. It was so that each citizen would be better fitted to make his way in the world that schools were established to teach reading, writing and arithmetic, and other things that I cannot name off-hand, as I do not keep track of the latest educational frills. Now that we are realising the fact that we must have more and cheaper food, why not educate young people along food-producing lines? At the present time a great proportion of our able-bodied citizens would be just about as helpless in the presence of food in its crude state as was the Englishman who was found perishing of thirst beside a river. He could not take a drink because he had no glass.

As making a living, reduced to its elements, simply means having a capacity of securing food and shelter from the raw materials of nature, how could any man be better equipped for the vicissitudes of life than by knowing how to get his own living in this way? Having once acquired the needful training, he could enter the struggle of commercial life, and those cleaner occupations which we all desire, with greater confidence because he would know that if he failed he would still know how to make his living. The average man who fails in the struggle of city life is almost helpless if he tries to go back to the land to get his living from it. He barely knows which end of a hoe to take hold of if he undertakes farm work; and a plough and its workings are mysterious beyond words. He may know all about trust bookkeeping that will baffle an investigating committee, but he cannot milk the brindle cow, and as for planting corn he cannot do it until some one invents a corn-planter that will cough and clear its own throat, because he never fails to jab it into the ground with its mouth open. If he had been taught these things in his [Pg 181]
youth he would step into his place in the army of workers and be worth board and wages from

the beginning.

Of course a plan of this kind would need a great deal of thinking out to make it work right, but I think it could be done without interfering with individual liberty as much as military conscription does. A man may have scruples of conscience about learning the art of war and slaughter, but he can have none against raising cabbages and potatoes. The more I think of it the more feasible it seems to me, but I merely offer it as a suggestion and leave it for others to develop.

July 7.—The children came home from the berry-patch with a stirring account of having seen a skunk—"a pretty striped, little animal," that stood by his hole; conscious of his power and refused to be frightened. Somehow the incident reminded me of coon-hunting, for it is wonderful how many coon-hunts in the old days were brought to an end by a skunk. Even the best trained coon-dogs would sometimes follow a trail that led to a hollow log where a flash of the lantern would reveal a pair of glowing green eyes. As a rule only a formal call was made on Mr. Mephiticus Americanus (the dictionary is not handy, but I think that is his full name), but sometimes the dogs caught him before he reached the log, and for weeks afterwards they were kicked out whenever they tried to lie under the stove, because they smelled like a nicely warmed theatre on a winter evening when the ladies are wearing their costly furs. One encounter with a skunk would ruin a dog's sense of smell for a season and make him so dull scented that he couldn't trail even an automobile (Yes, I know the story about the skunk and the automobile), but if the melons were plentiful coon-hunting went on just the same.

One night the coon-dogs led us into the middle of a tamarac swamp and then lost the trail. As the full dreariness of the situation dawned on us we sat for a breathing spell on a fallen log and talked things over. We were four miles from home, wet, muddy, bruised, and briar-scratched. Moreover, before starting out we had been wearied by a hard day's work at threshing. Presently [Pg 182] the man who had suggested the coon-hunt made a little speech befitting the occasion that was interrupted only by frantic slaps at mosquitoes.

"If any one had told me ten years ago," he began in slow, measured tones, "that on the seventeenth of October of this year I would be sitting on a wet log in the middle of a swamp at one o'clock in the morning, I would have called that—man—a—liar."

We all agreed with the sentiment and felt a dull rage against that hypothetical prophet of woe. If he had appeared among us at that moment, he would have been roughly handled. Right here it may as well be confessed that, although I have tramped many miles after some of the most noted coon-dogs the country ever knew, I never was present at the killing of a coon. Yet if this were the right season of the year and some one came along to-night suggesting a coon-hunt, I would go along. There is something about knocking around in the dark woods with a couple of scouting dogs that appeals to some primal instinct that doubtless comes down to us from the days when Nimrod was "a mighty hunter before the Lord."

It will probably be news to most people that trapping is still a means of livelihood in the older parts of Ontario. From Windsor to Niagara there are men who set out their traps every winter as in the pioneer days, and trudge many miles to visit them every week. The catch consists of minks, muskrats, skunks, and weasels, and skins to the value of from one to two hundred dollars are secured in a season by some trappers. Owing to the clearing away of the forests some of the animals have changed their habits in order to accommodate themselves to the new conditions. Muskrats have given up building their houses and live entirely in holes in the banks of the Government drains. Last winter a trapper who was digging out muskrats found a plump coon hibernating in the hole, the lack of hollow trees having driven him to the earth. Skunks by exercising the right of eminent domain now live almost entirely in the holes of ground-hogs. It is [Pg 183] generally believed that the ground-hogs extend to them a truly Oriental hospitality—giving them a quit-claim on the premises as soon as they enter. The men who dig out the skunks for profit do not move in our best circles. Even in the churches the right hand of fellowship is grudgingly extended to them.

Of all the wild creatures that "faced the new conditions" the turkey fared the best. As the forests disappeared he simply stepped over the fence into the barn yard, where he lords it like a king who has come to his own. There are more turkeys in the country at the present time than when the white man came, and according to tradition they were plentiful then. The first wheat that was sown in the new clearings had to be protected from their depredations, as corn is now protected from the crows. There are stories told of whole flocks being killed by one discharge of an old army musket loaded to the muzzle with buckshot. As for capturing the birds the trick was ridiculously easy. The pioneers built little huts of logs where the turkeys were plentiful, leaving out the bottom log on one side and covering the top with brush. Then they took some corn and dropped it in a trail over the beech knolls where the turkeys fed and into the hut. When the turkeys found the corn they began eating and followed the trail with heads down until they had entered the hut. When the corn was eaten they lifted their heads and found themselves prisoners, for the silly birds never thought of stooping down and going out by the opening through which they had entered. In this way entire flocks were captured, and from those that were kept with clipped wings the tame turkeys of the present day were developed. In some places the tame turkeys still wander away to the woods at brooding time and do not return to the barn yards until driven home by the cold weather. When their natural food is plentiful these birds are as deliciously gamy as the highly prized wild turkeys.

Fourteen years after the discovery of America turkeys are mentioned in the Court annals of England as being part of the royal fare. It is generally supposed that they received their name [Pg 184] through a mistaken notion that they had been brought from the East, though it has been

suggested that the name was bestowed on them because of the haughty Sultanic appearance of the gobblers. Since their first appearance on the banquet table their place has been assured, and there is no danger that they will disappear like the other wild game of the new world.

Quail are almost as plentiful this season as the "No Trespassing" and "Shooting Forbidden" signs by which they are protected. In the early mornings and evenings they can be heard whistling "Bob White" or "More Wet," for among the weather wise their whistling is said to be a sure sign of rain. Partridge have entirely disappeared from the older sections of the country, and although an occasional black squirrel may be seen they are practically extinct. In the Niagara Peninsula the golden pheasants are becoming so numerous as to be a nuisance to the farmers. Brown rabbits are fairly plentiful though the hard winters and lack of cover keep them in check. The big, long-legged swamp hares that turn snowy white in the winter are now seldom found, but a few still exist in the irreclaimable swamps and less thickly settled districts. As matters stand the hunter who has friends among the farmers and can get permission to shoot can make an occasional bag. In this connection a story is told of a local hunter. One day in the fall he took his gun and dogs and drove out into the country for a day's shooting. While driving, his dogs suddenly pointed in a field a few rods from the road. The hunter hurriedly tied his horse, took his gun, and climbed over the fence. Before he reached his dogs the farmer came running across the field, shouting at him to get off his place, but the hunter was stubborn and determined to have a shot, so he walked up on the birds. A beautiful flock of quail rose and he tried for them with both barrels. They whirred away without losing a feather. The farmer cooled down instantly.

"That's all right," he shouted. "You can keep right on. They are too tame anyway. If you shoot at [Pg 185] them a few times they'll get wilder and it will be harder for some one else to get them when I ain't lookin'. When you have enjoyed yourself enough, come up to the house and have some dinner."

July 11.—Much human ingenuity has been devoted to the invention of alarm clocks, the purpose being to get a kind that you cannot get used to hearing or silence by knocking the tail feathers out of it with a well-aimed shoe. I have even seen pictures of contrivances that would throw a man out of bed, light the kitchen fire, and turn on the cold water in the bathtub at a stated hour, but they never came into general use. As a matter of fact, the perfect alarm clock has never been invented, but the other night I got an idea. When the beds in the tent had been made up an ordinary tame bee evidently got tangled up in the clothes. At exactly seventeen minutes thirty-eight and one-tenth seconds after two o'clock next morning this bee, in its efforts to escape, stepped on my naked flesh, and, being peevish through loss of sleep, let fly at me. Instantly I was so wide awake you could have heard me a mile. I don't think I was ever more wide awake in my life. There was no yawning and stretching and closing one eye for a catnap about that awakening. It was instantaneous and complete. Now, what is to prevent some genius from inventing an alarm clock that will release a bee at the right minute? Of course it might not work out in practice—few good ideas do. Still I offer it for what it is worth.

Last week I experienced a couple of those coincidences that lead to so much profitless speculation. When in town one day I was looking at a case of stuffed birds and saw one that was a stranger to me. I was told that it was a Carolina rail. I had never seen one in a collection before and had never run across one in the woods or fields. Two days later when I was driving home from the post office a Carolina rail fluttered across the road ahead of me and perched on the top of the fence. It evidently had its young with it, for it kept up a constant twittering, stretching its neck and fluffing up its feathers and acting as if greatly disturbed. I stopped the horse and had a [Pg 186] good look at it, and beyond a doubt it was the same kind of bird as I had seen in the collection. Yet I had never seen one before, though I hunted much some years ago, and for the past couple of years have been watching bird-life closely. So much for the first coincidence. The second came when a correspondent wrote asking if there were any cuckoos to keep in check the caterpillars in this section. I had been watching for cuckoos for the past couple of years, but had seen none. Yet on the very afternoon on which I got the letter a pair of cuckoos appeared in the orchard. Of course it was only another coincidence, but I feel like asking, as our nature student does after he has recounted some observation:

"Now, why was that?"

The dry spell has given me a chance to get a collection of all the signs of rain that are popular in the country. When the maple trees showed the white side of their leaves we were sure to have rain; when no dew fell for two nights rain was not far off; the squawking of the geese made rain as certain as if it were already falling; when the tree toads started croaking everybody got ready for a wet spell; when the quails whistled they were simply saying "More wet"—and yet—and yet—it didn't rain. Then came the wisest observation of all: "All signs fail in dry weather." They certainly had failed, every one of them. At last, weather-wise men began to remark, after rain had threatened a few times and nothing had happened:

"I've always noticed that after a dry spell such as we have been having it takes a lot to get the rain started."

According to that the weather must be something like the old wooden pumps we used to have. It needs a thorough priming before we can get rain. Another thing I have noticed is the different language people use about a storm when the weather is dry. In ordinary times they say that a storm "looks threatening." After a spell like this they say of every thunderhead that appears, "That looks promising." It makes all the difference whether rain is wanted or not.

I hope we don't have a mad-dog scare this summer. If we do I am afraid it is all up with Sheppy, [Pg 187] the dog. He is so full of irrepressible fool energy that he can't help falling under suspicion of

being afflicted with rabies. Every once in a while the steam gets hissing at his safety valve and he simply can't contain himself. He will start running around in wide circles, with head down and tongue lolling out, barking and snapping at everything he passes. I admit that I might be alarmed myself if I had not seen him act in the same way in mid-winter. The explanation seems to be that he gets so full of the joy of life that he simply has to act foolish to express his emotion. Of course I know it is wrong, if not positively immoral, for him to act in that way in a province so sedate and well ordered as Ontario, but I cannot find it in my heart to check him. And he has a wicked habit of taking the end of a stick in his mouth and running around the children until one of them grabs the other end, and they go for a romp together. I know in my heart that this should not be allowed. Sheppy should be taught to work off his superfluous energy on one of those treadmill churns they advertise in the farm papers, and the children should be doing their homework or reading improving books. As for me, I know that I should not be lying on my stomach on the grass, laughing at their antics. I should be doing something to improve my mind, such as sitting on the roadside fence discussing reciprocity with some neighbour who doesn't know any more about it than I do. But I am afraid that I have fallen too much into the way of Carman's St. Kavin, who

> "Was something like a gnome,
> Or a sphinx let out of school—
> He could always be at home
> Just beyond the reach of rule."

With a whole province full of people who are setting me good examples of serious-mindedness and industry and all the virtues, I have become so hardened that I can spend an hour at any time watching the pup and the children at play and never think of reproving them. I know this is very, very wrong, and—and— [Pg 188]

> "I'm very sorry, very much ashamed,
> And mean—next winter—to be thoroughly reclaimed."

I have never heard birds accused of having a sense of humour, but there is a killdeer in the pasture field that seems to have glimmerings. Every evening when Sheppy and I go out to milk the cows this bird flutters down in front of the dog and acts like a flying machine that has broken one of its planes or has run out of gasoline. Of course Sheppy takes after it, and the bird will flutter along just ahead of him for a couple of hundred yards and then, with a joyous screech, will rise over the fence and leave him in the lurch. When he starts to trot back the bird will swoop down ahead of him, and the chase will be resumed until another fence is reached, and then the rising and screeching will be repeated. I suppose the killdeer has a nest somewhere in the field, but it doesn't matter what part of the fifteen acres Sheppy appears in the bird will come to tease him. They usually keep up the game all the time I am milking, until the poor dog is so hot and panting so hard you would think he was trying to "step outside of himself and let the wind whistle through his ribs." When the dog finally gives up the chase and starts home with me the bird circles around above us screeching "Look't here! look't here!" in the offensive way that people have when they have got the better of you in a practical joke. Probably sober-minded, scientific persons would say that the killdeer is simply trying to protect its young and keep the dog from approaching them, but I don't believe it. I think that the bird is simply having fun. Our scientific men are all so serious-minded that I am afraid they miss many things when engaged in their nature studies. Perhaps if they cultivated humour a little they would not make so many solemn blunders.

July 15.—It is not often that I want to make a speech. As a rule I would rather have a tooth filled than speak a few well-chosen words at a picnic or meeting of the Farmers' Institute, but yesterday afternoon there were some minutes when I yearned to pour forth my perturbed spirit in an adequate oration. If I could have been transported from the cornfield just at the instant when the monkey-wrench slipped and I barked three knuckles of my right hand, and if at that psychological moment I could have been placed on the platform of a meeting of the Manufacturers' Association, I would have addressed a few words to that stall-fed aggregation of Privileged Pirates that would have made Demosthenes against Philip, Cicero against Catiline, and Burke against the despoiler of the Carnatic sound like the commencement exercises at a girls' school. G-rr-r-r-!! (meaning snarls of rage). Why won't some one let me get at them? Their relations with the press are largely confined to the servile approaches of the advertising department, or to the well-fed compliments of the halter-broke editors who respond to the toast of the press at annual banquets. It might do them good to have a run in with a spontaneous and care-free journalistic outlaw when he was in the humour to kick out the tail board of the dictionary, and let the big bouncing adjectives roll down from the sulphur-blue heights of his eloquence. I do not think it was in vain that the poison of asps was put under my lips, and if I could have got at those fellows while the monkey-wrench was in my hand they would have sent in a fire alarm, called the police, wired Colonel the Honourable Sam Hughes for a regiment, and then to a man they would have hidden their fatness under the seats until the lightning and continuous thunder had passed, and the weather began to clear. [Pg 189]

Of course, all this demands some explanation, but in making the explanation I want to make a few restrictions. I want it to be understood that I am talking as man to man to farmers who do their own work. What I have to say is not intended for those purse-proud farmers who have hired men, and who feel that because they sold their beef cattle for a few cents above the market it is to them I am referring when I speak of shady operations in High Finance. Do you know I have [Pg 190]

been finding that when I pay my respects to Sir Jingo McBore there are a lot of farmers who feel that I am attacking the propertied class, and that they are getting kicks out of the overflow? But that is not what I want to talk about to-day. I simply want to explain to the ordinary farmer, who has to scratch gravel with both feet in order to provide for his brood, that I have stumbled on another way in which we are being looted, and it is the meanest and most exasperating trick that has come to my notice in a blue moon. I was placidly cultivating corn in the new orchard, when I noticed that the frame of the cultivator was working loose. The correct thing to do was to tighten the nuts, and I got a wrench for that purpose. Feeling that I was doing the right thing at the right time, just as a real farmer would do it, I began to turn on one of the nuts with the wrench. But it did no good. There was no tightening of the loose frame. A more careful examination showed that the bolt was turning with the nut, and I could keep on turning till the cows came home, and it would make no difference. The head of the bolt was round and flat, and there was no possible way of catching it with another wrench and holding it while the nut was being tightened. I passed on to several other nuts that were working loose, and found the same state of affairs. Every bolt would turn with the nut, and it was impossible for me to tighten anything. It was just after I had made this discovery that it occurred to me that perhaps if I gave the wrench a quick jerk the nut would loosen and begin to turn without the bolt. I tried and the wrench slipped and my knuckles struck on the iron frame. That was the moment when I should have been introduced to the Manufacturers' Association. As it was I merely sat down on the cultivator frame, and, though there was no one but the old grey horse to hear me, I talked about the manufacturer of that cultivator for some minutes. It was about two o'clock in the afternoon, about the time when he would be sipping his coffee after his luncheon, and I shouldn't wonder but he remarked to his wife that his ears were burning and that probably some one was talking about him. If he said [Pg 191] that, he was entirely right. Some one was talking about him in a very restrained but exceedingly feverish manner.

As might be supposed there is a reason for having cultivators put together as mine is. The reason is called "Profits." When machinery is properly assembled before being sold, bolts that must be taken out from time to time are fitted with square shoulders under the head, and these fit into square holes. This makes it possible to tighten nuts or remove them as occasion may require. But, under our modern non-competitive system, the sole purpose of the manufacturer is to get his implements put together and sold. If he does not trouble himself to have square-shouldered bolts fit into square holes, he can save the wages of several mechanics who would otherwise put in their time seeing that the implements went together properly and could be taken apart again. By using bolts that are smaller than the holes in the castings they can assemble the implements without bothering to ream out the holes, and then if you want to change the position of, say, a cultivator tooth you may find, even if you are fortunate enough to get out the bolt, the next hole has never been reamed out, and that you must take the cultivator to a blacksmith to get it changed. And all this is due to the fact that thrifty manufacturers want to save the wages of mechanics in assembling their implements. If they can save a few cents it does not matter that they will cause delay and annoyance to the farmers who buy their implements. It is about the meanest, cheapest form of petty graft to which they can stoop, but they are doing it every day. Sir Jingo McBore is on the board of directors, and his one purpose in life is to get more dividends. To meet his insistent clamour, the manufacturer is forced to save at every turn so as to increase profits. Machines are put together in the cheapest way possible, and even though the style and materials may be of the best, they become a source of constant annoyance and loss of time to the man who buys and uses them. When I realised just what was the matter with that cultivator, and [Pg 192] that, in order to make a saving of fifteen or twenty cents in the wages of a mechanic who would fit the bolts into their places properly, the manufacturer had sold me an imperfect implement, I just naturally boiled over. For a few vivid moments I lost my grip on the National Policy, and all the great verities of life. While I sat on the cultivator I recalled the appearance of a manufacturer of agricultural implements whom I had the privilege of looking at for fully half an hour one day last spring. He was a mild-looking man with pink whiskers and an air of vested rights, and, judging from his tone of voice when speaking from his place in parliament, he probably contributes regularly to the funds of the Holy Name Society. And yet that man and others like him sell to the farmers implements like my cultivator, that poison the fountains of language at the source. As I recalled the meek looks of this manufacturer and rubbed my barked knuckles, I saw red. It was then that I wanted a chance to address the Manufacturers' Association, and I think I could have said a few things to them that would have been worth while. And I have a sneaking suspicion that in addressing them on this subject I should be voicing the unexpressed and unprintable opinions of thousands of farmers in this fair Canada of ours.

July 18.—Hurrah! The new bug has come. This morning I found a Perillus Bioculatus—or was it Claudus? And yet again it might have been Circumcinctus. Oh, what's the use? What I am really trying to tell is that I found one of the new beetles that are eating the potato bugs. I had heard that such a beetle exists, but had no hope of ever seeing one. There is a little patch of early potatoes in the corner of the garden, and when looking them over and making up my mind to spray them with Paris green, I noticed the little stranger. At first I thought it was a new enemy of the potato, and was trying to work up a feeling of resignation, when I noticed it had its proboscis sticking into a young potato bug. To make sure that it was really killing the creature, I put my finger close to it, and it ran along the leaf, still carrying its prey with it. It was undoubtedly a true [Pg 193] Perillus bioculatus, or claudus, or circumcinctus, though it did not wear a tag giving its Latin name. It is a rather handsome creature, of about the same length and breadth as the hard-shelled potato bug, square-shouldered and attractively marked with yellow stripes on a black ground. I am not much of a hand at telling what any one or anything wears, so you may find it hard to recognise this excellent beetle from my description; but if you find one that has a potato bug

speared on its beak, you will know that it is the farmer's friend. When you find one, be good to it, and make it welcome. I think we should get together with our scientists, and give it a better name than it has. I suggest that we call it the "Fun Bug," because, when it gets plentiful, the children can go and have fun, instead of picking the potato bugs. If you do not care for that name, and have a better one to suggest, you may write to me, giving your choice, and enclosing postage stamps as a guarantee of good faith. But above all things, be good to our new friend. To find a bug that is a benefit, and not a pest, is enough to make a man declare a birthday and go out to celebrate it.

Homer tells about a man who "dwelt beside a road and was the friend of mankind." A farmer meditating on that passage might be inclined to remark that in the days when Homer wrote there were no automobiles. If there had been, the gentle soul who dwelt beside the road might have found the milk of human kindness curdling in his bosom. And yet this would hardly be true. In those good old days they had chariots with scythes sticking out from the axles that must have been rather ticklish things to get past, especially when driven by some silken Greek or Trojan noble who was trying to handle a team of wild horses. The only point to this is that we must not run away with the idea that people did not have trouble before our time. I quite realise that there is nothing new to say on the question of automobiles, but there are times when I feel like saying a few old things with much bitterness of heart. Automobiles are more plentiful and more hasty than [Pg 194] ever this year. I am told that the latest make cannot be run successfully at less than fifteen miles an hour, and that they can be made to go at the rate of forty and fifty miles an hour without trouble to any one except farmers who may be trying to go about their business on the public road. I frequently see them going by more swiftly than the express trains on the railway. I am told that only Americans crossing from Windsor to Niagara Falls offend in this way, but I have my doubts. It is quite true that the people in near-by towns who own automobiles are commendably considerate when approaching a skittish horse, but that is when they are near home. It is hard to say what they would do if they got out beyond the circle of their acquaintanceship. While travelling where they are known, they have to be careful, for we all know where they live, and if they don't treat us right they are likely to have a rough-necked man drop in at their place of business to talk matters over with them. Visitors of this kind can lean up close to the offending automobilist and say things to him, and if he tries to talk back, they can bite him. I am sorry to say that I have no suggestion to make about improving conditions of mixed travel on the public roads, but still I think it is worth while to keep on saying something about it, "Lest we forget, lest we forget." Some day we shall find a solution of the difficulty. In fact, we must find one, if we are not to be crowded off the roads altogether.

A few days ago I had an illuminating talk with a visiting fish peddler. He told me that it had taken him three years to work up his route, so that he can cover it profitably. People had to be educated to the use of fish. Now that they have become accustomed to his visits, he has no difficulty in selling from twelve hundred to fifteen hundred pounds of fish a week; but if he gets off his beaten track and tries a new district, he finds it hard to sell. This reminds me that I saw in a recent newspaper article a statement that Canadians are becoming much greater users of cheese than they were in the past. It is also said that the home demand for fruit and honey is also [Pg 195] increasing—all of which is good news. It does not mean that people are becoming more extravagant in their way of living, but that they are learning the value of variety in their food. Fish, cheese, honey, and fruits are no more expensive than the pork, beef, and so-called plain foods which the majority of people use year in and year out, without change. The medical authorities tell us that variety in our foodstuffs makes for public health; so, besides making profit for themselves, those who are educating the people to use new foods are rendering a public service, and introducing the variety which is said to be "the spice of life."

They have raised a monument to the McIntosh Red apple, and there is talk of raising a fitting memorial to the man who introduced Red Fife wheat. This is a step in the right direction, and I think, when we are at it, we should raise a memorial of some kind to all the people who have done work from which they expected no return. We have only to look at the roads, the cleared fields, and the orchards of Canada to realise that the generations that went before us did not all look to collect for themselves the last cent of profit from their work. I am moved to make these remarks by the fact that I have so frequently heard people say to those who are planting out orchards or making other improvements that cannot be perfected for years to come, "Well, you'll never live to get any good out of it." Of all the discouraging, unprogressive points of view, I think that is easily the worst. The world would practically be at a standstill if men did not undertake anything from which they could not hope to reap the entire profit. Moreover, this matter of getting and having does not seem to be very well understood. Many people who have collected all the profits of their work really have nothing at all, because they get no good from what they have gathered. There is much food for thought in the words of the Frenchman who said on his death-bed, "What I spent I enjoyed, what I gave away I still have, but what I saved I lost completely."

July 19.—There are young grasshoppers in the field—merry, inconsequent grasshoppers—but in [Pg 196] the present state of public opinion in Canada I doubt if it would be wise to say much in their praise. The grasshopper chews tobacco, and fiddles, and I understand that both practices are forbidden by church discipline. And yet there is much about the grasshopper that appeals to me. To parody Sir John (I mean Falstaff, who must not in any way be confused with any of our own Sir Johns): "If to be merry and inconsequent be a sin, then many an old codger I know is going to get into trouble." In spite of his cheerful disposition the grasshopper has been an object of scorn to the moralists and fabulists. They have been fond of comparing him with the bee and the ant, to his disadvantage, and yet, as usual, there is another side to the story. In all the fairy tales, myths, and records of sorcery that I have read only one man was ever transformed into an insect, and he

elected to be a grasshopper. When Tithonus, the accepted lover of Eos, goddess of the dawn, began to get old and shrivelled because he neglected to ask for immortal youth instead of immortal life, she got rid of him by changing him into a grasshopper, and I suspect that the change was made by request. Tithonus was no doubt very wise as well as very old. As the favoured lover of Rhododaktulos Eos he must have seen a great deal of life. To begin with, he must have been one of the industrious sort or he would never have been up early enough to make love to the Dawn. Besides, in order to live up to his position he would have to be around at daybreak every morning. So it is no wonder when it was "time for a change," as the politicians say, that he decided to be changed into a grasshopper. This insect neither works nor stores up treasure. He takes his ease until the sun is high every morning, and when danger threatens he clears out of the way with one jump. His life lasts only while the pasture is good, and when he isn't eating he chews tobacco and fiddles. Personally, I prefer a pipe, and those who ought to know tell me that I am not musical, but, still, I have much admiration for old Tithonus, who decided that if he couldn't be a man he wanted to be a grasshopper. [Pg 197]

The more I consider insects the more I am convinced that our moralists must give up drawing lessons from them. Although the ant is industrious she never lays up more food than is needed for a hard winter, and no ant hill that I have ever investigated has revealed anything suggestive of the most approved forms of modern thrift. The ants have nothing to correspond with our industrial system, with its mergers and watered stocks. The bee is nearest to man in these matters, and see what a fool she is. She lays up treasures where the moth can corrupt and thieves break in and steal. A great majority of the bees work themselves to death without ever getting a chance to enjoy the treasures they have stored up. If you provide them with comfortable quarters and plenty of white clover blossoms they will go on producing like farmers without ever noticing who is getting the profits of their work. Although the bees have been much favoured by fabulists I think that they should really be regarded as horrible examples.

July 21.—This is a wonderful year for roses. In the early morning when they are drenched with dew every bush looks like a fairy fountain where the universal life force is bubbling up in beauty of form and colour and perfume. And the roses are not alone. All the other old-fashioned flowers, the marigolds, petunias, larkspurs, poppies, and hyacinths, are sending up their jets of tremulous loveliness. As I look at them with eyes refreshed by sleep I realise the truth of that verse in the Koran which says:

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

Not even the fabled

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

can surpass a Canadian garden, brimming with the old-fashioned flowers beloved in childhood. As I linger among them the years fall from me like an "envious shadow." I press the delicate blooms to my face, inhale their fragrance, and let my whole being vibrate with the joy of life until my heart joins in the morning chorus of the birds. And then the great sun swings up and the day's work begins. [Pg 198]

July 22.—For the past few days we have been hauling in hay and hustling like a gang of lightning-rod peddlers following up a destructive thunderstorm. And I have built my first stack. That may not seem a very startling statement to a tired business man, but I beg to assure all such that a stack of blue grass and a stack of blues are two entirely different things. The method of building them is not the same, and a stack of blue grass goes farther in feeding the cattle than a stack of blues in feeding the kitty. But sh-h-h! I should not be introducing these esoteric terms of high finance into innocent pastoral scenes.

To return to the stack—I feel fairly proud of it. It is more symmetrical than I thought I could ever make one, and it is settling down on its foundation like a benediction. Having seen real farmers, who are reputed to be good stack-builders, get down off their stack and run for a rail to prop it up so that it would not fall over, it gives me a glow of satisfaction to see my first attempt sitting as upright as a pyramid. Whenever I have nothing else to do when I am smoking my pipe after dinner, I always wander to some spot where I can see and admire my first stack from a new angle, and I find that it looks fairly well from every side. Of course, it is not perfect, and I would not advise people who are busy or have something important to do to come far out of their way to look at it, but still I am not ashamed to have it examined.

In the past I have always had an expert stack-builder to do the building, but this year the boys and I are doing all the farm work, and I had to build myself. Of course, I have often helped at stack-building, keeping the hay in front of the builder or pitching off the loads, but I never before had the courage to act as chief architect. I have also heard good stack-builders discuss the art, and I know that the chief thing is to "keep the middle full." As nearly as possible I made this stack all middle, kept it well tramped and never went too near the edges. Experts who have looked at it say that it will turn the wet all right, but I shall not feel entirely safe until it has been opened next winter. I have no doubt the cows have a proverb to the effect that "the proof of the stack is in the eating." [Pg 199]

A real farmer with whom I was discussing my stack with more modesty than I really felt made the disquieting comment: "Your first two or three stacks will probably be all right, for you will be careful. It is after you think that you know how to build stacks that you will get careless and then

you will begin to build poor ones." Possibly that is true, but to be forewarned is to be forearmed. I certainly did give my whole attention to the work while building that stack. My mind was on it all the time, and every forkful was placed with considerate care. It irritated me to have any one distract my attention by speaking to me while I was at the work. I was bound to make a good job of it.

To those who have never built stacks it would be surprising to know the amount of concentrated attention that is required. A stack isn't simply a pile of hay, and when it comes to topping off you need a good eye to make all sides slope up evenly. I didn't intend to build it so high, but the slope at which I started kept me going up and up as far as the two boys could pitch. One was throwing hay up as high as he could from the load, and the other was perched precariously on a little ledge, from which he threw it up to me, and when I reached the top I was also pitching the bundles higher than my head. By that time I had become sufficiently accustomed to my work to have a chance to observe and to note that my stack was like

"Some tall cliff vertiginously high."

The boy who was perched on the side of the stack reminded me of the lines:

"Half way down,
Hangs one that gathers samphire, dreadful trade!"

[Pg 200]

But working with hay, thinking hay, and almost eating hay is not conducive to a flow of poetical quotations. By the time the stack was completed and the top weighted down with a piece of wire and a couple of blocks of unsplittable wood from the woodpile I was tired out in mind and body. As soon as I could I stumbled away to the tent and slept like a log until five a.m. on the following morning, when a fly with a club-foot limped across my nose and wakened me to another day of toil and building.

Many explanations have been offered of the trend of country people to the cities, but it is possible that the true source of the difficulty has been overlooked. Students of the problem have been too practical. They have discussed the difficulty in terms of dollars and cents and of hard labour. An idealistic observer with keener insight might lay the blame on our literature and art. For some generations compulsory education has been scattering the leaven of learning in the rural districts, and what are we offering the new army of readers and seekers for culture? We are offering them history, romance, and poetry in which war, statecraft, social eminence, artistic, poetic, and professional ability yield to heroic souls ample harvests of success, fame, and perhaps content.

Agriculture, the most essential of the world's industries, has not been touched by the true glamour of literature and art. Poets and writers who have dealt with it have given us creations in dialect, and artists who have illustrated this kind of literature have depicted a race of men and women in jeans and gingham. This is not the kind of thing calculated to rouse the ambition of country boys and girls. Their heroes are fair spoken, well dressed, and skilled in courtly manners. They feel that to develop themselves and to make the most of their lives they must away to the cities where the things that literature and art glorify may be found or accomplished.

You cannot expect young men of spirit to take to farming until it has been idealised. In the present condition of public taste they can only hope to figure in literature as stupid and [Pg 201] sometimes amusing drudges, and in art as raw-boned monstrosities with whiskers in their ears. They dream of military uniforms, places on boards of directors, and well-dressed triumphs of all kinds that are adequately applauded by beautiful women dressed in the latest fashion. All our literature and art tends to foster these foolish dreams. It is vain for philosophers to preach the advantages of the simple life and for editors to preach the great duty of producing the world's food. Duty, the "stern daughter of the voice of God," is not popular with the young. They want life and action and joyousness, because literature and art have taught them that these are the things most to be desired, and they hurry to the cities to find them.

The art of living has not penetrated to the country, and you need not expect it to make progress until we have that new race of poets and writers and artists which Whitman foresaw, but of which he was not the protagonist. He sang the glories of work—but did not work much. Thoreau with all his cantankerousness came nearer to the new literature. His farming was all done to supply his own needs, and he foresaw the possibilities of leisure and ease in connection with farm life when he said: "No man need earn his bread in the sweat of his brow unless he sweats more easily than I do."

"If the farmers learn to get leisure and use it the old order will change, and instead of a new heaven and a new earth we shall have a new earth and a new heaven. The change will begin on the earth. When farmers learn to work for homes and well-rounded lives, instead of for money, a new race of artists and writers will spring from the soil and give us the much-needed literature and art of democracy. They will give a romantic glamour to country life, and culture, instead of being handed down from the heights, will be handed up, or rather we shall have to go back to the soil to get it. Most of the free and equal citizens of the country are born on the land, and it is probable that in the near future all the people on the land will be well educated."

When that time comes we shall have a new literature, art, and poetry, and the world will be given [Pg 202] new ideals. Instead of the age of poetry being past, it is merely beginning to dawn.

July 25.—"Are you going to the raising?"

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

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

On the day of the raising a gang of men working under the directions of the framers put together [Pg 203] the bents and sills. The latter are usually laid on cement foundations, as most modern barns have a basement stable for horses and cows. The bents, usually four in number, consist of the posts, beams, girths, and braces. They are put together, with all joints strongly pinned and laid overlapping one another on the foundation, with the tenons on the foot of each post ready to be entered into the mortises in the sills. Early in the afternoon the crowd begins to gather. When all who are expected have put in an appearance, captains are selected, who proceed to choose sides. Then is the anxious moment for the county beau who can feel holes burning in the back of his duck shirt because of

> "A pair
> Of blue eyes sot upun it."

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

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

When every one has been chosen down to such riffraff as visiting journalists and politicians, who can only be expected to help with the grunting when the lifting is being done, the real work of the raising begins. Although the rivals take opposite sides of the barn, they work together in putting up the main framework. "Ye-ho! Hee-eeve! All together now! Ye-ho! Hee-eeve!" [Pg 204]

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

"Ye-ho! Hee-eeve!"

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

"Ye-ho! Hee-eeve!"

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

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

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

"Ye-ho! Hee-eeve!"

The cheering suddenly changes to sharp calls and commands.

"Where's that brace?"

"Throw me a commander!"

"Throw me a pin!"

Bang! Bang! Bang! The pins are driven home. [Pg 205]

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

"Ye-ho! Hee-eeve!"

"Where's that strut?"

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

"All down!"

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

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!"

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

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

Then comes the drive home through the moonlight, along the country roads and past the sweet-smelling clover fields. As the young men are always heroic and the girls bewitching on these occasions, there is no telling how many romances take definite form at barn-raisings. What have the cities to offer in comparison with this for excitement, fun, and sentiment? Nothing—absolutely nothing! [Pg 206]

July 27.—The fat steers are now occupying the centre of the stage. They are being shipped from this district, not simply in carload lots, but in trainloads. It is sad to think that they will so soon lose their colonial identity and begin to masquerade on imperial tables as the roast beef of Old England. For some months past they have been making a glorious showing in the pasture fields. A drive along the roads in any direction would be sure to bring into evidence herds of from twenty to thirty feeding in dehorned peace or chewing the cud under the shade trees. They gave an air of prosperity to the landscape fully as satisfying as the wheatfields of the hustling junior provinces. If old Ontario is being forced by changed conditions to let her fields run to pasture, she has fat steers to show for it that equal the best. The old scrub stock descended from the pioneer cattle that used to get through the winters by eating buds and licking the moss off the trees has entirely disappeared. In its place we have cattle that are bred for meat production, and the farmer who sells a herd of these gets in exchange a roll of bills that is too big to be hidden in a stump or hollow log. Nothing but a chartered bank will hold it. Like almost everything else the farmers have to sell nowadays, fat steers command a high price that makes one sympathise with the poor city people who must buy. But when the farmers are prosperous, business booms and the city people get their share—especially those who are in any way affected by the piano trade.

Fat hogs are also playing an important part in this year's drama of prosperity—in fact they are getting their feet right into the financial trough. At the present price—eight cents a pound, live weight—they have reached a point that is the despair of men whose memory runs back to the time of the American war and other periods of forced prices. In this connection it is amusing to [Pg 207] note how little some people care for the cause, so long as they can get good prices. One old Presbyterian elder, who has long since gone to his reward, made his fortune during the Crimean war, and ever after he used to exclaim with heartfelt emphasis on every possible occasion, "I wish there would be another war with Roosha, so the price of wheat would go up." It didn't matter to him how many people were killed or what suffering was endured, so long as he got a fancy price for his wheat. Another worthy of the same period kept his wheat for three years after the war closed hoping to be able to sell it at war prices. The state of the market weighed so heavily on his mind that when he met an acquaintance his invariable form of greeting was: "Isn't the wheat cheap? How are the wife and children?" But to return to hogs. They, too, have undergone a transformation. The old-fashioned swift-footed, long-nosed variety that could reach the third row of potatoes through a snake fence has disappeared—as has the snake fence. The hog of the present day really resembles his portrait in the advertisements in the agricultural papers. He lives a brief life of full-fed inactivity, has a clean pen, plenty of pure water and wholesome chopped feed. If offered the old-fashioned ration of swill, he would no doubt turn up his nose in disgust and ask the farmer to bring him the bill of fare.

Calves and lambs are also in demand with the buyers—they used to be called drovers—and bring good prices. But sheep-raising is not so important a business in this district as it might be. There are a few sheep—prize-winners at that—in the neighbourhood, but the industry is not flourishing, and the good old joke about taking the annual bath at the time of sheep-washing has fallen into disuse. The sheep they have are excellent to look upon. They even surpass the one described by the schoolboy as having "four legs on the under side, one at each corner." Their feet are set far towards the middle, and are so overhung with fatness that if a sheep gets cast on her side she [Pg 208] cannot regain her footing, but will die unless found and rescued. So many sheep are lost in this way that farmers who raise them find it necessary to look over their flocks and count them at least twice a day so as to be sure that none of them is missing. But though the sheep have changed, the buyers are still the same as they were in the days of Solomon. Here is a sample deal reported from life. The buyer has just driven up to the barn from the road.

"Good-morning, Jim."

"Good-morning, Bob."

"Awful dry weather we have been having lately."

"It is; but it looks a little like rain this morning."

"Yes, but it has been looking like rain every day for the past couple of weeks, and I have always noticed that when it looks like rain and doesn't, we usually have a long dry spell."

"That's so."

"I hear you have some fat sheep."

"I have, but I don't think I'll sell them just now. Jack Stout was looking at them the other day, but he didn't offer enough for them."

"What did he offer?"

"Three cents a pound."

"Well, that's all they're bringing now."

"Yes. Well, I think I'll keep mine for a while longer. I have nothing else on the pasture since I sold my steers, and I don't think they'll get any cheaper."

"Funny that sheep aren't higher when pork is so dear. I am paying eight cents a pound for hogs just now."

Here followed a conversation on hogs that need not be reported, as it was not to the point. Finally the buyer volunteered:

"I'm making up a carload to-day and I'm a little short. If your sheep are good and fat I don't mind paying three and a quarter for them."

"That isn't much better than Jack's bid. No, I don't think I'll sell them just now."

"Well, I must be going. Good-bye." [Pg 209]

"Good-bye."

The farmer stands and watches the buyer as he drives down a lane. When he has gone a few rods he stops and looks back.

"Oh, Jim!"

"Well!"

"I've just been thinking it over, and, though sheep are not worth a cent over three cents a pound, I am in such a fix to-day getting my car filled that I'll pay three and a half."

"When will you want them delivered?"

"At noon to-day."

"All right." The deal is closed and both are satisfied. What an up-to-date comment this makes on Solomon's text: "The buyer saith 'It is naught. It is naught,' but when he goeth his way he boasteth."

Now comes the task of rounding up the sheep, loading them on a waggon, and taking them to a railway station. If the man who first compared voters to a flock of sheep didn't know any more about politics than he did about sheep he should have been waited on by a delegation of farmers and told a few things. Of all the stubborn, contrary, ornery critters to drive, coax, or lead, sheep certainly deserve the mahogany sideboard, or trip to Europe, or whatever it is they offer in popular prize competitions. They follow their leaders, of course, but any fool that starts running in any direction is instantly followed as a leader. And the leaders never seem to have a clear idea of where they want to go. Their one idea seems to be to bolt the convention, and that is a characteristic of reformers rather than of ordinary voters. If the people were at all like sheep the politicians could do nothing with them. The simile is no good. And will some psychologist kindly explain why a man's memory will turn sarcastic on him—when he has almost run his legs off and can feel his lungs red all the way down—and throw up a quotation like this:

> "Falstaff: He fled from me like quicksilver.
> Doll: Ay, and thou followest him like a church;"

[Pg 210]

or words to that effect. If my motions resembled those of a church, the church must have been hit

by a cyclone when its actions were observed. However, the task was finally accomplished and the sheep joined the fat steers, hogs, calves, and lambs in their progress towards the kitchen.

Some farmers in this district have threshed their wheat without putting it in barns or stacks—carrying it from the shocks to the threshing-machines. The grain was then rushed to market, so that advantage might be taken of the high prices. The highest yield reported was of thirty-one bushels to the acre—a return that is highly satisfactory at present prices. All spring crops will be light on account of the late sowing and the continued dry weather. One field of oats was seen that has already turned yellow, as if ripening, without having headed out. But so many things are making for prosperity on the farms this year that few people have any real cause to grumble.

July 29.—The country has been described from a car window, an automobile, a buggy, a bicycle, and even afoot, so why not from a hammock? It is favourably located with a view of the best the country has to offer. One end is suspended from a little oak that has grown within the memory of man from an acorn dropped by a red squirrel or a predatory small boy. The other end is attached to a crab-apple tree that "casts a generous shade." A gentle breeze is whispering in a near-by clump of oaks and elms—an untouched bit of the original forest. The bees are humming like a city, and the hens are cackling over recent contributions to the world's food supply. A reaper is clacking faintly in the distance, and somehow the hour of ease seems sweeter because of the knowledge that some one is working. A panorama of green corn, oat, and barley fields, brown hay stubble, and yellow wheat in the shock can be seen by merely turning one's head. And around all is a wall of woods still as fresh as in the spring. What more could be asked by any one enamoured of the simple life?

The haying came and went this year as quickly as the express train that needed two men to see it—one to say, "Here she comes," and another to say, "There she goes." One morning the mower started, in the afternoon the rake was busy, and by the end of the next day the hay was all in the mows and lofts. As it was all cut, raked, loaded, and unloaded by machinery, the old back-breaking work of pitching was not in evidence. Still, the work was hard enough, and those who kept at it from early morning till late at night were thankful to have some one else volunteer to do the chores. The haying weather was ideal, plenty of sunshine and a good breeze to cure the hay; but for the first time on record the haymakers were wishing for rain. This section is suffering from a peculiar dry spell that is damaging the spring crops. For some weeks past there have been almost daily indications of rain, but none has come. Storms gather in the west almost daily and then drift away to the south or north. The papers bring reports of heavy rains at every point of the compass, but a strip about thirty miles wide through this part of the province has not been blessed with a decent sprinkle. In some places the corn is wilting through lack of moisture, and all spring crops will be light unless there is a heavy downpour within the next few days. It looks like rain to-day, but the performance of previous days will probably be repeated. Will the weather man kindly explain why other sections are favoured while this one is left desolate? Can it be possible that there is a Jonah living in this neighbourhood? But perhaps it will be as well not to investigate that point. [Pg 211]

The wheat harvest is now on and progressing at the same rate as did the haying. The self-binders are doing the heavy work, but there is no machine for loading or unloading the sheaves. They must be handled with a fork and to put in a full day at that is to know what hard work means. The sheaves are of uniform size, however, and that is an advantage. In the days of the self-rake machines that did not measure the sheaves automatically, but had to be "tripped" by the driver, they varied from a few wisps to huge bundles that would break the fork handles. This inequality made pitching a worse job than it is to-day. By doing the binding, the modern reaper has relieved harvesting of its heaviest work. It used to take four men to keep up with an old self-rake machine and many a good man was "bushed"—that is, driven to the bush to cool off and rest—by the killing pace. Before the day of the self-rake machine the grain was harvested with the cradle, and cradling was work for a giant. A farmer whose memory goes back to the days of cradling tells a story on himself that is worth repeating because of the light it casts on the women who helped to build up Canada. In his day he was a master with the old turkey-wing cradle, and it was his boast that few binders could keep up with him when he went swinging down a field. When his own wheat was harvested it was his custom to "hire out" to do cradling for the neighbours. On one occasion he hired out with a farmer whose daughters, [Pg 212]

> "Huge women, stronger than men,
> Blowzed with wind and rain and labour,"

used to help with the harvest. When he went to the field in the morning he was accompanied by one of these Amazons, who proposed to bind after him. He started down the field at an easy swing and when he reached the end of the swath and prepared to whet the scythe of his cradle he glanced around to see how his partner was progressing. To his surprise he found that she had just tossed aside the last sheaf. With the handle of the rake resting on her shoulder, she was mopping her face with a corner of her apron. As she caught his eye she remarked cordially:

"It's a het day, Mr. Jamieson."

On the next round he bent to his work with all his energy, but when he reached the end of the swath and glanced around his triumphant partner remarked:

"It's a het day, Mr. Jamieson."

All day long he plunged ahead, but she kept at his heels, and when the last swath was cut and the last sheaf bound she threw the rake over her shoulder and remarked:

"It has been a het day, Mr Jamieson." [Pg 213]

It is generally believed that later on he proposed to the Amazon and that the answer she gave made it "a cauld day" for Mr. Jamieson.

With the spirit of harvest home in the air it is a source of real joy to one who reclines in a hammock and meditates on what other people do that the last word on these happy festivals has been written by a Canadian. All the poets have had a try at it and some of them did fairly well, but it remained for McIntyre of Ingersoll, The Cheese Poet, to reach the fundamental truth. With the plain practical common sense for which he was noted, he penetrated through all the shams and make-believes that always surround periods of thanksgiving and let the truth gush forth in limpid verse. His poem on "Big Crops" closes with a couplet that should be better known, for it is undoubtedly destined to immortality. Hearken to McIntyre:

> "Forty bushels to the acre
> Makes us grateful to our Maker."

There you have it. Can you add anything or take anything away! To approve its truth you have but to notice the thin, sour smile of the man whose crops yielded but ten bushels to the acre when he takes up the Thanksgiving hymn. Then behold the irradiating happiness of him whose bins are bursting with a forty-bushel crop. Note how he bellows forth the strains and makes a joyful noise. Unquestionably the laurels belong to McIntyre. He has summed up the harvest-home spirit once for all.

To the hammock comes the odour of raspberry jam in the making. Owing to the dry weather the raspberries were not plentiful this year, but they are well-flavoured. The same report applies to currants, gooseberries, and all other small fruits. The prospect for apples is excellent. The trees are heavily loaded, and where they have been properly sprayed there will be a good yield. It seems incredible, and yet it is true, that in different parts of Ontario thousands of bushels of the [Pg 214] best apples are allowed to rot every year because the farmers cannot get enough to pay for the labour of picking and marketing the fruit. Yet good apples are dear in the cities. Just where the trouble lies is not quite clear.

Of all the delights enjoyed by the occupant of the hammock, watching the sunsets is chief. This summer they have been unusually fine, owing to the storms that threatened and turned aside. Each evening has given a picture of marvellous splendour, ranging from light streaks of silvery cloud over blue skies of illimitable depth to masses of rose and gold. Sometimes the colours are confined to one glowing spot. At others they spread over the whole sky, varying in their shadings at each shifting of the clouds. To this splendour of the skies must be added the silvery grey of the oat and barley fields, and the cool green of the woods, shot with streaks of golden sunlight. Mountainous countries may show more stupendous effects, but the sunsets of the level reaches of central Ontario have a beauty that it would be hard to rival. And after the sunset the stars come out, and hours of waking dreams precede the hours of dreamless sleep that only the quiet country can give. It is all very good.

July 30.—There are no doubt many hot jobs on the farms during the summer months, but up to the present writing I have struck nothing hotter than cultivating corn in the still, humid hours of the early afternoon when a thunderstorm is gathering. As the green-headed flies are always at their worst just before a storm, they get the horse frantic, and her attempts to dislodge her tormentors with her hind feet are so disastrous to the growing hills of corn that a man's temperature goes up steadily until he makes a sweating, panting, howling exhibition of himself. These flies are said to be especially bad this summer, and one "grave and reverent seignior" told me that the ones that attacked his horses not only bit them, but took out chunks of flesh and flew away to the woods with them, where they could eat them at their leisure. But I have my doubts of [Pg 215] that. I am beginning to suspect that real farmers take a delight in telling me whoppers, and otherwise imposing on my credulity. For instance, a man was telling me what a hearty feeder one of his horses is.

"Why," he said, "when she is pasturing, and makes up her mind that she wants to have a roll, she never stops eating. She lies down, still eating away, and rolls over and over, without ever missing a bite." Now, I leave it to the editor if that man wasn't stretching it a little bit. But to get back to hot jobs. I thought that my job of cultivating in the blazing sun was hot enough for any one, but I am told that a man who has never mowed away hay under a steel roof has no idea of what heat is. According to the accounts I have heard, it must be a trifle worse than mining borax in Death Valley, and that is said to be the hottest job that any human being ever undertook. But the corn job is hot enough for me.

Yesterday afternoon I was nearer to being "bushed" than I have been since undertaking to work a farm. I was pitching hay in the field—I am told it was native blue grass, and unusually heavy—and the coils were compact, and looked to have only about one forkful in each one. We were working at the gait of men who want to get a stack finished before a shower, and I thought I was good for anything that came along. But before evening I hadn't a word to say to any one. They could "josh" me all they wanted to, but I hadn't the energy to answer back. Every coil was bigger and heavier than the last, and the day kept getting hotter and the wind died down, and the weather got more threatening, until it seemed as if human nature couldn't stand more, but the rest of the gang didn't find out how tuckered I was. I managed to stick it out, but I am not anxious to repeat the experience. If a large plantigrade man had come along hunting for work while the trouble was in progress, he could have had any price he asked, but hired men are too scarce to be foot-loose at this time of the year. Oh, yes, I know I should be up-to-date and have a hay loader and hay fork, [Pg 216]

but any implement agent who reads this will be wasting his time if he comes and tries to sell them to me. I have noticed that a lot of farmers who are farming on about the same scale as I am keep themselves poor buying the latest improvements, and I am not ambitious to join their melancholy ranks. Improved implements are an excellent thing to have if one has enough work for them to do, but there are cases where the sensible thing is to be old-fashioned. Muscle is still cheaper than machinery for small jobs.

This experience started me meditating on hired men I have known. Where now can we find the equals of those wonderful workers who were known in "the short and simple annals of the poor" as "Bill the Cow" and "Three-fingered Jack, the Human Hayfork"? Bill used to laugh aloud at ordinary haycocks. What he wanted was young stacks, and he would heave them up whole, and was insulted if offered anything smaller than a barley fork to work with. And when hay forks were first introduced, did not Three-fingered Jack get all lit up at the fall fair and start on a rampage to find the agent who had sold the toys. He reeled up and down the one street of the village and "bellered like all Bashan," and breathed slaughter, and would not be comforted when he could not find the man who was spoiling the good old pastime of haymaking by introducing horse forks. Those men used to work from dawn until after dark on the longest days, and they hated a mid-day shower as badly as the men who hired them. But where are they now? For answer, let us cull a fitting threnody from Homer, mighty singer of heroes:

> "They long since in earth's soft arms are reposing,
> Afar from their own dear land, their native land—Lacedemon."

Instead of Lacedemon, read Scotland, or England, or Ireland. They died, and their methods of working died with them. If they could only come back, we would organise excursions and charge an admission fee to those who wished to see them at work. But we are living in another and no [Pg 217] doubt a better age. Men do not work as they did, and could not if they wanted to. Compared with them, we are a degenerate race, even though we wear finely-laundered linen when we go to town, instead of donning paper collars and putting butter on our hair.

Of course, time is very valuable, and we are assured by all kinds of wise people that "Time is Money." Even *The Farmer's Advocate* has published articles telling what to do on rainy afternoons, so that no time may be lost. All this is no doubt very excellent, and far be it from me to say anything that might justify lazy people in wasting time, but I am still of the opinion that no man should work during the first few minutes after a summer shower. When everything in nature has been refreshed, he should try to breathe in a little of the refreshment himself. The air is so pure, and everything in the fields and woods so beautiful that it is positively invigorating to share in the joy by which we are surrounded at such times. Even the birds, though their broods may be hungry, stop for a chorus of song among the dripping leaves. Before the storm comes up all nature is parched and wilting, but after it has passed everything is throbbing with life. The corn and oats are a fresher green, and sparkle with countless jewels. It is at such times that life in the country is at its best, if we will only forget our cares and worries to enjoy it, even though only for a minute. The beauty of the world needs to be harvested and stored away in the memory just as carefully as the crops that are now causing us so much concern. The memory of what is beautiful should be as precious to us as full granaries.

AUGUST [Pg 218]

Aug. 3.—There may be more argumentative jobs than thinning apples, but, as yet, I have not come across them. For the past couple of weeks I have been constantly on the defensive. Everybody seems to think that I am more destructive than a windstorm and that I am simply wasting apples. But the last time Mr. Clement came to see the orchard he said that there was altogether too much fruit, that it would not mature properly, and that if I wanted good fruit I would have to pick off a large percentage. Mine not to question why, mine but to do or die—and I went at it. In all the time I have been able to spare from other work and from arguments I have been stripping apples from the trees until the ground is covered with them. It does look like a slaughter, but there are still so many apples on the trees that there should be a big enough crop to satisfy any one. Besides, I have a little demonstration of the value of thinning the apples that satisfies me entirely. There are two branches of the Red Astrachan that according to the traditions of the orchard have never borne on the same year as the rest of the tree. When we were spraying in the spring these branches had such a trifling sprinkling of blossoms that I thought they were going to live up to their reputation. The rest of the tree was full of bloom. However, the whole tree was sprayed thoroughly and the straggling blossoms on the branches that were supposed to have missed were saved as well as the rest. At the present time the Red Astrachans are ripe and the two off-year branches are fairly well loaded with magnificent apples. Now that each stray blossom has matured in a perfect apple those branches are a sight worth [Pg 219] seeing. Of course the rest of the tree is loaded, but the apples are small and many of them are badly shaped. All the best apples are on the two branches that were supposed to have missed. And I am inclined to think that the big apples on these branches would weigh fully as much as the small apples that are crowded on any two similar branches in the other part of the tree. And the big apples are not only a delight to the eye, but they are ripened better and are of finer flavour. An examination of that tree would convince any one that it does not pay to have too much fruit on the tree, but I seem to be about the only one it has convinced. "It just happened that way."

When Mr. Clement ordered the thinning to be done I admit I started at it with reluctance. There was one tree in particular that I hated to touch. It is a small tree that has nothing in it but fruit wood and every twig and spray is loaded. No one is able to tell me what kind it is, but those who are familiar with the orchard say it is a better apple than the Spy. Now, if there is a better apple than the Spy I want to know what it is. Yet they say that in the winter when they wanted a good apple to eat they would always take this one in preference to all others. Up to the present I have tasted no apple that suits my taste so thoroughly as a good ripe Spy and my mouth is watering already at the prospect of having something better. I have a sneaking hope that it is a new variety. I know that there are a few natural fruits in the orchard that grew from roots of the planted trees after the grafts had died. Wouldn't it be great luck if this was one? I cannot imagine how it could be a better apple than the Spy and not be known to everybody, if it is an established variety. Anyway, this tree is so beautifully loaded that it has been the show tree of the orchard. I always take every one to see it. But when Mr. Clement looked at it he said, "At least one-third of those apples should come off"—and they have come off. When he looked at the tree the fruit was not sufficiently developed for him to say what the variety is—especially as it is said to be better than the Spy. The number of apples that are better than the Spy must be very limited, but he did [Pg 220] not seem to know what they could be any more than I do. I guess he must like Spies, too.

Though it was a painful job to pick so many apples off my pet tree, I was not much happier when thinning the Spies. I wished that there was some way of making them all mature properly, but as that way does not seem to be known to the scientists I did as I was told. But I didn't thin very savagely. I confined myself largely to apples that were badly formed or showed some blemish. Here and there on the lower branches there were occasional scabs and a few appeared to have been bitten or stung by insects, but on the whole the fruit looks clean and thrifty. The Baldwins, Kings, and Pippins were well loaded, but did not need any thinning. The chief destruction took place among the Ben Davises and Pewaukees. According to Mr. Clement, they had twice too many apples, and I guess he was right, for some of the branches were breaking under their load of fruit some weeks ago. I did not mind stripping the fruit from these inferior kinds, and it was an easier job as all I had to consider was the number of apples to be left on the branches. They were all clean and well formed, but on the Pewaukees especially they were so plentiful that some branches looked like clusters of grapes. On one branch I found a cluster of fifteen apples growing so close to one another that they could not move. They were wedged together like Brazil nuts. It would be impossible for such clusters to mature and colour properly, and thinning them out seemed to me a perfectly reasonable process, though when other people saw the apples on the ground they protested and could not understand why so much fruit should be wasted. Judging from all I have heard thinning apples must be something new in this part of the country.

Aug. 5.—Now that the celery is banked up and blanching properly I feel like expressing surprise that more farmers do not raise this excellent vegetable. It is easy to raise—the proof being that I can raise it. Every year we have had better luck with the celery than with anything else in the [Pg 221] garden. We sow the seed in the spring when the ground is warm, transplant early in August, and then keep the ground clean. An hour's work each week sufficed to care for five hundred plants. The celery has been no harder to attend to than the potatoes. I am afraid too many people regard celery as a luxury, and would only think of raising it to sell. Our experience has been that we do not tire of it even though we have it every day in the fall and winter, and I regard it just as necessary to our winter supplies as potatoes. In the past we have pitted it in trenches in the ground, but last winter the mice got into some of the trenches, and this year they are so plentiful we do not dare to take any chances. The intention is to make a concrete root-house in a side-hill and keep the celery in it. This vegetable has something of a high-toned reputation because it is always served at banquets, but there is no reason why it should not be on every farmer's table. When it is crisp and well developed everybody likes it. All it needs to make it grow properly is an abundance of fertiliser and that is easy to get on the farm. We raise our celery in an old barn yard and I have yet to find any that beats our home grown. Our favourite is the White Plume, and though it is listed as a fall variety we have had it in first-class condition in February and a neighbour managed to keep it in a cellar all through March. Besides being good eating I am assured that its food and even medicinal values are high.

An altogether too meagre newspaper report tells that when President Creelman of the O.A.C. was addressing the guests at a luncheon given by the directors of the Industrial Exhibition in Toronto he said that there is a crying need for fun on the farm. I have noticed that. Farms are terribly serious-minded places. It was a city poet, not a country poet, who wrote:

> "I dance at work, I dance at play,
> I dance the whole d—d livelong day."

Hard work seems to kill a man's capacity for fun, and of hard work on a farm there seems to be [Pg 222] no end. But if Professor Creelman has any scheme for enlivening the labour of the farm so that men will sing at their work he will do as much for them as he can by teaching scientific farming.

THE BURDEN OF LABOUR

Behold, O God of seedtime,
  Thy children, how they toil!
Scattering the seed before Thee
  On the altar of the soil.
Thy little birds with music
  Disport on joyous wing,

But we who feed the nations,
  We are too tired to sing.

Behold, O God of harvest,
  The burden of our days,
We gather in Thy bounty
  And may not stop to praise.
Thy little birds around us
  The spell of music fling,
But we who feed the nations,
  We are too tired to sing.

O God of those who labour
  In field and mill and mine,
With whirling wheels to drive us,
  Lo, we are also Thine!
Thy little birds a-lilting
  Come back to us each spring,
But we who feed the nations,
  We are too tired to sing.

Aug. 8.—When it comes to appreciating the bounty of nature you should go to a city. That's where you hear the stimulating talk. When I was in Toronto last week I heard more downright blowing about crops than I have heard in the country in the past year. [Pg 223]

"Say! I wish you could take a run out to my place and see my garden," exclaimed one enthusiast after we had shaken hands and I had proudly pressed my callous spots into his soft and ladylike palm. "I tell you it's great."

Having had a city garden of my own years ago, and farther south, I couldn't help asking a few leading questions.

"Are you going in for specialties or doing ordinary mixed gardening?"

"Oh, I have a little of everything," he replied with the jaunty air of a man determined to bluff it out. "Say! I had a tomato for breakfast out of my own garden this morning."

I looked properly astonished, and even went so far as to admit that all the tomatoes I had enjoyed so far this season had been bought in a grocery store.

"Yes, sir! And I have had a tomato for breakfast from that garden every morning for the last three mornings."

"I notice that you speak of your tomato in the singular. Don't the other members of the family like tomatoes?"

"Aw, see here," he protested with offended dignity, "I'm not running a farm. I'm gardening on a town lot."

"Quite so. How is your squash doing?" I began to use the singular also.

"Say!" he exclaimed in a confidential tone, seeing that I understood something of his difficulties, "I admit that that squash was a mistake. The vine has already covered the carrot bed and the gravel walk, and is trespassing on my neighbour's lot at the rate of one yard of vine and three big leaves a day. It is making my garden look like a tropical jungle, and there isn't a sign of a squash on it yet, though there have been plenty of blossoms."

"How much space have you under garden?" I asked abruptly.

"Well," he squirmed, "we have a forty-foot frontage, and the garden runs back about thirty feet, but I haven't got it all under vegetables. We have a fine peach tree and a lilac bush, and my wife has a couple of flower beds in one corner, but I have all I can really attend to. It is intensive gardening all right, but we have been having something from it every day since the first radishes and lettuce came in." [Pg 224]

Further conversation brought out the fact that he has four stalks of corn in his garden, and that some day soon he is going to have green corn for dinner. His corn is doing fine, by the way, and doesn't seem to be affected by the heat and drought.

Another city farmer had been having some trouble and wanted to know if I could tell him what it was. His vegetables have been acting freakishly. They grew too fast at first, put on too much top, turned yellow, and then seemed to burn out in spite of watering and much cultivation. When I found out how much fertiliser he had surprised his eight-by-twelve patch of ground with I diagnosed the case as one of water-brash or some similar form of soil indigestion. I advised him to put his garden on a spoon diet till it got back to normal. At the present time it is evidently so strong that it is heaving the roots out of the ground. Another man complained that his troubles were due to a city ordinance that forbade the use of water during the recent hot spell.

"If I had been at home," he explained, "things would have been different. But I went away with my family for a two-weeks' holiday and left the garden to the care of a man who does odd jobs around the neighbourhood. I told him above all things to water it regularly, but as soon as he heard that the city forbade the use of water in that way he shut right off instead of finding some way of doing it at night when no one was looking. It's a corker how careful some people are about the law when it lets them get out of doing work."

But in spite of these occasional failures the crop reports for Toronto are very good. Cucumbers seem to be thriving especially well in captivity, and carrots that are kept in solitary confinement are doing wonderfully. If reciprocity is passed and the yield of canned vegetables is normal Toronto will pull through the winter all right. [Pg 225]

Since coming home I have been busy shocking oats and I find that shocking, like every other occupation on the farm, has undergone a change. The shocks of my earliest recollection were works of art in their way. Although I am woefully lacking in specific information regarding these old-time shocks, I have a very distinct impression that they meant more than merely a convenient pile of sheaves set up to dry. Those old shocks, as I remember them, were made in two shapes and sizes. There were ten-sheaf shocks built in a straight line in which two sheaves were braced against each other in a way that is still customary. Then there was a round shock made of thirteen sheaves, twelve in the pile, and the thirteenth placed on the top with both ends spread out so as to make a kind of thatch roof. My impressions are vague, but I am setting them forth in the hope that some one who really knows will set me right so that a bit of information of pioneer days may be preserved. Those old-time shocks invariably had the same number of sheaves made as nearly as possible of the same size, and a definite number of them were supposed to represent a fair day's work, but just how many I cannot say. They served to keep tally as well as to preserve the grain, but these modern shocks of the kind I threw together are not ornamental and no more useful than the law demands. After some of them were put up I held my breath and moved away on tiptoe for fear of shaking them over. The number of sheaves in each one depended on the thickness of the sheaves at the point where I began my building operations. They are altogether too sketchy in appearance to serve as models for an agricultural implement poster, but it doesn't matter much, as there are no signs even of "local thunderstorms," and we intend to begin hauling in to-morrow.

My personal recollection of sheaves covers practically their whole evolution. Although the first reaping I remember was done with a horse-killing machine which carried two men, one of whom swept the sheaves off the table with a rake, I had a chance to see the work of some belated sickle men. In new land that was too stumpy for machines, or even successful work with the cradles, sickles were used. As the sickle men cut the wheat in handfuls, they were able to lay every straw in its place and make sheaves that for square butts and compactness surpassed any that can be turned out by the self-binders. They also made sheaves of practically the same size. Those who followed the cradles were apt to make big sheaves where the crop was heavy and little sheaves where it was light, and the swath would have to be raked for a considerable distance to get a proper bundle. There was also an artistic carelessness about the sheaves made with a self-rake machine, but the binder of to-day makes them all of the same size—a fact which makes the handling of sheaves much more convenient. Before leaving this subject I wish some one would tell me just why binders are made to go in the opposite direction to mowers. I can see no reason for this, and no one of whom I have asked has been able to offer an explanation. [Pg 226]

Threshing is now in progress in all parts of the country, and as soon as we have that well in hand you may bring on your politics as fast as you like. The indications are that the yield of speeches is going to be large and weedy, but whether our statesmen will thresh out any No. 1 hard ideas remains to be seen. Already there are indications that flails may be used in the threshing by some of the workers. Moreover, I have noticed that, although it is hard to get good hired men on the farm, political hired men are cheap and plentiful. But enough of this.

Aug. 15.—"Do bees pay?"

"They do. For the amount of the investment, and the labour required, they pay better than anything else a man can raise."

"Then why doesn't everybody raise bees?"—(At this point the fight begins.) [Pg 227]

Those who are able to handle bees successfully always laugh at those who are not—the whole thing seems so simple to them. On the other hand, those who have tried and failed are liable to ruffle up when they hear bees mentioned, as if they could still feel the stings. In such a discussion an enthusiast on bees who has at the time of writing a cauliflower ear due to a bee sting may be expected to tell the truth. Therefore perpend.

Bees certainly pay, if given a ghost of a show. Any one who keeps an eye on the farmer's sales in the spring can buy good, strong hives for five dollars each. If he has the proper appliances, and gives the necessary attention at the right time, such a hive may reasonably be expected to yield ten dollars' worth of honey, at least two swarms, that, if properly hived, will each be as valuable for another year as the parent hive, and that may yield in the first year another ten dollars' worth of honey. As a handy man can make his own hives and can buy the fittings (frames for the honeycomb, pound sections, etc.) very cheaply, the actual money investment need not be large. The time investment is so small that it need not be taken into account—it can be credited to that indefinite part of farm work called "chores." Let us now see how this figures out. Expenses:—Parent hive, $5; extra hives, appliances, etc. (say), $5. Returns:—Honey, $20; three colonies of bees worth $5 each, $15, total $35; profit, $25. Can you beat it? If a company were formed to handle bees on that basis the prospectus would be excluded from the mails, and very properly, for the business seldom works out that way. A successful bee-handier seems to be born, not made.

"Don't you feel frightened when bees light on your hands and face?" a successful bee-keeper was asked.

"No, but I sometimes feel uncomfortable. Their feet tickle me when they walk about."

A farmer to whom this was repeated, snorted: "That's just it. There are some folks that bees will walk all over without stinging, and others that they'll sting all over without walking." [Pg 228]

For two weeks the writer moved about fearlessly and unharmed among ten hives of bees, and indulged in the beautiful moral reflections that the thrifty colonies are supposed to inspire. Their constant industry recalled in an improved version the words of the poet:—

How do the busy little bees
  Improve the shining hours
By making honey all the day
  From other people's flowers.

In spare moments he put together pound sections, fitting into each a strip of "starter"—wax foundations for combs—and similarly prepared frames for the larger boxes from which the honey will be extracted later on. At last the fateful day arrived when the pound sections were to be put on some of the hives, and the boxes with frames on others. A demonstration in practical bee-handling was to be given for his benefit. The demonstrator took the usual precaution of wearing thick woollen gloves and an ample gauze veil. The cautious observer, who never could see the use of taking unnecessary chances, viewed the proceedings from behind a screen door. Very simple the work seemed. The top of the hive was lifted off, a box of frames or pound sections put in place, and the top put on again. All went merrily until an old and somewhat imperfect hive was reached. It was found that the top had been gummed down by the bees, and a chisel was needed to pry it loose. This fussing angered the bees, but everything would have gone off right had not a sudden gust of wind blown the veil against the demonstrator's face. Instantly three bees got in their fine work. At this point another veil must be drawn.

When bees have once been angered, as were the inhabitants of this hive, it takes them some days to settle down—as the writer knows to his cost. On the morning after the demonstration he was [Pg 229] standing fifty yards from the hive admiring a fine plump broiler, and wondering if he would have him served fried, with brown gravy, broiled, or à la Maryland, when a scouting bee lit for one hot moment on the Darwin tip of his ear. A wild slap that almost knocked his head off, a jump of two feet straight up in the air, and a staccato yell that roused the whole neighbourhood did no good. It was everlastingly too late—hence the cauliflower ear referred to above. This morning, three days later, an attempt to split some kindling wood within twenty yards of the hive led to another attack. Fortunately the bee was killed at the first swipe, and splitting kindling wood is a nuisance that one is only too glad of a good excuse for being rid of.

Bees are so scientific in their methods that it is easy for the skilled bee-keeper to meet them half-way and get the best results. The literature on the subject is so copious and precise that any one can have expert knowledge with a little study, and then, if he keeps on good terms with his colonies, he can handle them with ease and profit. He can be fully instructed just when to give them extra working room fitted with proper appliances, how to take the honey from them and induce them to do the greatest possible amount of work, and how to feed them with sugar in the fall so that they will be well prepared for the winter. The question of wintering the bees is the one that causes the beginner the most trouble, as a hive may be so weakened that it will not survive the winter, or will not be thrifty enough to do well in the spring. As for being on friendly terms with the bees, full instructions are given on that point. It is said that any one can acquire the knack of handling them without being stung; but the writer will listen to these stories with a more open mind when his ear feels better.

It seems only a few years since the man who had bees got his honey by smothering the hive. A hole was dug in the ground, and in the bottom a number of twigs were placed so as to hold up a bunch of cotton rags coated with melted sulphur. At night, when the bees were all in the hive, the [Pg 230] sulphur was lit. The hive was then lifted cautiously and placed over the hole. A blanket was thrown over it to keep in the fumes, and the bees were quickly smothered. Even when such destructive methods were in vogue bee-keeping was considered profitable. It should be much more profitable now when nothing is wasted and the bees are carefully preserved.

The conclusion of the whole matter—the sting, if you like—is that bee-keeping is light, interesting, and profitable work for those who master its secrets; but the fact remains that most people are afraid of bees, and not without reason. Whether one can become a successful bee-keeper can only be learned by experience. Fortunately that experience can be gained easily, and can be gained in town almost as readily as in the country, for bees will travel far to find the blossoms from which to gather their honey. There is no reason why hardy suburbanites should not go in for bee culture as well as farmers—but—but—in spite of all the nice things that enthusiasts write about them bees do sting.

Aug. 17.—Yesterday I pitched oat-sheaves and it seemed so pleasant a form of exercise I am surprised that any one would call it work. But some people can make work of anything. I have even known people to wear themselves out counting up their money—but I didn't know them very well. If I had, I would have offered to help and to share their burdens.

I am inclined to believe that they have a finer harvesting spirit in the older countries than we have here. Once when passing a harvest field in England I thought there was a picnic of some kind in progress. Children were playing among the sheaves, girls wearing their brightest ribbons were wandering about among the workers, and those who were pitching and loading acted as if they were enjoying themselves instead of drudging. The jolly farmer whose crop was being taken to his barns called to me cheerily, and asked if I would come in and have a drink of hard cider. [Pg 231] Every one acted as if nature's bounty were appreciated, and as if the harvest were a natural time

of rejoicing. Here it is different. Everything is rush and hurry. I have even known a good farmer to fume and rage because the minister was so thoughtless as to make a pastoral call during the harvest and had delayed matters by asking a blessing at dinner. When folks get in a hurry here in Ontario, they make the fur fly. But I gave up being in a hurry long since, and yesterday the children were among the sheaves, and they rode on the loads, and we had a good time together that we'll probably talk about years afterwards.

Mushrooms are in. The wet weather has brought them up in the fields fully a month earlier than usual, and we have had several luxurious feeds. After all, I am not sure that the hand-raised mushrooms are any better than those that come up naturally in the fields. Of course, the cultivated ones are good and you can have them at any season of the year, but the pink-fleshed field mushrooms, when you are lucky enough to see them before the worms do, are just about as good as anything can be. Besides, there is something that appeals to one's sporting instinct in finding them out in the pasture. Getting field mushrooms compares with taking them from a bed as winging a partridge does with potting a fat domestic hen. But picking mushrooms is not an entire joy to me just yet. I know only two kinds: the common field mushroom and the inky mushroom, both of them delicious. But during the past few days I have found nine different varieties, some of them very tempting-looking, and I don't know whether they are poisonous or fit to eat. They are plentiful both in the fields and the woods, and it would be easy to get basketfuls if one only knew the right kinds. I have studied all the attractive-looking ones carefully, and the next time I go to Toronto I am going to hunt up J. McPherson Ross and find out all about them. He tells me that there are one hundred and twelve edible varieties and only six that are poisonous. It will be just my luck that six out of my nine will be poisonous ones. Anyway, I am [Pg 232] taking no chances, even though I may be losing some of the best fungi that grow. Better to be safe than to be sick and sorry.

The bobolinks have changed colour, and, judging by their appearance, they are as fat as butter. In a few weeks they will be appearing at the best restaurants in New York, nicely spitted, as broiled rice birds, and if you try them you will find that a couple are fully worth the sixty cents you will be charged. When I see about a hundred of them (they are gathering in flocks now) stretched along a wire fence after they have been scared away from the oat shocks, I can't help wishing that I could defy the Insectivorous Birds Act and pot enough to make a good meal. I admit it would be a sin and a shame to shoot bobolinks. But what would be wrong about shooting a few rice birds? It seems odd that our musical and law-protected bobolinks, after a flight of a few hundred miles, will be the destructive and toothsome rice birds of the south. I fancy they would taste just as good here as they do down there if one only dared to try them.

This is an unusual year for black thimbleberries. Not only is the fruit more plentiful than usual, but the briers seem to be longer and sharper and the mosquitoes that protect them more plentiful and savage. Still we are picking all we can of them.

BERRY-PICKING

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

[Pg 233]

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

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

THE STONE

A man! A man! There is a man loose in Canada!
A man of heroic mould, a "throwback" of earlier ages,
Vigorous, public-spirited, not afraid of work!
A doer of deeds, not a dreamer and babbler;

A man, simple, direct, unaffected.
Such a one as Walt Whitman would have gloried in,
And made immortal in rugged man-poetry—
Vast polyphloesboean verses such as erstwhile he bellowed
Through roaring storm winds to the bull-mouthed Atlantic.

And yesterday the man passed among us unnoted!
Did his deed and went his way without boasting,
Leaving his act to speak, himself silent!

And I, beholding the marvel, stood for a space astonied, [Pg 234]
Then threw up my hat and chortled,
And whooped in dithyrambic exultation.
Hark to my tale!
On the sixteenth sideroad of the township of Ekfrid,
Just south of the second concession line, some rods from the corner,
There was a stone, a stone in the road, a stumbling-block;
A jagged tooth of granite dropped from the jaw of a glacier
In an earlier age when the summers were colder;
A rock that horses tripped on, wheels bumped on, and sleigh-runners scrunched on,
And no man in all the land had the gumption to dig it out.
Pathmaster after pathmaster, full of his pride of office,
Rode by with haughty brow, and regarded it not,
Seeing only the weeds in the field of the amateur farmer,
And scrawling minatory letters ordering them cut,
But leaving the stone.
Oft in my hot youth I, riding in a lumber waggon,
By that lurking stone was catapulted skyward,
And picked myself up raging and vowing to dig it out—
But dug it not.
I didn't have a spade,
Or, if I had a spade,
I had a lame back—always an excuse.
And the stone stayed.
As passed the years—good years, bad years,
Years that were wet or dry, lean years and fat years,
Roaring election years (mouthing reforms); in short, all years
That oldest inhabitants keep in stock—there grew a tradition
About the stone.
Men, it was said, had tried to move it,
But it was a stubborn boulder, deep sunk in the earth,
And could only be moved by dynamite—at vast cost to the council;
But every councillor was a watchdog of the treasury,
And the stone stayed.
Since the memory of man runneth the stone was there.
It had stubbed the toe of the Algonquin brave, and haply [Pg 235]
Had tripped the ferocious, marauding Iroquois.
It had jolted the slow, wobbling ox-cart of the pioneer;
Jolted the lumber waggons, democrats, buggies, sulkies;
Jolted the pungs, crotches, stoneboats, bobsleighs, cutters;
Upset loads of bolts, staves, cordwood, loads of logs and hay;
Jolted threshing machines, traction engines, automobiles,
Milk waggons with cans of whey, envied of querulous swine;
It had shattered the dreams of farmers, figuring on crops;
Of drovers planning sharp deals.
Of peddlers, agents, doctors, preachers;
It had jolted lovers into closer embraces, to their bashful delight;
But mostly it had shaken men into sinful tempers—
A wicked stone, a disturbing stone, a stumbling-block—
A stone in the middle of the road—
Insolent as a bank, obstructive as a merger!

Year after year the road flowed around it,
Now on the right side, now on the left;
But always on dark nights flowing straight over it,
Jolting the belated traveller into a passion black as midnight,
Making his rocking vocabulary slop over
With all the shorter and uglier words.
Boys grew to manhood and men grew to dotage.
And year after year they did statute-labour
By cutting the thistles and golden-rod, milkweeds and burdocks,
But left the stone untouched.

There is a merry tale that I heard in my childhood,
Standing between my father's knees, before the open fireplace,
Watching the sparks make soldiers on the blazing back-log,
While the shadows danced on the low-beamed ceiling;

A pretty tale, such as children love, and it comes to me now;
Comes with the sharp, crisp smell of wood smoke, [Pg 236]
The crackle of flaming cordwood on the dockers,
The dancing shadows and the hand on my touzled head—
A clear memory, a dear memory, and ever the stone
As it lay in my path in the roadway brought back the story—
The loving voice, and, at the close, the laughter.

"Once upon a time there was a king, a mighty ruler,
Deep in the lore of human hearts, wise as a serpent,
Who placed a stone in the road in the midst of his kingdom,
On the way to his palace, where all men must pass it.
Straightway the people turned aside, turning to right and to left of it.
Statesmen, scholars, courtiers, noblemen, merchants,
Beggars, labourers, farmers, soldiers, generals, men of all classes
Passed the stone, and none tried to move it—
To clear the path of the travelling multitude.
But one day came a man, a kindly poor man,
Who thought it a shame that the stone should be there,
A stumbling-block to the nation.
Bowing his back He put his shoulder to it, and behold, a marvel!
The stone was but a shell, hollow as a bowl!
A child might have moved it.
And in the hollow was a purse of gold, and with it a writing:
'Let him who hath the public spirit to move the stone
Keep the purse and buy a courtly robe,
And come to the palace to serve the king as prime minister.'
So the kindly poor man who had public spirit
Became the chief ruler of all the nation.
When the news was told to them, all men rushed to the highways
And moved away the stones, but found no purse of gold;
But they cleared the roads of stones, and the 'Good Roads Movement'
Went through without cost because the king was wise
And well understood our weak, human nature." [Pg 237]
Ever when passing the stone I remembered this story
And smiled, touched by memories of childhood,
But knew there was no purse under it; there might be an angle-worm,
But I was not going fishing—and the stone stayed.

Now mark the sequel, the conclusion of the matter!
Yesterday a man went by—whether neighbour or stranger,
No man can tell me, though I have questioned widely,
Questioned eagerly, longing to do him honour,
To chant his name in song, or cunningly engrave it
In monumental brass, with dædal phantasies—
To make it a landmark, a beacon to all future ages,
This good man, earnest, public-spirited,
Not fearing work, scorning tradition,
Doing his duty as he saw it, not waiting an order,
Dug out the stone and made it a matter of laughter,
For it was no boulder, deep-rooted, needing dynamite,
But just a little stone about the size of a milkpail.
A child might have moved it, and yet it had bumped us
For three generations because we lacked public spirit.
I blush with shame as I pass the stone now lying
In the roadside ditch where the good man rolled it,
And left it where all men may see it—a symbol, a portent.

Tremble, ye Oppressors!
Quake, ye Financial Pirates!
Your day is at hand, for there is a man loose in Canada!
A man to break through your illegal labyrinths,
A Theseus to cope with your corporate Minotaurs,
A Hercules to clean out your Augean stables of grafters,
A man who moves stones from the path of his fellows!
And makes smooth the way of the Worker!
And such a man may move you! Tremble, I say!

Aug. 20.—Yesterday I had a chance to do some excellent moralising, but missed it, because I couldn't keep from laughing. To moralise properly a man must be very solemn. He must look [Pg 238] wise, so that the things he is saying will seem wise. Although I do not often indulge in moralising, I have done enough of it to know that its chief value lies in the satisfaction it gives to the moralist rather than in any good it does to his hearers. That is why I am sorry I missed my chance yesterday. It isn't often that I get a chance to feel wise and self-righteous. But I couldn't keep from laughing and that spoiled everything.

We were waiting for the horses to finish their dinner before returning to the cornfield, when one

of the boys threw a crust of bread among the hens. They all made a dive for it and a moment later a nimble Leghorn broke out of the scrimmage with the crust in her beak. It was too big to be swallowed at a gulp, and she had to find some quiet place where she could peck it to pieces and swallow it bit by bit. But to get the necessary quiet and leisure was the problem. Half a dozen other hens pursued her across the barnyard snatching at the crust. With neck outstretched, and a look of vested rights in her eye, she ducked under the granary still pressed by her relentless pursuers. A moment later she appeared at the other side, and as they say in the old-fashioned novels, "The villains still pursued her." Back she came across the yard a neck ahead of her tormentors. Occasionally one of her pursuers would drop out of the race, but her place would be taken at once by a fresh plunderer. The chase disappeared around the corner of the stable only to appear a few seconds later around the other side. Try as she would, she could not shake off her pursuers. Her steps began to show signs of weariness, but to stop meant to lose her prize. She started towards the house, but her pursuers, fresh ones that had just joined the chase, were just at her shoulder. Her steps began to wobble, for she was about winded, and at last she had to open her beak to pant. The crust fell to the ground, where it was immediately picked up by one of her pursuers. But the new owner was no better off than the one that had been robbed. The change of ownership seemed to increase the energy of the other hens, and the run continued. [Pg 239] Back they came to the granary, passed under it, across the yard, around the stable and hen house, and into the orchard where a new bunch of hens took up the chase. While we continued to watch the crust changed ownership three times, and not a morsel of it had been eaten. At one time or another every hen in the flock had taken part in the fruitless pursuit. When we started for the field the crust was being carried by a long-legged Andalusian, but though gifted with more speed she was faring no better than the others, for there was a fresh hen at every turn ready to take up the chase. Now, if you stop to consider the matter could you possibly get a better example of the embarrassment of riches? Just like a man who has acquired a fortune, the hen in possession had to spend all her energy in protecting it and could not take time to enjoy it. And just like wealth, it was constantly changing hands—or beaks. What finally became of the crust we did not learn, as we could not spend the whole afternoon in watching, but at the last glimpse we got the Andalusian was still running strong. Probably the chase was kept up until roosting time. But though I missed the chance to moralise because I could not keep from laughing at the plight of the hen in possession, I may be permitted to score a point with poultry raisers. I understand that to do record laying hens must have plenty of exercise. From what I saw yesterday I learned that a whole flock of hens can be made to exercise to the point of falling from exhaustion by one crust of bread. Here is a scheme for giving hens exercise that beats the usual one of giving them their grain in chaff or straw so that they will have to scratch. One durable crust would keep a flock in motion for a whole day. So you see I learned something even though I missed the chance to enjoy the pleasure of moralising.

Having ventured to give a tip to the scientists about the best methods of exercising hens, I may as well unburden my mind of some more scientific suggestions. I have been watching with [Pg 240] interest the wonderful work that is being done in the development of improved strains of grain by selection, and have been wondering if the scientists are not missing something. The work of natural selection is going on all around us, and haven't you noticed what vigorous weeds Nature is producing in spite of our efforts to destroy them. Many weeds seem to be like "The camomile, the more it is trodden the more it grows." Is it not possible that the scientists are coddling the plants they are favouring? They are doing wonders in the way of producing better yields of corn, wheat, oats, etc., and maturing them in shorter time, but all these better products only tend to fasten on us more securely the curse of labour that makes us earn our bread in the sweat of our brows. These improved products require unusually careful cultivation, and that is not Nature's method at all. Nature seems to aim at getting results without cultivation of any kind. Now why should not the scientists make some experiments along the same line. If they were to throw handfuls of corn among weeds and grass it is probable that a few grains would struggle through and mature ears of corn. If the best of these were selected and sown again under the same conditions, a hardier and more vigorous product could be secured. The process of selection could go on by constantly choosing the most vigorous and best-yielding products until in time we might produce a strain of corn that would not only be able to hold its own with the weeds, but would choke them out and still give a noble yield. By following this suggestion they would simply be aiding natural selection instead of developing strains that need artificial conditions to make them do their best. Think of what a boon it would be to have grains that would grow like weeds without cultivation of any kind and still yield good crops. With hired help so scarce this suggestion should not be brushed aside too scornfully. Besides it would make farming possible for amateur farmers who are obeying the impulse to get back to the land. I am afraid that scientific agriculture is suffering from the same defects as our educational system. There is too much coddling. What I [Pg 241] want to see is self-producing crops. If we once get that, the farmers can produce more just as they are being urged by the editorial sages of the city papers. Trusting that the scientists will accept this suggestion in the spirit in which it is meant, I offer it for what it is worth.

SEPTEMBER [Pg 242]

Sept. 5.—It had not occurred to me that fall is closing in until some one brought a big ripe pumpkin from the cornfield and placed it by the kitchen door. A handful of red crab-apples happened to be thrown beside it, and, with a white wall for a background, it was a picture to

tempt an artist—or a cook. This has been a good year for pumpkins, and, although the one I speak of is merely an average specimen, the children cannot put their arms around it, and to be able to lift it even an inch off the ground is a feat of strength to be "blowed" about with popping eyes and excited faces. There is much speculation as to how many pies it will make. By the way, wouldn't it be a good scheme for some enterprising grocer or baker to put a fine ripe pumpkin in his window and offer a prize to the person who could guess how many pies could be made from it? The prize might take the form of a dozen pumpkin pies, and I miss my guess if grave professional men and magnates who were once country boys would not step in to take a chance. Pumpkin pies are just as good as ever they were, and yesterday at the thrashing I attended I asked for a second piece. Then I came home and clamoured for pumpkin pies and would not be comforted until I saw them being put in the oven.

Of course there are other signs of fall, but they have not forced themselves on my attention. Every night we are serenaded by the crickets that, according to Maeterlinck, are the possessors of a wonderful musical instrument, "whose bow numbers one hundred and fifty triangular prisms that set in motion simultaneously the four dulcimers of the elytron." (School teachers might find [Pg 243] it profitable to use this sentence in the Friday spelling match.) I had no idea that the cricket's music was so complex, but the scientists say it is, and we must believe them. Anyway, the music is better than the description of it sounds, and our choir—"The Choir Invisible"—must number several millions, and they are all singing of the fall and harvest home. Many of the summer birds, such as the bobolinks and blackbirds, have flocked and disappeared. A flock of wild ducks that is evidently making its way south has lately been haunting the Government drain and the pond in the gravel-pit. Yesterday the turkeys were lying on the ground with one eye turned towards the sky while they sounded their peculiar note of warning, and after straining my sight for awhile I discovered a flock of hawks circling in the upper air. But in spite of all these signs the country looks more like June than September. The heavy rains during the harvest freshened the pastures and the foliage of the trees; a vigorous growth of weeds or a catch of clover has hidden the harvest stubble, so that everything looks fresh and luxuriantly green. This may be fall, but it is hard to believe it.

While out walking a few days ago I came to a patch of woods that has been enclosed for several years. Sheep, cattle, and hogs have not been allowed to pasture in it, and already it gives a hint of what the country must have been like in the days of the pioneers. Seedling trees are coming up by the thousand, while flowers and plants with strange berries that I cannot remember having seen before are everywhere. The earth under the underbrush is moist and cluttered with rotting vegetation. Even the woodland odours are different from those you notice in ordinary woods from which the underbrush has been cleared, and where the cattle have been allowed to have their will. Many of the birds, too, were unfamiliar, and the change I found on climbing the line fence from a piece of unprotected woods into this patch, which is being protected, reminded me of a passage in one of Darwin's books, in which he told how the flora and fauna of a whole countryside was changed by the enclosing of a piece of forest that had been open to pasture. I [Pg 244] wished that I had with me three or four scientists who could have told me all about the wonders I found. As it is, I am determined to take up the study of botany, entymology, and all other 'ologies that will help to acquaint me with all the marvels of such spots as this.

A BALLADE OF APPLES

I sing the apples of my eye
  And I shall sing with all my might,
For here around me, swinging high,
  They tease my senses with delight.
  My palate yearns! they charm my sight!
My lips with longing overflow—
  (Excuse me while I take a bite!)
  The Apples of Ontario.

From Astrachan to Northern Spy,
  Alike they rouse my appetite
As they were wont in days gone by,
  When hearts were bold and fingers light;
  When barefoot pirates sought at night
The orchards where they used to grow
  And filled their shirts ere put to flight—
  The Apples of Ontario.

Superb in dumplings! prime in pie!
  When baked they'd tempt an anchorite!
Supreme in "sass," good even dry,
  But ripe and mellow, peerless quite!
  I know, good friends, it is not right
Of me to tantalise you so!
  If you're without—I mourn your plight—
  The Apples of Ontario!

[Pg 245]

ENVOI

Prince, do not heed the words of spite

Or slurs that envious rivals throw!
We have them free from scab and blight,
The Apples of Ontario!
Especially around Glencoe!

Sept. 16.—Say, do horse-hairs turn into eels? There was a time when I firmly believed that they did, but it was so long ago that I had forgotten all about it. This morning when they told me that there was a "live horse-hair" in the tub of rain-water beside the cistern I remembered the old belief and proceeded to investigate. The creature certainly did look like a living horse-hair, as it swam around the tub like a sea-serpent. It was about ten inches long and had no head that was visible to the naked eye. It was the slimmest thing for its length that I ever saw. When I was a boy I had seen these creatures in the watering-trough at the barn and firmly believed that they were horse-hairs that had come to life in the water. Furthermore, I believed that if they found their way into the creek they would grow into great eels of the kind from whose skins they make shoe-laces. Of course, the children were quite ready to believe the old explanation of these long, snaky wrigglers, but with a *Century Encyclopædia* within reach, I could not resist getting at the truth of the matter. After several vain attempts under "eel" and "horse-hair," I finally got a line from "hair-worm," and located the mystery as a specimen of the Gordius aquaticus. They are described as a family of nematoid worms. They have an elongated, filiform body with a ventral cord. The life history of the little creature is interesting:

"In the young stage they live in the body cavity of predatory insects and are provided with a mouth. At the pairing time they pass into the water, where they become mature. The embryos, [Pg 246] which are provided with spines, bore through the egg-membrane, migrate into insect larvæ, and there encyst. Water beetles and other predatory aquatic insects eat the encysted young forms, which then develop in the body cavity of their new and larger host to young Gordiidæ."

There you are. Another belief of childhood has been exploded by some painstaking scientist, who has made a careful study of the "horse-hair eels."

A walk to the orchard showed me that after all my thinning of apples I did not take off nearly enough. Half a dozen big, heavily-loaded limbs were broken off by the last windstorm. I couldn't have propped them up even if I had tried, for they were all top branches, but it is some consolation that it was the Ben Davis trees that were affected the most. In doing the thinning I attended to the Spies most carefully, as they were the most important, and, though I took off a cruel lot, if I had the job to do over again I would take off still more. The Spies, Baldwins, Pippins, and Kings have all the fruit they can carry, and I am sure the unusual size of the apples is due to the thinning. I thinned several of the Ben Davis quite severely, and the apples on them are fully twice the size of those on the trees that were neglected. No, I haven't sold the apples yet. The regular dealers have not made me an offer, but I have received offers from various parts of the country where a number of consumers are willing to club together and take the whole crop. My only reason for not accepting these offers at once is that I do not know how I am going to pick and pack the apples by myself. Experts say that I shall have over two hundred barrels of good shipping apples, but how am I to get experienced packers? The dealers have employed every man in the country who knows anything about such work. The children and I could probably pick them all right, but I hate to undertake the job of grading them for fear I should be arrested for not doing the work right. But, like Sentimental Tommy, I hope to "find a w'y."

When walking through the orchard I was sorry to see a lot of good apples, Maiden's Blushes and [Pg 247] sweet apples, rotting on the ground, but I can do nothing about them. There is no market for them, and the local evaporator can take only a limited supply because of the scarcity of labour. And even if I could sell them to the evaporator the price paid is so trifling that, I am told, the best a man can do is to earn day-labourer's wages without counting the value of the apples. It seems too bad to have good apples rotting when there are thousands of poor people and apple-hungry children who would be glad to get them. I would willingly give the apples to any one who wants them rather than see them waste, but every one in the country has enough, and even town people near by have friends among the farmers who keep them supplied.

In spite of the high cost of living, I am becoming convinced that there is enough food of various kinds going to waste every year in Ontario to relieve the stringency, if there were any way of getting it on the market. It is the same with the cabbages and tomatoes in the garden. We have so many that they are wasting, and there is no local market. If I had more it would be worth while to make an effort to ship them to the city, but as it is I have a surplus that is simply going to waste. I guess I'll have to get to work and put up a couple of barrels of sauerkraut, so that, like the Dutchman in the story, we shall have some on hand "in case of sickness." The redeeming feature of the situation is that we have all we want of these things ourselves at a cost of time and labour that is practically negligible. That is one of the advantages of being back on the land, but, having lived many years where it was hard to get fresh garden truck of the best quality at any price, I feel that there is something wrong about having so much going to waste.

A walk around the farm this morning brought out a few surprises. To begin with, I found that, in spite of the fact that hay was cut so late, there is a second crop of clover that is well worth caring for. It is too late to mature properly for seed, but real farmers whom I consulted tell me that, if we get a spell of decent weather, about the first of October I should have several tons of good [Pg 248] clover hay. There are others in the neighbourhood who are looking forward to getting a second crop of hay from their fields of red clover, and some go so far as to say that if this second crop can be cured properly it will make better feed than the earlier crop.

Sept. 17.—The rush is over. With the harvesting and fall seeding done, the farmers are easing up

on the strenuous life. They are having a breathing spell that gives them leisure to be thankful for the fine summer they have had and to enjoy some of the fruits of their labour. The round of fall fairs is on and those who enjoy looking at prize cattle and surpassing farm products can indulge their taste. Now that the big exhibitions, with their hippodrome features, are over, the county and township shows are having their share of public attention. They are so arranged that they do not clash with one another, and the person with the show habit can take in half a dozen if so disposed. This orderly arrangement, however, has led to a development that is hardly desirable. It has given a chance for what may be called professionalism among exhibitors. The chief benefit to be derived from the small fair is the neighbourly competition it arouses, but of late years those who have prize-winning products have made a practice of exhibiting at one fair after another, so that the same exhibits are to be seen at various places. The man who has cattle, sheep, hogs, or horses that are sure prize-winners can make money by taking them around from fair to fair. Because of this the local producer is discouraged from showing, though the whole purpose of such fairs should be to give him every encouragement possible.

The country seems more alive at this time of the year than at any other season. The roads are still good, and, owing to the lull in the work, those who have an excuse for going to town can go. Products of all kinds are being marketed, and instead of watching their crops the farmers are watching their bank accounts grow. The winter shopping has commenced, and the tailors and dressmakers are working overtime. Moreover, this is what the poet calls the season of "mellow [Pg 249] fruitfulness." The apple buyer is abroad in the land, and paying as high as a dollar and a quarter a barrel for prime winter apples. Think of that, you who will buy those apples next winter at city prices—after the buyer, commission man, grocer, and other possible middlemen have added their profits. Peaches, plums, and pears are also receiving attention, but those raised in this district are finding their way to the preserving kettle rather than to the market. Pickles and catsup are also adding their pungency to the atmosphere of the farmhouse, and there is abundant promise of good eating during the winter months.

The part that the preserving kettle plays in a properly conducted country home is worthy of a special paragraph. It gathers the best of the summer's luxuries for use during the long winter months. The various small fruits are so distributed through the summer that a few sealers can be put away at a time without the work becoming burdensome. Wild and tame strawberries came first, and were plentiful and cheap. Raspberries, gooseberries, black and red currants came next, and could be had almost for the picking. Now we have the peaches, plums, and pears, and grapes and apples will follow. The housewife who has her cellar shelves stocked with a full variety of fruits can look forward to the winter with the assurance that her table will be bountifully supplied. At this point it may be worth while to ask what city worker having the same income as the farmer can afford to make such provision as this for the table? Nor are the solid parts of the fare lacking. The country worker can have his pork, potatoes, vegetables, etc., at the cost of production, which is an entirely different thing from even the country market price. Even when pork is selling at the present prices the farmer can afford to put by his winter supply because it has not cost him anywhere near its selling price to raise. If the countryman does not live on the best the fault is his own. He has either neglected to give attention to a little garden and orchard at the proper time or is so anxious to make money that he has sold off too much of his produce. [Pg 250]

Sept. 19.—All sorts of strange things are happening in the country. Owls have been heard hooting at mid-day, violets are blooming as they did in the spring, and the other day a black squirrel came from the woods fifty rods away to the oak trees beside the house. What does all this portend? Are these signs of a hard winter, or of the failure of the reciprocity negotiations with the United States? There isn't a witch or a gipsy anywhere in the neighbourhood whom I can consult. Possibly it all means nothing, but it is not so long since wise people would have looked grave and shaken their heads at such unusual happenings. Personally, I have lost no sleep over these matters. I admired the violets, and, as there was no gun handy, allowed the owl to keep on hooting, even though there are reports that neighbouring hen roosts have been raided. The visit of the squirrel was regarded as a treat by every one, and its tameness enabled us all to have a good look at it. Perched on one of the lowest limbs, it curved its fluffy tail over its back in a Hogarth line of beauty and seemed as much interested in looking at us as we were in looking at it. With its shining black eyes and jet fur, it made as pretty a picture among the green leaves as any one could wish to see. In the old evil days it would have been shot or clubbed to death, but a kinder spirit is abroad in the land, and it did us all good to watch it as it frisked about in the branches. But I mustn't say too much about it, or some city hunter who "wears puffed sleeves on his hunting pants" may be moved to come this way and scare the poor thing half to death by shooting at it.

Sept. 21.—There is a job for Sherlock Holmes over here. When it was decided that I should drive to St. Thomas it was suggested that I should borrow a sulky and ride in it. Now I want to know what secret enemy made that suggestion. In ordinary circumstances I can remember most anything I want to, but last Friday I had all recollection of everything shaken, jarred, and jolted [Pg 251] out of me. I am thankful that I am able to remember my name, and I am not sure that I could do that if I didn't see it in the papers once in a while. They tell me that the idea was all my own and that they warned me, but I doubt it. Some one must have urged me to my fate, though I can't remember who it was. If I could—but what's the use, anyway? I drove to St. Thomas in a sulky. It wasn't a regulation sulky of the kind that have no springs and that you ride on with a leg stretched along each shaft so as to keep the horse in place. No, indeed. It was an improved sulky with the seat placed over the most active spring I ever had dealings with. When a wheel struck a clod it would shoot me high into the air, and when I came crashing down it would flatten out on the iron axle and stop me with a jolt that scattered my wits over the landscape. When one of the

wheels caught in a rut the whole contraption would jump sideways, forward and up, thereby imparting a spiral motion to my body that I have no doubt was excellent for my liver. The seat was placed high in the air; in fact, it was so high that one of those men who can always see something funny in everything remarked that I might have seen more of the country if the seat hadn't been so high. Moreover, the seat had a little iron railing around it, not so much to keep the rider in his place as to bring home to him the truth that "man was made to mourn." As the driver is full of life and the wild actions of the thing behind seemed to scare her, she let out her speed to the last notch. I was still conscious when crossing the bridge over the Thames below Middlemiss. Then something happened that brought me to in an instant. An unaccountable skeleton tower loomed up in the distance, and my curiosity was aroused. Curiosity always has a tonic effect on me, and for the time I forgot all about the sulky. Perhaps the fact that the horse had slowed down to a walk helped some.

On a hill north of Iona Station there is a tower that seems to be almost as much of a mystery as the round towers of England and Ireland. It is merely a square open framework with ladders on [Pg 252] the corners and a small platform on top. It looks like the old observation tower at Coney Island, and when I first caught sight of it I wondered if I was approaching some inland pleasure resort. A nearer approach did not help me any. It was not the right build for an oil-derrick, and I could see no evidence of any use it might be put to. It was a gaunt, wind-swept mystery. Stopping at Iona Station, I began to make inquiries.

"What, that thing? Oh, it was put up about three years ago."

"But what is it for?"

"I'm sure I don't know."

"Who built it?"

"I did hear that it was the Government. It has something to do with the War Department."

This did not enlighten me much, and perhaps it is just as well. Competent war departments are always doing mysterious things that the public must not be allowed to know too much about. Perhaps in speaking of this tower I am giving away the secret of our national defences. Still, I wish I knew just what the bare-ribbed thing is for. Surely the explanation of its building is not the same as the Tammany Alderman gave of the building of the Pyramids. A friend with whom he was travelling in Egypt asked how he could account for the building of those wonderful structures. The Alderman mused for a while and then said:

"Maybe, there wor a divvy."

And didn't Kipling suggest that:

> "The secret hid
> Under Cheops' pyramid
> Was that the contractor did
> Cheops out of several millions."

Let us hope that neither of these explanations accounts for the lone tower of Iona. I am sorry, but I am forced to leave it the same mystery that I found it.

Some miles beyond Iona the Talbot road was reached, and the drive then became worth more [Pg 253] than all the discomforts it entailed. If there is anywhere in Canada or America a finer farming country than this I have yet to see it. I have never passed through a section of country showing more outward signs of good farming and prosperity. Clean fields, good fences, up-to-date buildings were to be seen everywhere. The corn and bean fields showed evidence of careful cultivation, and the promise of crops was of the best. The cattle in the fields—Holsteins, Jerseys, and Durhams—all looked to be thoroughbreds. The roads are good, and the land appeared to be thoroughly drained and cared for. There are old trees about the houses, some of which must have been planted almost a century ago. On the whole, this section of the country is really a show-place where you can see what farming might be made in any part of Ontario. The credit may not be in any sense due to Colonel Talbot—in fact, I have heard his memory reviled by descendants of the pioneers in the settlement—but some one saw to it that the foundations were laid right. Such sections as this are not accidents, and are not to be accounted for by the ordinary development of the country. The people here started right.

The mail boxes of the rural free delivery add a distinct charm to this country. As one admirable farm after another was passed it was pleasant for the moment to learn the name of the occupant, even though it was forgotten immediately after. It seemed almost like an introduction. I also noticed with pleasure that many of the farms have names on the gates in the old country fashion. There is something that smacks of long standing and family pride about a farm that has a name rather than a number. "Maple Grove" or "Elmhurst" sounds more sociable and human than Lot 17 or Lot 23. This is a custom that I hope will grow throughout the country. Another thing that struck me was the absence of new houses. The houses along the Talbot road have the appearance of having served several generations, and I trust that they have been generations of the same family. It was something of a shock to see a sign: "This farm for sale," on one of the best farms. I [Pg 254] cannot imagine how any one having a farm in this section could possibly want to sell it unless overwhelmed by some great calamity. I hope that the secret of that sign was not the too frequent one: "Owner moving to the West."

For two hours I travelled along the old road, feeding fat my pride of country, and trying to imagine what the Talbot Settlement must have been like in the days of the first settlers. That the

land was heavily timbered is shown by the patches of forest that still remain. But it was well worth clearing, and whatever else may be said of the doughty Colonel, no one can doubt his wisdom in selecting such a place for his home. He led the people into a land of plenty, and for that his memory should be revered. But every delight must come to an end. As I approached St. Thomas I came to a piece of road that was dotted with cobblestones, and, do my best, I could not avoid having the wheels strike them. The conduct of that sulky then became absolutely fiendish. It went down the hill at the outskirts of the city in much the same way as "the waters went down the Lodore" in the old school readers. When I finally dismounted at my destination I was suffering from springhalt, spavins, saddle-galls, splints, and sore shoulders. I felt the need of a veterinary surgeon rather than a doctor. I hope the man who owns that sulky never sees this article, but the truth must be told at any cost. If I owned that instrument of torture I would take it out to some place in the woods, where no one could hear its cries and I'd go at it with an axe. That is, I would in a week or two. Just now my joints are so stiff and my bones are so sore that I don't expect to be able to handle an axe for some weeks to come. Still, I am glad that I saw the Talbot Settlement, even though I saw it from a sulky.

Sept. 23.—I have never seen an authoritative description of the migration of the hawks, but one day last week when the sun was shining I had a chance to observe what may be their method of [Pg 255] assembling and taking their departure. I saw half a dozen hawks start circling up from the woods, and as they rose higher and higher I noticed that they were making their way up to a flock that was circling around almost out of sight. It struck me then that perhaps the hawks were gathering for migration in the upper air. That may account for the fact that we never see flocks of them near the earth as we do of other birds. And, possibly, when the migration begins the passing flock is joined by the scattered hawks of the country that circle up to meet them. At different times in the fall of the year my attention has been called to flocks of hawks by turkeys lying on the ground with one eye turned skyward, while they uttered their warning cry. These flocks were usually so high in the air that I could see them only by lying on my back and shading my eyes with my hands. Possibly what the turkeys were watching was the migration of the hawks.

As a rule at this time of the year the air on sunshiny days glistens with flying cobwebs, thistledowns, and the silken parachutes of the milkweed. This year, however, the constant rains seem to have pounded these frail craft to the earth. Except for a little smokiness, the air is wonderfully pure and clear. Even the gnats, which sometimes float around in clouds, have not put in an appearance. The forest trees are only beginning to show touches of colour, for the dark, wet weather evidently protected their luxuriant foliage. Apple-packing has commenced in every orchard except mine, and all the usual fall activities are in progress, though the look of fall has not appeared in nature and the feel of it is not in the air. There are a lot of us who have a sneaking hope that we may yet get a spell of summer weather, but I am afraid we shall be doomed to disappointment. Strange to say, in spite of the wet weather, there are no mushrooms in the pastures, though there were plenty some weeks ago. I wonder if the season has been too wet for mushrooms.

These are the days when the Thanksgiving turkey is accumulating succulent flesh and fatness. [Pg 256] Even the flocks that are regularly fed in the farm yards take to the fields and woods to pursue the nimble and inconsequent grasshopper. They travel in open formation like an invading army, and whenever a grasshopper hops a turkey hops. Sometimes a grasshopper gets a chance to make a second hop, but not often. He usually finds the open beak of a turkey waiting for him the moment he lights, and is not given time to draw up his legs for a second jump. It not infrequently happens that he is gobbled while still in the air. This sort of exercise develops the turkeys, and grasshoppers are said to be fattening. Anyway, they seem to be appetising, for if a grasshopper intent on his life of pleasure jumps singing into the air near where the turkeys are being fed they will desert even a ration of corn to capture him. The prophet's fare of locusts, even without the wild honey, seems to be just what the turkey yearns for. Despite the fact that turkeys are native here, and to the manner born, they are the hardest of all fowls to bring to maturity. During the first few weeks of their lives, unless they are fed with scientific care, they drop off like flies, and although they are only a few generations removed from the wild turkeys that lived in the woods, they need constant protection from the weather. One good drenching will destroy a flock of young turkeys, and unless kept free from insects they sicken and die. Injuries and accidents that other birds would survive are almost invariably fatal to them. In short, it is a wonder that so many of them survive to grace the Thanksgiving and Christmas table.

Sept. 24.—The driver is a thoroughly dependable animal, gentle, no bad tricks, can be driven by a child, and no one complains, even though she resembles certain Canadian financiers of whom J. J. Hill said that they "wouldn't stand without being hitched." On the whole, I could give her an excellent character if she had to pass into the service of some one else. But I hate to think what I might have done to her yesterday afternoon if I could have caught her. Never once have I [Pg 257] deceived her on the question of oats, or salt, or an apple, when trying to catch her. No, indeed! Once, when a little boy, I read a moral story about a farmer who used to fool his horse by holding out a hat that had nothing in it until the wise animal lost all faith in him and refused to be caught, even when he came bearing carrots and other rich gifts. I laid the story to heart, and never once have I gone to the pasture field without something to tickle her palate. But yesterday she went back on me. When I went out to the field I had a dish of oats in one hand and a bridle in the other. The autumn sunshine was warm and the air bracing, and I felt at peace with all the world. I dawdled towards the corner where she was feeding with the leisurely air of one who was enjoying life, and intended to enjoy it still more by taking a lazy drive to the post office. But the driver had other views. Without notifying the Department of Labour, or otherwise conforming to

the requirements of the Lemieux Act, she went on strike. When I was within about a rod of her, she raised her head, snorted, kicked up her heels, and galloped across the field. She didn't even sniff at the oats. I was surprised, of course, but not discouraged. It was a fine day, and I was not in much of a hurry, so I strolled along after her. She had stopped at the farthest corner, and had started to eat as if she were starving. She fairly mowed down the scorched grass. I don't think I ever saw a horse that seemed so hungry. When I approached her, she started to walk away with her head down, still eating as if her life depended on it. I whistled a soft imitation of a whinny and rattled the oats invitingly, and called her pet names, but when I was almost within touching distance she snorted again, and, with tail up, galloped back to the original corner. It was a beautiful exhibition of animal vitality. As I watched her doing her stunts, jumping over furrows as if they were Government drains, kicking up her heels, shying at bits of paper, I positively envied her abundance of fool energy. What wouldn't I give to have so much superfluous steam. And then, the action she was showing! I never thought she had it in her. If I could only make her show up [Pg 258] like that in harness, she would take all the prizes at the fall fair. Still, she must be caught, so I tempered my admiration. Evidently, she didn't feel the need of oats. She had been getting altogether too many since harvest time. Going back to the house, I got a lump of salt and a couple of apples. Apples would catch her, if anything would. Approaching cautiously, I whistled coaxingly, and displayed the apples to the best advantage. She was interested at once, but she didn't walk straight up to me as is her usual custom. She started to walk around me, with ears laid back. I stood where I was, and turned slowly as she walked around. The apples were held out temptingly, and she never took her eye off them for a second. Gradually the circle became smaller, and my heart bounded with hope when she finally stopped and stretched her nose towards an apple. I let her close her teeth on it before I started to move my hand towards her head. It was a fatal move. Instantly she was off across the field, giving imitations of Maud S. and Salvator. Right there I lost my temper, and shied the apple at her. She saw it bounce past, applied the brakes, reversed her engines, and came to a full stop within twice her own length. Then she gobbled the apple. I thought the time a good one to make further approaches, but it was no use. She frisked away, showing in every line of her body how much she was enjoying her freedom. This was her day off, and, besides, she had fooled me out of an apple. Sputtering with wrath, I called the family to help. We would corner the brute. Oh, yes, we would, would we? Not if she knew it! It would have been just about as easy to corner a jack-rabbit on the prairie. We could get her headed towards a corner once in a while, but, as the scientists say, "The angle of reflection was equal to the angle of incidence." She would gallop in at one side and gallop out at the other "just as easy." I am a little ashamed to remember how I raged around that field, but what can you do when the people who are supposed to be helping you duck behind a tree when they see the horse coming, instead of getting in her way and waving their aprons and jumping up [Pg 259] and down and yelling like wild Indians. She just had fun with us until we decided to stop. Then the family went back to the house, feeling offended at the directness of my remarks, and I went to cut corn so that I could work off my lust for slaughter. At milking time the exasperating beast came up to the gate and hung her head across and whinnied for apples or anything else we might have to offer. She submitted to being caught as if she had never done anything wrong in her life. When she was finally hitched to the buggy she wiggled her ears to shake off flies, and let her under lip droop, and looked about as spirited as a dowager cow.

After all, the driver was right. The evening is the pleasantest time of the day for driving. As we turned out on the road, the sun was going down, big and red, behind a thin cover of trees that made a sort of grill-work across its face. For a little while it seemed to reach from the tops of the trees to the earth, and then it smouldered down, leaving a few lines of bright cloud in the sky. The last crows were straggling off to some distant swamp to roost, and a flock of killdeer ran across the road on invisible legs that made them seem to be swimming a few inches above the ground. It was still light enough to see the first blades of wheat that were showing, in spite of the dry weather, and here and there we passed fields that were pleasantly dotted with black bundles of seed clover. I am told that the wheat has been put in with especial care this year, and most of it has been heavily fertilised. The ground has been so well worked that it held enough moisture to start the grain. If we only get a good rain soon, everything will be all right. We passed farm yards where milking was in progress, and occasional bursts of fierce squealing announced the feeding of pigs. It was the hour of doing chores, and the day's work being done, farmers were not afraid to stop to talk with passing neighbours and discuss the weather. There was a freight train busily shunting and puffing at the next village, but otherwise everything was still. The wind had died [Pg 260] down at sunset. As the shadows began to close, the crickets, or whatever little creatures make the noise, began to chirp rhythmically. I am told that it is not the cricket that makes the sound, but a green insect that looks like a grasshopper. They never seem to make it when one is near them, so I have never managed to see one in action. I have often seen a cricket rubbing out his tune on his hind leg, and must say the sound is different. Whatever makes the sound that beats through the still autumn air, it is about the most characteristic music we have in the country just now. Presently a screech-owl whistled in an orchard, and I felt that it was the voice of solitude. When I looked up from the shadow-blurred earth, I found that the stars were all at their appointed stations.

It is all very well for excellent people who live in cities or barren parts of the country to have high notions about property rights and petty thieving. What I want to know is how the majority of these same people would act if they happened to be driving or walking through the country at night, and came to an orchard where the perfume of the ripe fall pippins overflowed the road. I came to such a spot, and it was very dark, and the tantalising odour "set my pugging tooth on edge." I wanted to be comforted with apples right there and then, and human nature is very weak. It was so dark, no one could see, and the road was deserted—but I escaped the temptation.

As I told you in the first sentence, the driver will not stand without being hitched, and there were deep ditches on both sides of the road. Besides, I knew that I could get plenty of apples at home. But what if I had been walking, and there were no apples at home. I hate to think of it. While I was meditating on these things, and vowing to be easy with the next boy I caught with his blouse full of apples, I had to swerve the horse suddenly to avoid a collision with another buggy.

"Half the road, and all the ditch, please," said a girlish voice. She wanted to show the young man who was driving how clever and witty she was. No Sherlock Holmes was needed to detect that [Pg 261] when she spoke she had a large bite of an apple tucked in her cheek. But far be it from me to give evidence against them. Had I not been sorely tempted myself a moment before I and perhaps these young people needed to be comforted with apples even more than I did, and were in condition to quote the rest of the text about being "sick of love." Having escaped the collision, I hurried home and unharnessed the driver in the dark. As I was turning her into the pasture, I patted her shoulder and held no grudges for the cutting-up of the afternoon.

NATURE'S POEMS

Poets, no matter what your fame,
  I bid you one and all make way!
For I can put your best to shame
  With poems of the common day.
  Who cares for sonnet, ballad, lay,
That on the grass can lie at ease
  And to the limit tuck away
The poems growing on my trees?

King Solomon, when he would tame
  His heart—fordone in Love's affray—
For apples called, and ate the same,
  But did not bid his harpers play.
  And he of men was wisest. Yea,
He showed it by such deeds as these!
  A bard himself, he well could weigh
The poems growing on my trees.

The Snow, with rounded cheeks aflame,
  On which the dewy kisses stay;
The Spy, that like a blushing dame
  Hides in the leaves her colours gay;
  The Russet, like a sun-burned fay [Pg 262]
Ravished from the Hesperides—
  Too fair they seem for lips of clay,
The poems growing on my trees.

L'ENVOI

Prince, if you would taste them, say
  The word and on my bended knees
I'll offer, without thought of pay,
  The poems growing on my trees.

Sept. 26.—It is many years since I cut corn before, and I don't care if it is many years before I cut corn again. It is slugging hard work from the first hill to the last. One doesn't even get a rest when tying the shocks, for the brittle stalks break until a fellow's temper is all frazzled. What's that you say? "It ought to be hauled straight from the field without shocking, and put in a silo!" Don't I know it! I've probably read more bulletins of the Department of Agriculture than you have, and, besides, I take two agricultural papers. I know what ought to be done with corn just as well as you do, so don't interrupt me, for I am sore from head to foot, and not in the best of humour. It is all right to talk about scientific methods, but there are times when one has to do things as best he can. I know there are machines for cutting corn, but one of them would cost more than the whole crop is worth, and there isn't one in the neighbourhood that can be hired. When the time came for the corn to be cut, I just had to cut it as my fathers had to cut it before me, and perhaps the Indians cut it in the same way before them. You have to cut your corn according to your patch, just as surely as you cut your coat according to your cloth. But I am not going to defend myself. A man doesn't defend himself unless he knows he is in the wrong, and I am not in the wrong. All I wanted to say when I started was that cutting corn is hard work. It [Pg 263] doesn't appeal to me even as a form of exercise, but what a man sows—or plants—that he must reap; and having planted corn in the joyous springtime, I had to cut it when the melancholy days had come, the saddest of the year. The one consolation about it is that it will yield chicken and cow feed for the whole winter.

As a form of exercise, cutting corn combines most of the motions of wrestling, skipping the rope, and tossing the caber. You begin by getting a half-Nelson on a hill of corn, then you strike at it with a hoe, and the same skill is needed to keep from hitting your toes that is used in skipping. When you have tucked between your legs all the stalks you can sprawl along with, you take the unruly bundle in your arms and jam it against the shock. Then you take up the hoe and resume the original exercise. I think it would do very well as part of the training of a prize-fighter, though

it might be too exhausting. I have no doubt that a hoe that has had its handle docked and its blade dished by a blacksmith is the best instrument to use, for most other cutting tools have been tried and rejected. I have seen everything used, from a carpenter's adze to a hay-knife, and none of them seemed to make the work easier. The Cuban machete, which is used for cutting sugar-cane in times of peace, and for carving the oppressors in time of war, always looked to me as if it would make a very plausible corn-cutter, but I never saw it tried. For some of the stalks I struck, I think a butcher's bone-saw would be best, though I suppose a strong man might cut them with a sharp axe. I am inclined to think it would be a good idea for a man who is cutting corn to have a caddie, the same as they have when playing golf. The boy could carry all kinds of cutting tools in a bag, and when you had sized up your hill of corn you could pick out the tool that seemed best in your judgment, and go at it. This is a sportsmanlike way of doing the work that should appeal to gentleman-farmers everywhere, but it would hardly do to let the hired man go at it in that way. The artistic side of work is not supposed to appeal to him, and he usually has the brute strength, [Pg 264] or should have it, to plod along with a hoe, and cut the amount he should in a day. As I forgot to ask some one how much corn an able-bodied man is supposed to cut in a day, I shall not be definite on this point for fear I should expose myself to unfeeling laughter. Suffice it to say that, somehow, during the last couple of weeks in September, I cut five acres of corn in what Bill Nye would call "a rambling, desultory way." Of course, I didn't work at it all the time. Not at all. I spent a lot of time letting the ache get out of my bones and doctoring the cracks in my fingers.

Sept. 27.—There are eight little pigs in one pen, little white beauties, and from time to time it falls to my lot to feed them. I always undertake the task cheerfully, because I like to look at them. They are still at the tender age of the little pigs we sometimes see in restaurant windows with apples in their mouths and "their vests unbuttoned." Not one of them but deserves the description of Charles Lamb:

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

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

"The little pigs sleep with their tails curled up."

Their eight little tails were twisted into eight curls so tight that I felt sure another twist would have lifted their hind feet off the ground. An unguarded step roused them, and then what [Pg 265] excitement there was. Eight little voices were at once raised in protest at my slowness. Carefully spilling a little of the skim-milk "mash" into one end of the trough, I stepped back hastily and distributed the remainder evenly along the rest of it. The taste I had given them, however, was enough to get them all into action and reveal their characters. Really, one can't help liking little pigs. They are so human. For a moment I imagined myself a Professor Garner, and felt that I understood their language.

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

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

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

Some day I hope to have the leisure to write an adequate "Defence of the Pig." Now that Judge Jeffreys and Nero have been whitewashed and given good-conduct cards by the historians, I think that some one should speak a good word for the pigs. They have been very much maligned. And perhaps this is the right time to do it—after the pigs, both live and dressed—have been dragged through the mire of politics. To begin with, the pig is no more gross in his appetite than that [Pg 266] much applauded "tame villatick fowl," the hen. As for cleanliness, give him a chance, and see how clean he can be. His dirtiness is due to the people who pen him up so that he can hardly stir. "Seek other cause 'gainst Rhoderick Dhu!" Then, consider how important the work of the pig has been in the making of Canada. He deserves a place in the gallery of the Makers of Canada, because the pioneers would have had a much harder time of it had they not been supported by plentiful supplies of fat pork. If the pig had his rights, he would be our national emblem, instead of the beaver. What has the beaver done for us, anyway? The pig, on the other hand, sustained our fathers in their fight against the wilderness, and yet his name is a name of scorn. Even the poets, in whom fair play is intuitive, have done scant justice to the pig. As a matter of fact, I can recall only one bit of poetry about the pig in Canadian literature, and that is McIntyre's epigram

"On a hog exhibited at the Western Fair, which weighed 1000 pounds, and measured five-foot-nine from tip to tip":

"Pig had to do some routine work
To make a thousand pounds of pork;
But our stomach it doth not incline
To eat a hog five-foot-nine;
Let others eat enormous swine."

In clearing the country of snakes, the pig has been a veritable animal St. Patrick. Even the rattlesnake had to go down before him. Because of this, he deserves a place in heraldry second only to St. George the dragon-killer. In history, the pig has received frequent mention from the time of the prodigal son. Even to-day the reigning family of Servia proudly claims its descent from a militant swineherd, and do not both the United States and Canada boast of many pork-packing millionaires, who prove the importance of the pig to modern society? These are only a few of the points that might be developed in a "Defence of the Pig," and as the subject is one of the few on which a book has not yet been written, we may expect to have it written by some one before long.

I never think of pigs without remembering a dark night, many years ago, when they used to run [Pg 267] half-wild, instead of being penned and fed scientifically. I was coming home late, and took a short-cut through the dark woods. I was whistling to keep my courage up, for even though I knew that there were no wolves or bears, there was something uncanny about the deep shadows. At last I came to a huge elm tree that had been cut down for a coon in the brave days when the coon-skin was worth more than a tree three feet in diameter and the labour it took to chop it down. It was late in the fall, and there were deep drifts of leaves beside every log. Climbing to the top of the fallen giant, I jumped down into a great drift—and then yelled with terror. The earth seemed to spring up under me and around me, as a drove of half-grown pigs that had taken shelter from the cold in the dry leaves began to scatter, squealing and "whoofing." They were every bit as scared as I was, and as they rushed about blindly they bowled me off my feet. My first thought was of wolves and bears, about which I had heard so much in my boyhood, but I soon realised what the trouble was. And yet, in the few seconds when I didn't know what I had tumbled into, I got a scare that made me wear my hair à la pompadour for weeks afterwards. Since then I have at different times tripped over a sleeping pig at night when walking past a straw stack, but I never got such a scare as I did in the woods. Perhaps that is because these modern pigs haven't so much steam in them as did the grunters we had when the saying "root hog or die" had an actual application. They had to root for their livings, and I have no doubt that there are still neighbourhoods that keep up feuds that were started by the predatory pigs of the early settlers. It was no easy matter to make rail-fences "horse-high and hog-tight," when they had to be built over cradle-holes, and those eager, hungry pigs could be depended on to find a hole if there was one; and if there wasn't, they were not beyond making one. Those pigs didn't pose before cameras and get their pictures in the agricultural papers, but if an acorn fell within [Pg 268] half a mile of them, they would hear it, and get to it in time to catch it on the first bounce. We shall never see their like again.

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

Sept. 30.—I should have known better, and, in fact, I did know better. I have known better for a long time. Yet I went to town to get empty apple boxes without putting on a waggon box or a hayrack. But I was going to bring home only a dozen boxes, and, when I went to hitch the driver to the one-horse waggon, I thought the cordwood rack it was provided with would carry the little load all right. I didn't even take the trouble to hunt up the stakes, so what I had with me was practically a platform with a stake at each corner. Still I was going to bring home only twelve [Pg 269] empty boxes that would not weigh more than fifty pounds. I would manage all right. There was no need being fussy, especially as I was in a hurry. But when I got to the post office I found a postcard telling me that eighteen crates of honey pails were waiting at the station. I felt a vague uneasiness on getting this news, but concluded that I could bring them home with the apple boxes. I got the boxes first. It was amazing the amount of room they took compared with their weight. They covered the whole bottom of my rack. Nevertheless I piled them on, and started on a trot for the station. I didn't trot far. Those light boxes seemed to feel the jolting far worse than I did. Every time I struck a pebble they would bounce into the air, and, in spite of that law of physics which states that an object thrown up from a moving object will fall on the place from

which it started, or words to that effect, those boxes never came down in the same spot. Before I had gone ten rods I had to stop to trim my load. When I had straightened the boxes so that they would ride I let the mare walk, and tried to figure out some way to pile on eighteen crates that would probably be very little heavier and every bit as slippery as what I had on.

The crates of honey pails were wide and flat, and took up about twice as much room as the apple boxes. I couldn't put two rows side by side. I had to pile them on top of one another, and I knew that there was trouble ahead. Moreover, I had to pile the apple boxes two deep, and I had had enough experience with them to know what that would mean. But having started I was going to see the thing through. I made a fairly neat job of the loading, and tried to hope that everything would be all right. Then I started. Two hundred and sixteen honey pails began to rattle with the first turn of the wheels. Not being used to such a racket the driver jumped. Two hundred and sixteen honey pails clanged and the wrestling began. By the time I got her under control, my pretty load looked as if it had been struck by a cyclone. It had shifted in about seven different [Pg 270] directions. An apple box had fallen against a wheel, and the crates of pails looked as if they had been spilled aboard. As soon as the mare was quiet, I righted the load as well as I could without taking it all off and starting again from the bottom. By the time I had done this I had figured out that the only way I could keep the load straight would be to lie on top of it, wrap my legs around the hind end, my arms around the front end, and do the driving with my teeth. Of course, it would be a ridiculous sight for the village folk, who have a keen appreciation of everything of the kind, but I didn't care for that. However, I didn't put my plan into practice. After examining the lines I decided that I would not like the taste of them. When the driver was entirely quiet, I started her gently and crawled along the main street. Three times before I got to the home road I had to stop and fix my load. In doing this I lost my daily paper, and, by the time I had turned the corner, I was feeling real peevish.

When I had turned off the stone road I thought everything would be all right, but I was mistaken again. As the road has been graded and people drive to one side instead of on the middle, I found that the waggon was tilted just enough to start my ticklish load slipping. There was nothing for it but to let the horse walk at her own pleasure, while I devoted myself to pushing back the crates and boxes as they threatened to slip overboard. Now, the driver at her best is not a fast walker, but when allowed to take her own time you would need to sight on a couple of posts to see whether we were moving. She would swing her head around to bite a fly—and come to a full stop. When she started again she would swing her foot up to knock a fly off her belly—and stop again. I don't think I ever knew flies to be so plentiful. She was biting at them or striking at them all the time. But the slow motion had its advantages. The boxes and crates stopped slipping, and presently I resigned myself to my fate and began to look about me. After all a slow drive is best when one is trying to enjoy the country. It was a perfect autumn day, hoarfrost in the morning [Pg 271] and midsummer heat at noon. The sky was cloudless, and not a breath of air was stirring. I had the road and the fields all to myself.

My enjoyment was suddenly disturbed by the appearance in the distance of what I took to be an automobile. These overgrown "road-lice" usually give the driver hysterics, and with the honey pails to bang and scatter we would probably have a wild time. Fortunately it turned out to be a waggon, and we got around the home corner safely. Then we came to the railway, and, as we crossed it, the waggon rolled forward and the mare started to trot. By talking gently and tugging on the lines I got her stopped before the load slipped off. I trimmed the boxes again and then crawled the rest of the distance home. When we reached the barn yard two crates slipped off, but I didn't mind much—in fact I felt triumphant because I had kept them from falling off sooner. I was an hour late for dinner and had to explain to every one just what had kept me, and how I managed to lose the daily paper. And when peace was restored, I made up my mind that the next time I go after light boxes of this kind I shall take a waggon and hayrack, even if I am going to bring home only one box.

OCTOBER [Pg 272]

Oct. 5.—Can husking corn be described as a sedentary occupation? You certainly sit down while at work, but before the day is over you sit in so many different ways that you really get considerable exercise. Some people use a milking-stool, some sit tailor-fashion, others kneel devoutly, and if it were not for the cold weather I believe some people would lie down beside the work and go to sleep. During the first forenoon I sampled all the different methods except lying down, and found them all equally uncomfortable. The simple fact is that when you go at it energetically, husking corn is really work. It has no holiday features that I have been able to discover. You work with both hands, and when you strike a stiff-necked ear you have to put forth as much strength that, as the realistic novelists say, the muscles on your back "stand out like knotted whipcords." Besides, when the field has a considerable acreage it is not simply a day's job, nor a week's job, but a month's job. Of course, you get used to it in time, and the more used to it you get the more sore your hands become between the thumb and forefinger through breaking off the ears. And there's another thing besides the sitting down that requires thinking out before you settle down to work. Is it better to sit facing the sun with the north wind blowing on the small of your back, or to sit with the wind in your face while the sun gives a nice, comfy feeling to your spine? I have tried both ways, but have not yet reached a definite conclusion.

A nail with a string tied to the head and a loop to go around your third finger makes an excellent

substitute for the old hickory husking-peg whose end had been hardened in the fire. A sharp wire nail slips through the husks readily to make the opening tear that reveals the yellow grain. Then you bend the ear back over the sorest spot on your hand to break the cob, and the trick is done. When you are husking corn your mind is apt to be more on your tender hands than on your work, but still one has a chance to do a little thinking from time to time. Husking corn—in fact, all the work of this last harvest, such as digging potatoes, pulling roots, and caring for vegetables—brings one into a closer dealing with nature than the grain harvest earlier in the season. Wheat, oats, and barley are reaped by machinery and thrashed by machinery, so that your contact with them is never intimate. The things we are harvesting now we must attend to with our hands, and for that reason we seem to be receiving them directly from the hand of Nature. Being food for man and beast, these things represent true wealth as it comes to us directly from the soil. Every ear that is husked and every potato that is dug means a distinct addition to the wealth of the world. In this way the work of the farmer is superior to that of any other man. The more wealth the farmer produces, the more mouths will be fed and the cheaper the cost of living will be. Many people who have not given the matter thought imagine that the production of gold increases the wealth of the world. As a matter of fact, every dollar of gold that is produced reduces the buying power of every other dollar, and in that way makes living harder for men of fixed income or men who work on salary. The miner is simply providing us with more counters to be used in the handling of the natural wealth which is produced by the farmer. This is all very elementary, of course, but it helps to give a man a proper pride in his work. If farmers would think more of this aspect of their lives we might hear less grumbling. [Pg 273]

There is a flock of quail somewhere in the cornfield, but as yet I have not seen them. Their gathering calls can be heard in the evening, and I have seen their dusting-place, but thus far I have not seen a feather of the quail themselves. Last Sunday I flushed a woodcock beside the Government drain, the first one I have ever seen in this neighbourhood. And that reminds me that I recently had a conversation with a sportsman who unburdened himself with considerable vigour regarding our game laws. To begin with, he said that, as far as woodcock are concerned, our laws are especially designed to protect woodcock for American hunters. Most of the woodcock migrate before the season for them opens in Canada. Another complaint is that, as at present administered, the game laws simply keep law-abiding sportsmen from getting any game. No true sportsman will do any shooting in the close season, but long before the season opens for quail, partridge, woodcock, and squirrels, the country is hunted out by people who have no regard for the law. Town and country boys who have guns take to the woods and fields early in the season and kill everything they come across. As there are no funds to pay the game wardens, these offenders against the law are seldom or never prosecuted, and practically all the game goes to them. This sportsman suggested a remedy that should meet with the approval of every one interested in the preservation of game. He urges that all guns be registered and a gun tax levied that would pay for wardens who would properly enforce the law. This would not only provide the necessary machinery for enforcing the game laws, but would make the ownership of a gun a matter requiring consideration. Something must be done if we who have a respect for the law are to get any of our corn-fed quail and squirrels. [Pg 274]

The coon-hunting season is on again, and almost every night one can hear the barking of coon dogs. There has been a change in the method of procedure of coon hunters, however. The ringing of the axes no longer disturbs the stillness, and you never hear at midnight the crash of a falling tree. Trees are now worth more than many coonskins, and the farmer who heard coon hunters chopping in his woods would not only make a roar, but would probably chase off the hunters with a fence stake. The present method is to hunt on moonlight nights and try to bring down the coons with a rifle. I am told that if the barrel is whitened with chalk it is possible to sight the gun fairly accurately. If the coon happens to be treed where it is not too hard to get at, the hunter straps on telephone pole climbers and shins up the tree. But with all these improvements coon hunting is not what it used to be—chiefly because the farmers do not raise as many melons as they used to. I remember—but no, I guess I'll not tell about it. [Pg 275]

The husking was varied by an exciting rat hunt. Under one of the shocks there was a surprising pile of earth, fully two feet high. It was evidently the home of a family of rats, and as these creatures have no redeeming features it was decided to destroy them. They are filthy, destructive, disease-bearing vermin, and to kill them is a public service. As the ground was mellow, it was easy to follow the winding tunnels that went out on every side. These tunnels had little chambers every yard or two, evidently to enable the rats to turn round if pursued, but I was surprised to find that every tunnel ended without a hole leading to the surface. I thought that every creature that burrows in the earth has a back door as well as a front door to his home, but these rats had only one hole for going in or out. They evidently depended for safety on their intricate system of tunnels, and they had a system that must have equalled the one in the Portland estates in England or the kind you read about in old romances. The tunnels were so near the surface that they broke through when stepped on, and it was not hard to follow them and throw them open with a fork-handle. After yards of tunnels had been opened rats began to pop out—but there is no need describing the carnage. One old rat and twelve that were partly grown were rooted out and killed. It was an unpleasant duty, but a duty nevertheless. If left to themselves those rats would have eaten and destroyed as much corn as several hogs. While it is a scientific fact that man and the rats have discovered and conquered the world together there is war between them, and there will be war until the end of time.

After the day's husking comes the job of binding up the cornstalks and when the stalks are dry it is just about the meannest job imaginable. You pick out the softest, juiciest-looking stalk you can find, bend it between the joints and proceed to tie up an armful of stalks that scratch your wrists [Pg 276]

and face, and just as you are starting to twist the ends into a knot the wretched thing breaks and you have to start the whole performance over again. After this has happened a few times your temper begins to slip cogs and your language becomes "painful and frequent and free." Of course it had the advantage of making me forget how stiff my joints were from sitting on the cold ground, and before I knew it I was warm clean through, but that kind of warmth is not the kind of warmth a fellow wants. I grumbled so much about this feature of the husking that a man of experience asked why I did not use binder twine. That solved the difficulty, and the husking is being done in a proper frame of mind. Although the yield is not remarkable for quantity, the ears are large and the grain is sound.

Oct. 8.—There is a pear tree that is hemmed in on one side by an apple tree and on the other by an oak. The result is that the lower branches have died and fallen off and the fruit grows from thirty to forty feet above the ground. For some time past the children had been picking up the wind-falls, ripening them in the bureau drawers, and asking when I was going to pick the pears. When it comes to lofty and fancy climbing I have to do it myself. The youngsters do enough climbing to tear their clothes, but that is all. When we got ready to pick the apples I decided to begin by picking the pears. I have a weakness for these particular pears that made me want to harvest them. This was the only kind on the farm when I was a boy and I have never found others quite like them. They are not of any of the standard varieties, and as they are not good keepers or particularly good for preserves they are not in favour with thrifty people. But as eating pears they are unrivalled. When picked at the right time and hidden in a hay-mow for a few weeks they used [Pg 277] to be as delicious to a predatory small boy as hoarded beechnuts to a red squirrel. Even when ripened among the clothes in a bureau drawer they are good enough, though they lack the tang of stolen fruit. This year there was about a bushel on the tree in spite of the spring frost that destroyed most of the blossoms. The longest ladder on the place barely reached to the first branches, but when I had pulled myself up among the fruit I was greatly rewarded. About the first thing that caught my eye was a big, perfect pear lying in a little nest of twigs where several branches were crossing one another. It had evidently ripened early, fallen into this hiding place, and then mellowed in the sun and wind. As I picked it up my thumb made a dent in its soft flesh. A moment later I had sunk my teeth in its rosy, juicy side and my palate was quivering with joy. It had the real hay-mow flavour and after the first taste I got the stolen fruit tang, for a voice floated up from below,

"Aw, gimme a bite!"

"All right! Come up and get it!" I exulted. Making myself comfortable in a fork of the tree I proceeded with my little banquet, and before it was done I was derisively singing an old schoolboy refrain:

"Billy! Dey ain't goin' to be no core!"

Feeling greatly refreshed I then picked the pears.

It was no easy job, for the top branches were long and slim, and as I swung around and took chances I felt that Calverly knew what he was talking about when he described the monkeys as clinging,

"With ape-like glee,
By the teeth or tail or eyelid
To the slippery mango tree."

While occupying my position of vantage I had a rush of primordial feelings that made me almost a believer in the Darwinian theory. It could be nothing but the stirring of some hereditary emotion that made me long to throw pears at the people below who were sending up exclamations of caution and advice. There would be a joy in it such as must have been felt by our ancestors when: [Pg 278]

"Side by side 'twas theirs to ravage
The potato ground and cut
Down the unsuspecting savage
With the well-aimed cocoanut."

Before my task was finished I was led to reflect that a prehensile tail must be a great advantage to a climber. Yet there can be no advantage without its penalty. I remember a joke in *Life* about a monkey that was complaining because it had slipped and sprained its tail.

While picking the pears I had a chance to overlook the activities of the whole neighbourhood, but my interest was largely centred in my own cornfield, where a band of original Canadians, Indians, were busy husking. That corn had been hanging over me like an incubus, for I thought I would have to husk it all myself, but

"The red man came, the roaming hunter tribe,"

and I promptly made a treaty with them. But the consideration was not glass beads and red cotton handkerchiefs. Not at all. They are civilised—as civilised as an imported hired man. They insisted on getting five and a half cents a bushel—"and find themselves." Reflecting that even at that price I would not make much more than board wages, I agreed to pay. And as I looked at the cornfield from the pear tree I felt glad that I had done so, for real judges have estimated that there will be at least five hundred bushels. I will have enough to do in hauling home the ears and stalks. The piles of yellow ears delighted my eye, and then I noticed the golden sprinkling of

pumpkins in the field, and I called down orders for pies. Somehow, in this country life our appetites are always with us.

Looked at from the height I was occupying, the world seemed more alive than usual. I could see men working in their fields or about their buildings for a mile or two in every direction. Ordinarily we see only the people and animals on our own farms, and are oppressed by a sense of [Pg 279] loneliness. From my tree-top I could see that I really have neighbours. As I realised this I was struck by the thought that all our activities take place within a few feet of the ground. In spite of our boasted freedom of action we are the slaves of the law of gravity which keeps us "crawling 'twixt the earth and heaven." But because we can walk and run and travel in trains, and even fly a little, we think ourselves entirely free and are not conscious of the fact that gravity binds us as with chains. Who knows but in a similar way our actions, both moral and intellectual, are governed by laws of which we are unconscious? Perhaps if we could make our analysis keen enough we would find that our lives impinge on the peripheries of other spheres than that of the earth, and that we are whirled around on them forever like Ixion on his wheel. Such a discovery would settle to the satisfaction of all the endless debate regarding predestination and free will. But it does not do to indulge in such metaphysical flights while clambering around in a tree forty feet from the ground. They might make us giddy, and then "What a fall would be there, my fellow-countrymen." Still it was worth the climb to get away for a little while from the flatness of things and to realise that there is much in life that is missed by the sensible people who keep their feet constantly on the ground. We need an occasional breath from the heights, and I am inclined to think there was much wisdom in the words of the poetess who closed a notable poem in a recent number of *The Forum* with the couplet:

> "He whose soul is flat, the sky
> Will cave in on him by and by."

Oct. 10.—Why are there no good quotations about October? We are having weather just now that makes one long for a burst of poetry that will surpass "What is so rare as a day in June?" as much as ripeness surpasses greenness. Poe has something about "the lonesome October" that gives one cold chills to remember. Is it because the only decent rhyme for October is "sober" that the poets [Pg 280] have been unable to get enthusiastic? And what a peculiar touch of irony it is that "sober" is the only rhyme for the month of wine-pressing, cider-making, and "brown October ale." But perhaps the trouble is that the poets cannot do the subject justice. At no other season of the year is the country so bewilderingly beautiful—so "beautiful exceedingly." The frost has worked miracles with the foliage. The staid green of summer has given place to "a riot of colour" (good old phrase) ranging from the most delicate yellow to crimson and purple. After the frosty nights the air has an exhilarating quality not to be described in a country where prohibition sentiment is so strong. The October sunshine has a satisfying warmth that makes a man as mellow as a fall pippin. Some one has somewhere described this as "the season when every schoolboy trudges along the country roads munching a ripe apple." That does very well for prose, but the subject is one that demands poetry. We should have something as meaty as the well-filled granaries and as luscious as the closely-packed apple barrels. Let our poets get busy. Some American magazine will be glad to pay a proper price for the gem when it is completed.

A drive through the country has charms at all times, but just now it is especially worth while. If scenery is your hobby the above-mentioned "riot of colour" may be seen from a thousand angles. Piles of apples, rosy, yellow, and green, give an appetising beauty to every orchard—marred somewhat by commercial-looking apple barrels, indicating that these good things will be sold to be enjoyed elsewhere. It may be observed everywhere that

> "The frost is on the pumpkin, and the corn is in the shock."

Potatoes are being dug and huge piles are in evidence ready to be pitted. This, by the way, is the season of the real Canadian harvest. The corn, potatoes, beans, and pumpkins are native products and were cultivated long before the coming of the white man. The Indian harvest was really gathered in Indian summer. The harvest over which we make so much is all of cereals [Pg 281] introduced by the white man.

This is also the small boy's harvest. The nutting season is on, although it is somewhat spoiled by "No Trespassing" signs that give such an unneighbourly look to some parts of the country. Walnuts and chestnuts are carefully protected as a rule, for they have a market value, but beechnuts and hickory nuts are free for all. One misses, however, those most industrious nut-gatherers, the red squirrels. They have practically disappeared from this part of the country. They understood the science of nut-gathering to the last detail, and the boy who kept a close watch on them usually reaped a rich, though piratical, harvest. When gathering hickory nuts, the red squirrel selected the best and put them through a proper course of treatment before carrying them to his nest in some hollow tree. The nuts were first buried under decaying leaves or old damp logs until the outer husks were loosened. These preliminary storehouses were the ones raided by the predatory small boys, for the squirrels usually managed to hide their winter homes so carefully that there was no finding them. It used to be said that the squirrels never climbed a home tree, but left and approached it through the branches so that no tell-tale tracks would be left on the snow. The boy who managed to plunder a number of busy squirrels usually got a winter store of the choicest nuts, but the urchin of to-day must do his own climbing, selecting, and hulling. Judging by observation, the shell-bark hickories have not changed in any way, but are just as exasperating to climb as ever. Moreover, they are just as tall as ever, and the choicest nuts grow out of range of the well-aimed sticks. The boy who does not want to get into trouble by

having his clothes torn wisely waits until the nuts are brought down by his ancient enemy, Jack Frost.

The cider presses are now working overtime, and everybody who cares to can have a plentiful supply of apple butter, cider vinegar, and possibly a little—only a little, for the stomach's sake—hard cider. Those who have encountered some of this home-made hard cider when it giveth its [Pg 282] colour aright assure me that it stingeth like an adder and biteth like a serpent and has a headache in every mouthful. It is whispered that some people add a bushel of white wheat to every barrelful—which ought to make a fairly husky brew. But let us talk of apple butter. This is made by boiling down the cider to one-third the original quantity and adding enough sound apples to make a thick "sass." It is a "nippy" preserve that is appetising and satisfying. Some cider is boiled slightly and put away in sealers to be used for drinking purposes and to make Thanksgiving and Christmas mince pies. Cider-making, like almost everything else, has undergone a change. It is unusual to find a farmer with an old-fashioned hand press, as it was found that these did not extract all the cider. They now have cider mills, to which the farmers take their apples to be ground and pressed by powerful machinery. And even though the huge presses seem to squeeze the fruit as dry as a small dealer who has fallen into the hands of a trust, I am told that in some places the pulp is carefully preserved and shipped to wine manufacturers, who subject it to a further treatment, which enables them to make a champagne that, when properly labelled, will rank with the finest and most costly. Speaking of wines, if ancient tales tell true, this is the year for connoisseurs to lay in a supply. It is one of the superstitions of wine countries that wine made in a "comet year" surpasses all others in body and bouquet.

Country sales are now in progress and are being advertised on every convenient roadside tree. Bridges and gate posts are decorated with attractive bills and the voice of the auctioneer is heard in the land. It is said that owing to the scarcity and high price of feed many farmers are selling their young cattle, but the prices reported indicate that few bargains can be picked up. Good stock still commands high prices. The auctioneers of the present are business-like individuals, and those who attend sales do not come home with the good stories and choice bits of repartee that used to make a sale a sort of country entertainment. Sales are now attended chiefly by [Pg 283] people who are looking for something to buy, and "business is business, b'gosh."

The turkeys, that reverted as far as they could to the wild state during the summer, are now returning to the barns about the time the chickens are being fed, and are selecting for themselves the best roosting-places. They have grown plump on wild seeds and grasshoppers, and now they make daily excursions to the woods for beechnuts, which they swallow whole. As beechnuts are plentiful this year, nut-fed turkeys should be a feature of the Thanksgiving markets, though no one seems to have made a classification of this kind. Beechnut bacon is sometimes advertised—a fact that causes wonder among the farmers, for in the old days when they dressed their hogs for market the buyers were expert in picking out hogs that had been allowed to eat nuts. These were promptly culled out and either had to be sold at a lower price or taken home. It was claimed that the flesh was soft and oily. But possibly beechnut pork had qualities that were overlooked. Anyway, it sounds good.

Oct. 13.—When the little yellow handbills announcing the Muncey-Tecumseh Fair appeared in the post office and other places where people assemble a curiosity was aroused that could only be satisfied by a visit to the Indian show. The whole affair was to be conducted by Indians, and the exhibits would be of Indian products. Here was something to kindle the imagination. It recalled memories of times when the Indians made regular excursions from their reservations to sell baskets, axe-handles, whipstocks, and bead-work pincushions to the farmers and the farmers' wives. It is not so many years since there was still "good hunting" in the land, and parties of Indians would be discovered, unexpectedly, living in a brush and bark wigwam in the woods. Although they carried guns, they still used bows and arrows for squirrels and small game, and a visit to one of their camps was an event in the life of a small boy. It was believed in those days, and the belief may have had a foundation in fact, that the Indians had a right to take hickory [Pg 284] trees for their axe-handles and whipstocks and hoop-ash for their baskets wherever they found the timber to their liking. At any rate, they helped themselves, with no one to object, and their little camps were developed into primitive manufacturing centres. They usually bartered their products for salt pork, flour, potatoes, old clothes, and apples with the farmers, and for bright ribbons, calico, and many unnecessary things with the storekeepers. When they visited a store they seemed to feel it a duty to keep on buying as long as they had a cent to spend or anything with which to barter.

These recollections naturally roused expectations for the fair. It would surely give an opportunity for another glimpse of primitive life. The trip involved a drive of fifteen miles over roads that varied from a piece that had to be travelled with one wheel in the roadside ditch to avoid a stretch of crushed stone put down under the "county roads system" a year ago, and still unfinished, to a piece that was nothing more than an Indian trail over hills and across gullies. It would take a man of keen discrimination to decide which was the worse, the road made by the white man when working at what should be his best, or by the Indian when not working at all. It should be explained, however, that the trouble with the white man's crushed stone road was the proverbial one of the "ha'p'orth of tar," for lack of which the ship was spoiled. In this case the ha'p'orth represented a heavy steam roller, costing several thousands of dollars, but absolutely indispensable to good road building. Because such a roller was not used on the crushed stone the road that had been treated has naturally caused many people to regard the county roads system of road building a failure. But any system is a failure when the work is not properly done. Another stretch of road represented the work done under military management in pioneer days, and it

was something to make automobilists cast all speed limits to the winds—which they mostly do when they strike it, leaving the foot passengers and drivers the option of dodging into the fence corners or landing among the telegraph wires. But despite the roads the scenery was excellent, and gave us much the same comfort that the Irishman's cow got when her owner drove her to the top of a barren hill and told her that, although the pasture was bad, the view was the finest to be had in three counties. Presently a British flag was seen floating from a flag-pole in a bare, open tract of country beyond two interesting-looking gullies that made the horse prick forward his ears and made the driver remember that hill-climbing on foot is excellent for the liver. [Pg 285]

One naturally expects an Indian show to be held under spreading trees, but the trees in the part of the Muncey Reserve through which we passed are not doing much spreading just now. Somebody—let us hope it was the Indians—has cleared away the timber so industriously that only a few patches of scrub remain. The show ground is behind a high board fence enclosing a couple of buildings and a little race track. An Indian was in charge of the ticket selling, and two more guarded the gate. So far, the prospect was promising. Evidently the Indians were in charge of their own show, but on entering the grounds the disillusionment began. The refreshment stand looked just like a refreshment stand anywhere else, covered with bunting, and made inviting with exhibits of coloured popcorn balls, pink lemonade, and roasting peanuts. There was no pemmican or jerked buffalo meat in sight anywhere. The one specialist who was calling his wares was selling perfume, "three bottles for a quarter," all undoubtedly coal-tar derivatives. The Indians who were on the grounds wore white men's clothing, and were going around seeing the sights like ordinary citizens at any other fair. They wore the Sunday-go-to-meetin' ready-made clothes with as much grace as the white men who were mingling with them. The dresses of the squaws suggested that at least some of them are dealing with the mail-order houses. There was not a blanket in sight. In the Exhibition Hall there were log-cabin quilts, hand and machine made shirts, knitted woollen socks and mittens, quilted babies' bibs, fancy-work, and overgrown vegetables and fruits of the kind seen at every Fall Fair. Among the work of the school children were obvious copies of pictures by Henry Hutt and Gibson, copied from current magazines by the Indian children. In fact, the Indian show was simply a white man's show, exhibiting products such as might be found at a show in any purely white community. The only evidences of Indian work were a few baskets and a Navajo blanket, loaned by some one who wished to show the Indians some of the kind of work the Indians do elsewhere. [Pg 286]

One conspicuous exhibit was worth the trip and the price of admission. Two little Indian children, in red dresses and caps, were playing among the feet of the sightseers with all the vivacity and joyousness of a couple of squirrels. Their liquid black eyes danced with merriment as they risked the chance of being trampled while they played tag with all of childhood's unconsciousness. Their little bronzed faces showed no touch of the care, and perhaps confusion, noticeable in the older faces. The woods were gone, but they were still the little people of the woods. In their veins flowed the pure Indian blood, but they were unconscious that they had been despoiled of their birthright. What they were their elders might still be in a more mature way had it not been for the coming of the white man, but it will not be long before they begin to feel the tragedy of civilisation. All that is left for the Indian is to suppress his own individuality and become an imitation white man. That this is being done with some success is proven by such shows as this, by Government reports, educational reports, and reports of missionary boards. The old quotations about the Indians no longer apply. Pope's lines are obsolete. There were too many black-frocked clergymen going around shaking hands for any one to stand aside, strike a pose, and murmur:

> "Lo, the poor Indian, whose untutored mind
> Sees God in storms and hears him in the wind."

"Gitche Manitou, the Mighty," has gone to the happy hunting grounds with everything else characteristic of the Indian.

On the homeward trip, as we turned on the Longwoods road, a cloud of dust was sighted in the east. [Pg 287]

"To the ditch!" said the driver, and to the ditch we went while a devil-car, driven by what seemed to be a band of Wendigoes, or other fierce barbaric spirits, whirled past. They were of those referred to above, who cast speed limits to the winds, and their passing made a couple of usually very peaceful citizens regret that a few more laws couldn't be cast to the winds for a minute or two. It would have been a real comfort to have taken a pot-shot at that crime against civilisation with an old army musket filled to the muzzle with slugs.

Any one encountering a speed maniac in circumstances such as these no longer wonders why they are hated by the farmers. To be frightened half out of one's wits and then smothered in dust do not give rise to charitable and philanthropic thoughts. The sensation one feels is somewhat the same as that experienced when a man finds himself crossing a railway track and catches sight of an express train coming at the rate of fifty miles an hour. The great difference is that he can get out of the way of the express train, and the engineer and passengers will not show evidences of enjoyment at his discomfiture. No wonder people are afraid of good roads, if having them would entail the advent of motorists of this sort.

Oct. 18.—After all there is nothing like a day in autumn. At dawn the grass was stiff with hoarfrost. Not a breath was stirring. The crickets and grasshoppers were all silent. The occasional crowing of a rooster or barking of a dog only served to make the stillness more noticeable. Slowly the red sun climbed up the hazy sky and flooded the world with light. Slowly

the heat filtered through the still air. The hoarfrost was gone. The grasshoppers and crickets resumed their concert. Flocks of cow-birds whirled over the pasture. The crows in the woods began to caw confidentially as if telling one another secrets. A mower began to clack in the distance, where some farmer was cutting his second crop of clover. An automobile raced past on the concession line throwing up a long cloud of dust that looked like a roll of wool prepared for a [Pg 288] giant's spinning. A single hawk circled in the sky and as we looked up we saw that the air was vibrant with heat and light. In the orchard not a leaf was stirring. The apples glowed like fairy lamps on the bending branches. Here and there in the distant woods that were mantled in a blue haze a maple flared out in red and gold. The ducks in the Government drain suddenly exploded into a loud quacking. The air was heavy with heat. The cattle huddled in the shade and the cow-birds flocked around them. By noon it was as hot as midsummer. And yet there was hoarfrost in the morning. After all there is nothing like a day in the autumn.

We have had a visitor on the farm for the past few days—a visitor that every one from the dog up has treated with respect. When I got home from the village on Saturday night the boys were bubbling over with excitement. When they had gone after the cows at sundown they had noticed a little black and white animal with a big bushy tail in the pasture field. After throwing a stick at it they knew it was a skunk. They had never seen one before, but they had no doubt about the identity of the visitor. A vagrant breeze touched my face while they were telling the story and I knew that they were not mistaken. A skunk had certainly paid us a visit. After they had made sure that it was really a skunk they got out the rifle, for where there are ducks roosting on the ground and an occasional clucking hen passing the night on a low nest skunks are regarded as vermin rather than as fur-bearing animals. But it was too dark for them to be able to see the sights and as they were afraid to go too near the intruder they were not sure that their shots had any effect. In the morning we went up to the woods where the skunk had been seen and Sheppy was not long in locating him. He was under a log among some long grass. The dog stood about a rod away and barked. It was quite evident that he knew the nature of skunks. He makes short work of any rats, muskrats, or ground-hogs that he finds in the open, but he seemed to know that a skunk is different. Instead of urging him on I scolded him away, for he lives with us most of the [Pg 289] time. When the skunk found that he was attracting so much attention he came out from under the log, probably so as to increase his sphere of influence, and we fell back respectfully. As it was the Sabbath it would not do to take out the rifle, so he escaped. In the evening he was seen again in the pasture-field where he was evidently feeding on crickets and grasshoppers. On Monday morning even Sheppy could not locate him, so it is probable that he has resumed his travels. But every time the wind blows from the north-west we are reminded of his visit.

If every cow-bird that we see in the pastures at this time of the year owes its existence to the destruction of a brood of some other kind of birds the destruction of song-birds this season must have been appalling. I have never before known the cow-birds to be so plentiful. Now that they are flocking before migrating to the south they seem even more plentiful than the blackbirds. One day when driving to the village I noticed a flock of these feathered parasites around a pasturing cow. As nearly as I could judge with my eye the flock was about four rods long and a rod wide. The ground seemed black with them, but supposing that only one stood on each square foot we can make a rough calculation of the number in the flock. Four rods equal sixty-six feet—one rod sixteen and a half feet—say sixteen. Sixteen times sixty-six (I had to take a pencil to finish the sum) gives one thousand and fifty birds or rather square feet on each of which a bird stood. Let us say that there were one thousand birds. Each of these during the nesting period probably crowded out from four to five young song sparrows or other small birds. So that one flock of useless, pestiferous cow-birds probably meant the death of three or four thousand useful birds. No wonder our scientists advise us to shoot cow-birds at sight. If they keep on increasing as they have done this year our smaller birds will be in danger of extermination.

I understand that the golden rod is listed among the injurious weeds of Ontario, but I have a very [Pg 290] tender spot for it in my heart. I have never heard any one complaining much about it or putting in a hoed crop to get rid of it, so I do not think it can be very bad. Of course it makes the fence corners look neglected during the summer months, but at this season of the year when it is in bloom it is a delight to the eye. I am told that those afflicted with hay fever have a special grudge against this weed, or flower, but as I have heard hay fever attributed to almost everything from the first violet to the last asters I am not sure that they are right in their diagnosis. Anyway, I am as fond of the golden rod as of the chrysanthemum, and I think that those people who advocate having it adopted for the national flower show excellent taste. The golden rod is now in its glory, and though there may be too much of it to please careful farmers there can never be too much for our artists. It should be allowed to grow in all our parks, for there are no flowers that give a richer touch of colour to the landscape.

Oct. 21.—The days we are having now are not only worth describing separately, but worth living separately. Each one is complete in itself. Take to-day, for instance. When I opened one eye sleepily and looked out—the tent-flap had been open all night—the "rosy-fingered dawn" was busy in the east. Light, smoky clouds were stretched along the horizon, and while they slowly changed to ribbons of ruddy flame I caught the first glimpse of

> "The great, deliberate sun
> Counting his hill-tops one by one."

Probably I dozed off again, for when I opened my eyes wide in what seemed a moment later the sun was clear of the clouds and the day had begun. All the grass and ground vegetation was white with hoarfrost. As I walked to the mushroom bed that had been made in a patch of sod in

the corner of the garden I could feel and hear it crunching underfoot. Of course, the night had been too cold for mushrooms, but before leaving the subject I want to put on record the fact that among those gathered from this bed yesterday was one beauty that measured seventeen inches [Pg 291] in circumference. No, I am not living entirely on mushrooms these days.

What seemed the most remarkable event of this morning was the singing of a robin that had perched on the top of a spruce tree. It sang as robins sing in the early spring. As I had not heard one for months, it made the morning start off "cheerily, cheerily, cheerily!" Crows were cawing in that emphatic way they have when they appear to be saying something, and every now and then a meadow-lark flung its musical cry across the fields.

When breakfast was over the frost had disappeared and the chill had left the air. There was a minute of indecision in which we argued whether to haul in corn or to dig the potatoes. It was finally decided to go at the potatoes, as they were planted on a clay knoll and would come out cleaner if dug when the ground was dry than if left until after a rain. The corn could wait. With pails and potato forks we started across the pasture, with the sun behind us, towards a fringe of maple trees. The colours of the landscape ranged from the tender green of a near-by wheatfield to the violent crimson of one bushy maple at the edge of the pasture. The gently-stirring air was full of autumn odours, autumn sounds, autumn touches. There was something to delight every sense. It was a perfect Canadian October day.

The belated harvest of the corn and vegetables is really the most delightful of the year, though people often let it become the most disagreeable. Because there is no particular hurry about husking the corn or getting in the roots and vegetables, many people linger over the work until the bad weather catches them. It is safe to say that every fall there is enough good weather for this work, but it is such beautiful, lazy, deceitful weather that they dawdle through it until it ends in a storm, and then they pick their roots and potatoes with wet, red, cracked, and chilled hands, and perhaps sit in a snowdrift and husk their corn. The potatoes we were digging were not so big [Pg 292] as those that proud farmers send to the office of *The Farmer's Advocate* to show what can be done by scientific methods, but they were of the clean, smooth variety that you like to get baked with a chop and kidney. They came out of the dry ground free from clay, and it was not long before the pile began to look like good eating. I had not picked many bushels, however, before I began to be glad that the day was so beautiful, and that nature about me had so many charms that one had to straighten up to observe and talk about. Picking potatoes is a job that should be done by a man of the kind described by Lincoln, when he said that the fellow's legs were barely long enough to reach to the ground. Mine are altogether too long for this work, and stooping to pick even the finest potatoes gets tiresome.

A frog was heard croaking in the long grass, and I knew from the sound he was making that a garter snake was slowly swallowing him. A careful search failed to locate the scene of the tragedy, but it rested my back.

The potato patch is in a little clearing that extends into the woods from the south, and when the October sun got nicely warmed up to its work I doubt if there was a hotter spot in western Ontario. That gave me an excuse to walk home for a drink of water. I was almost discouraged when I saw the number of potatoes that had been uncovered during my absence. When I was about ready to drop from exhaustion a stray hen began to cackle in the distance. Her nest had to be found, of course. More rest. By this time I was not so much surprised that people put off digging their potatoes until after the snow fell. A black squirrel that stole out of the woods and stole an ear of corn and then stole back to the woods with it afforded a few minutes of restful nature-study. Still the pile grew and was good to look at. The pailfuls of potatoes got heavier every trip that was made to the pit, and I was thinking of going home to get the children's express cart when a mourning dove flew across; but he was too brisk to be interesting. In fact he was not mourning at all. I was. Just about the time I was beginning to wonder if some one had not [Pg 293] commanded the sun to stand still so as to give us an interminable forenoon, the call for dinner was heard. I responded as quickly as the hired man who blew up the factory by letting go of the can of dynamite he was lifting the moment he heard the whistle blow.

In the afternoon the nature-study continued, and the thermometer registered eighty-two in the shade. I hate to think what it must have registered out there in the sun. A great flock of crows went flapping across the south-west early in the afternoon, and it was quite comfortable to sit back on the edge of a furrow and watch them and wonder where they were going, but the last one trailed past and then I began to wonder why people eat so many potatoes. There are doctors who say that too much starchy food is not good for one. I wish I had met one in the spring before we planted the potatoes and had been convinced by him that this is true. The chief trouble in this world is that we do so much needless work, but there is a proverb that unless we work we cannot eat. Oh, well, the patch is not so very big, after all, and a good rush will finish it. By the time it was finished I was beginning to feel proud of the pile I had gathered, and was almost sorry to lend a hand in covering it with straw and earth, because that hid the potatoes from sight. But I'll see them again, when they will have to be picked over before being put in winter quarters.

The care of vegetables for winter is quite a study in itself, and I hear many suggestions about the best way to keep cabbages. A favourite plan in this part of the country is to dig a trench and place the heads in it, face downwards, and then cover them with earth. It is also a question whether the parsnips and salsify should be left in the ground as they are and dug as wanted. The celery must be buried in sand, so they say. Beets, carrots, and turnips for household use seem to do better and keep a finer flavour if pitted—provided the mice do not get after them. These are all things that must be settled within the next few days in intervals of corn-husking.

After all—to be guilty of a bull—the best part of the day was the night. After the sun went down in hazy mildness the full moon swung up in the east to take his place, and almost immediately a fog began to rise from the heated earth. By the time the moon was well clear of the trees all the low places looked like pools of silver water. Towards the east the illusion of a broad river, with the distant woods as the farther bank, was perfect. Although the temperature ceased to be oppressively hot, the thermometer registered over sixty at 9 o'clock. There are weather-wise folk who say that this unusual heat and the screaming of the bluejays in the afternoon mean a sudden change in the weather, so perhaps we may have to wear mits when handling corn after all. But to-day has been sufficient unto itself. And now to sleep—perchance to dream. [Pg 294]

The hawk of the summer wind is proud,
  She circles high at the throne of the sun;
When the storm is fierce her scream is loud,
  And the scorching glance of her eye we shun;

And oftentimes, when the sun is bright,
  A silence falls on the choirs of song,
And the partridge shrinks in wild affright,
  Where a searching shadow swings along.

The hound of the autumn wind is slow,
  He loves to bask in the heat and sleep
When the sun through the drowsy haze bends low,
  And frosts from the hills through the starlight creep;

But oftentimes he starts in his dreams,
  When the howl of the winter wolf draws nigh,
Then lazily rolls in the gold-warm beams,
  While the flocking birds to the south drift by.

Oct. 24.—At this time of the year we get evenings and nights "that were not meant for slumber." They invite us to lowly self-communion, mental expansion, and serene thoughts. After a busy day the night comes upon us unexpectedly, before the chores are done, and there is an irresistible temptation to sit in the darkness and be at peace. The warm air is heavy with the odour of ripe apples, and the shrill concert of the crickets and other innumerable insects is so steadily maintained that it seems a new phase of silence. One thin note is poured out so insistently that you almost mistake it for a ringing in your ears. Over this beats a ceaseless rhythm that rises and falls in waves of sound as if in obedience to the baton of some invisible leader. Through all rises the irregular shrilling of the crickets. This autumn concert is so constant that the ear becomes unconscious of it, except in moments of attention. Yet it seems to have a stimulating effect on the mind. Sitting idly in the darkness, we find our thoughts becoming active with all manner of themes—the progress of science—the mystery of our political and business organisations—the place and fate of the individual in the scheme of things. [Pg 295]

While meditating idly on these things in the darkness under the stars I could not help realising how little we really understand about even the most familiar scientific, business, commercial, or political facts. They seem to be of importance to the race rather than to the individual. The individual is compelled to do his part in carrying out all sorts of ideas of which even the mightiest have no control and perhaps but little understanding. Thinking along this line I looked up at the stars and quite naturally thought of the astronomical facts that are now the commonplaces of our public schools. Where I sat I was facing the "Circle of Constant Apparition" and overhead was the constellation Lyra, towards which the sun and its attendant planets are said to be rushing like a flaming disc sent spinning through space from the hand of some mighty discobolus. My thoughts turned to the motions of the heavenly bodies as they are taught to us in the schools. For years I thought I had a clear conception of the motions of the earth on its axis and around the sun, and with little effort could visualise it as [Pg 296]

"A great round marvel, rolling in space."

But when Halley's comet appeared in the sky a few years ago I found that I had no grasp of solar and planetary motions. What puzzled me was that we saw the comet every morning for a while, and then it suddenly changed to the evening sky. Why was this? What caused the sudden jump of about sixteen hours in the time of seeing the comet? Of course I figured it out finally, but in doing so I found that I had never had a clear conception of the movements of the planets, though I had learned about them in school and had taught them in school. Since then I have propounded the question to others, and have yet to find any one who could explain that change of time off-hand. Yet we all know that the earth revolves on its axis and circles the sun. This is probably the most familiar of the great astronomical facts, and though we assent to it few of us understand it in the least. I am inclined to think it is the same with most of the great facts of business and government that we talk about so glibly.

Presently the moon rose serenely and lit up the quiet scene. In the growing light much of the magic of the night disappeared or rather the coming of the moon brought a new and different magic. But I had had enough for one night. Rising to my feet, I paused for a moment to look at the moon, and in spite of all I had been thinking about, life seemed good. The perfume of ripe apples was still in the air, and the little musicians of the night were still giving their concert. In the circumstances it seemed only right to apostrophise the moon, but in my lighter mood I did not

recall anything from Tennyson or Browning or Whitman, as I had done earlier. Instead, my memory gave back a whimsical bit from an apostrophe to the moon that had appeared in *Puck* many years ago and in spite of its flippancy it seemed to fit the situation. After telling his troubles [Pg 297] to the moon the poet exclaimed:

"Never you mind!
You are a durned good old moon anyhow."

Oct. 26.—Packing apples is an ideal job for an Indian-summer day. The year seems to be as ripe as the fruit and a poet might pick off perfect days to store in song for future meditation just as we pick and store the apples for future use. Last night there was a sharp frost and when "the sun, new risen, looks through the horizontal misty air shorn of his beams," the fields were white with rime. While the air was being warmed and the south wind began to stir was a good time to carry apple barrels from the shed to the orchard. Having been shown how to carry two at a time by placing them against my hips and catching the outer rims, I felt as if I were trying to fly. I would gladly have employed a professional packer to do the work, but being unable to get any one to help, a demonstrator of the Fruit Branch showed me how the job should be done, and I tackled it myself. He assured me that after I get through with the Peewaukees it will be fun, as the Spies and Baldwins are all over No. 1 size, and all I shall have to watch for will be the culls. In the Peewaukees the side worms were particularly active and did a lot of damage. Wherever apples touched one another or touched a leaf the worms burrowed around in the skin and made culls of what would otherwise have been prime fruit. The cut made by this worm "is not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church door; but 'tis enough, 'twill serve." I have heard it said that experienced packers can tell a defective apple by the touch and go on picking up three apples in each hand and looking at the scenery at the same time. I am not yet an experienced packer, and though I wore my glasses and did not handle more than a couple of apples at a time, defective ones would still get past me. I would find them in the sorting basket, and later on in the barrel when I was racking it after emptying each basket. Those first barrels caused me a lot of work and worry, and [Pg 298] though I did my best, I am haunted by the fear that some culls have got past me. This leads me to sympathise with at least some of the farmers who get into trouble by packing improperly branded fruit. Unless one is skilled at the work, he is almost certain to make mistakes, and the man from the Fruit Branch told me that culls were so sure to get in that one might as well forget about the ten per cent. allowed by law. You may do your level best and the ten per cent. will still be there. This goes to prove that packing apples is a thoroughly artistic job. Art critics tell us that no work of art is great if it does not contain some slight error. If it is mathematically perfect it is beyond human sympathy. But the artist need not take the trouble to deliberately put in the error. Being human, he is bound to do that in spite of all his skill. Only machine-made art objects can be absolutely perfect, and they never appeal to a cultivated taste. But let us get back to the apples.

There is always something to learn about apple-growing. This summer I learned more about the work than I thought there was to know before I began, and as each expert I meet tells me something new, I am being forced to the conclusion that as yet I haven't got rightly started. The last thing I have learned is that if a man is not careful when picking this year's crop he may pick next year's crop along with it. When apples are pulled too green, as altogether too many have been this season, the twigs on which they grow are liable to break off with the stems. As these twigs are the ones that have the fruit buds for next year's crop, careless picking can do a great deal of damage. When an apple is properly matured, the stem separates from the twig naturally without breaking close to the apple or pulling off the twig. As the fruit on one Peewaukee tree was somewhat green, I had a chance to see just what this destruction amounts to, and it was surprising. This leads me to wonder if there will be much fruit next year on orchards where the fruit was picked at least a month ago, when the apples were decidedly green. It is bad enough to have to sell this year's crop for a small price without destroying next year's at the same time. [Pg 299]

Although the apples are being packed, they are not definitely sold, but the probability is that they will be shipped to Edmonton, where people's mouths seem to be watering for choice Ontario apples. As I know with whom I am dealing, I feel sure of fair treatment, and the prices suggested are so amazing that I am compelled to take a chance. Arrangements are being made to get a fruit car that will be heated if necessary, and every precaution will be taken to insure the delivery of the apples in good condition. It looks as if we would have a carload of No. 1 fruit, about one-half Spies and Baldwins, and, according to the information I have received, Ben Davises will rank as first-class apples in the West. If the venture turns out well, others may be encouraged to act independently, and if I do not realise the wonderful prices that are being suggested, I shall be like the man who was kicked by a mule, I shall not be as pretty as I was, but I'll know more.

Oct. 27.—It was all a mistake about those ducks. I might have studied them and written them up any time since they came out of the shell, but I got an idea into my head that ducks are so active that I should have to be feeling particularly fit and to be prepared to take a day off for the job. Now that I have looked into the matter I find that the old hen that hatched them misled me entirely. She kept up such a continual clacking and scolding because those ducks didn't act like chickens that I got to thinking that they must be unusually trying creatures. And all the while those young ducks were probably living their duck lives in a quiet, contented way, and there was no reason in the world why they should be reformed into chickens. Fortunately, the old hen finally gave up in despair, and after loudly prophesying that the whole place was going to the dogs just because those ducks couldn't be taught to roost in an apple tree, and because they were all the time getting their feet wet, she went back to laying eggs, and the last I heard of her she was in solitary confinement, because she wanted to start hatching again at this time of the year. [Pg 300] All of which goes to show that there is a great deal of unnecessary fussing going on in this world,

and that it is possible for well-meaning people to make a nuisance of themselves. The old hen meant well, but she had tackled an entirely unnecessary job.

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

To begin with, I shooed the ducks from under the granary. Though I was loath to disturb them duty must be done. The whole flock rose with a simultaneous "quack" and squattered through a [Pg 301] near-by puddle. "Squattered" is exactly the right word, and I have the authority of Burns for using it:

> "Awa' ye squattered like a drake
> On whistling wings."

The word seems to describe both their appearance and the sounds they make. As soon as they reached a place of safety they all stopped and began wiggling their tails. Then I saw a great light. Duck language is not expressed with the tongue, but with the tail. There is a sameness about the sounds they utter that would make it impossible for them to carry on a connected conversation. With their tails it is different. They seem able to give an infinite variety to the way in which they wiggle them. They can express joy, satisfaction, contempt, surprise, or any other emotion, by the simple wiggling of their tails. Did you ever see a duck dive into the water in such a way as to leave only its tail exposed? If you have you could never fail to tell when it managed to get a good juicy root or a snail by the happy way it would wiggle its tail. Sometimes when they are very happy they can wiggle their tails so fast that all the eye can catch is a sort of hazy blur. At other times, when they are attending to their toilet and rubbing themselves down with the backs of their heads, they will give their tails a little flirt that is just as proud as proud. I think if I set myself to it I could write a bulletin on the language of duck tails. After I had disturbed them they stood and wiggled their tails at one another in a way that seemed to be entirely disrespectful to me. They seemed to be saying, "Humph! I wonder what he thinks he wants now. Did you ever see such a looking creature? How on earth does he manage to balance himself up on end in that way when every duck knows that the true, graceful position for a creature's body is to be hung between two legs horizontally! I wonder how he manages to convey his ideas, if he has any, without having a gaudy little bunch of feathers to wiggle the same as we have. Those sounds he makes with his mouth when the children are around can't have any more meaning than our [Pg 302] quacking. It must be terrible to be a poor dumb creature like that." Then they all said "Quack" and gave their tails a most superior wiggle. At this point an unwary cricket started to move past about ten feet away, and instantly every neck in the flock was stretched out full length and every tail wig-wagged: "My meat!" I don't know which one got it, though I think it must have been the brown drake from the contented way he wiggled his tail for some minutes afterwards.

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

Oct. 28.—Isn't there an old fable about an ass that wrapped himself in a lion's skin and tried to [Pg 303] ramp and roar like the king of beasts, and got himself laughed at and kicked in the diaphragm

and otherwise subjected to "grievous bodily harm"? I seem to remember such a fable, but I cannot lay my hands on it, and the children, who are at the fable-reading stage of education, are all in bed and I cannot ask them. Anyway it doesn't matter, for I do not want to quote it. I simply want to have the moral of the thing in the back of my head to keep me on the right track, while I indulge in an old-fashioned grumble. This morning I got a letter from a correspondent that finally brought to a head a number of things that I have been feeling peevish about ever since coming back to the country. Broadly speaking I have been mourning the disappearance of all kinds of country amusements. There is no encouragement for local talent of any kind, either for the intellectual talent for reciting and singing, or the physical talent for jumping or catching the greased pig. If we have an entertainment we import singers and elocutionists, and if we have a fall fair it must be an imitation World's Fair. The lion's skin of city attractions is being stretched out in every direction, and we can see long ears peeping from under every corner of it. Every town and village must be citified in everything it does, and the result is a lot of low-grade attractions entirely lacking in the old-fashioned and forever-artistic merit of sincerity. I do not think I am peculiar in my tastes, but if I cannot see the best I want to see what is honest and sincere. It has been my good fortune to hear some of the world's best entertainers, but when I cannot hear them I prefer the honest sing-song recitations of a schoolboy or school-girl to the conceited caterwauling of some half-baked elocutionist. In the same way if I cannot see a real world's fair I can enjoy myself thoroughly at an old-fashioned country fair where the exhibits are those of honest people who are trying to excel in their own way. But when we have an entertainment nowadays we must import talent, and when we have a fall fair we must have a midway and circus stunts by hamfatters, who would be hooted in the places where such performances really belong. We must be citified at any cost, and the result is tawdry entertainments and fairs, when by employing local talent and encouraging local effort we could have entertainments and fairs that would be wholesome and helpful.

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But say, do you remember the old-time country fall fairs before the days of vaudeville turns and hand-painted chickens? Every day when going to the post office, I pass the spreading tree from whose branches I watched my first horse-race. I would climb that tree right now and not care who was looking if I thought I could feel again the thrills and excitement of that bygone day. I not only knew the jockeys, but I knew the horses—all except one. My favourite was a bay mare somewhat given to what the society reporters call "om-bong-pong" on account of living on pasture, and her rider was one of my youthful heroes, perhaps because he was said to be "a leetle wild." But in spite of high hopes and a blue-beech gad our horse didn't win. The stranger took the prize, but I never felt that it was fair, and I leave it to you. For three weeks or a month before the show the stranger kept in his mare and fed her on dry timothy and oats, and had her all "ganted up." And he had a real raw-hide riding whip. Still it was a great race even if we did lose, and never since have I seen a race by which I was so deeply moved. And after the races there was a baseball match, and when the catcher got "het up" and excited he threw his vest on top of the Temperance Hall, and after the game was over had to put up a rail and climb after his vest. And the winning team won by at least twenty runs. And then there was the fat pig—so fat he couldn't stand up and took his meals in bed, like a person of leisure. But I mustn't get started on the exhibits or I'll never know when to stop. It was a few years after this that the "Pride of the Valley" man began coming to our fair. What a wonderful man he was, with that eloquent voice and long flowing hair. They don't make medicine like "Pride of the Valley" any more. It was good for man and beast, and indispensable to fowls. It toned your muscles, stimulated your circulation, and renovated your liver. It brightened your eye, restored your complexion, and stopped your hair from falling out. And all it cost was twenty-five cents, one quarter, or two York shillings a box. One fall I was feeling low and I bought a box. The stuff looked as if it had been culled from the Ontario weed book, but I made a tea from it as instructed, and took a dose. My recovery was instantaneous. I forgot everything except the taste in my mouth. No, they don't make medicines like that any more, and there are no gifted orators like the man who sold the incomparable and universal panacea. Both medicine and vendor belonged to a more robust age. We are living in an age of soft speech, and sugar-coatings, and vaudeville stunts. Ehue! ehue!

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Oct. 29.—"Blaa-aa-aa-aa-umph!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

About the only creature on the farm that pays any attention to the calf is Sheppy, the collie dog. He stands in front of her by the hour, growling and barking, while she keeps her little sprouts of horns towards him and goes on feeding. I wish I could understand dog language well enough to know what Sheppy is saying to her, for he seems to be dreadfully in earnest, even though he never ventures near enough to give her a nip. As a matter of fact, Sheppy is cow-shy, and it is all due to the capable mother of this calf. When he was in the puppy stage, and beginning bravely to learn his work in the world, she reached him with a swinging kick that knocked him heels over head across the barn yard, and took all the spunk out of him as far as cows are concerned. He will drive a horse or pigs, and the turkey-gobblers have no terrors for him, but I can't make him go after the cows. She taught him a lesson that he hasn't forgotten. Possibly that is why he snarls so much at her calf. If he knew how to quote Shelley, he would probably be saying: [Pg 307]

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

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

I sometimes wonder if our scientists have observed the calf as carefully as they should. Every one who has fed calves knows their tendency to bunt unexpectedly when feeding. They do the same when feeding from the cow, and it is just possible that there is light and leading in this fact for our inventors of milking machines. It is well known that incubators were a failure until some one noticed that sitting hens always turn their eggs at regular intervals. This hint led him to turn the eggs in the incubator in the same way as the hen does, and from that hour dates the success of artificial incubation. Perhaps, if some one would invent a milking machine that would bunt the cow at regular intervals, it would be a complete success. It is worth thinking about. Possibly, also, if we studied calves a little, the job of feeding them would not be so trying on the temper and damaging to our clothes. I have noticed that, when it is feeding, a calf always wiggles its tail, and it has occurred to me that there may be some connection between this and its bunting. Mark Twain once showed that a donkey couldn't bray if it couldn't lift its tail at the same time. He tied a brick to the tail of one that was serenading him, and it stopped at once. Perhaps if one tied a brick to a calf's tail, it wouldn't bunt over the pail when learning to feed by itself. The co-ordination of actions is one of the mysteries of nature. Some one who has a young calf might try it and report the result. The calf I have under observation is too far advanced to be experimented [Pg 308] on in this way. It is passing from the milk stage, and now has a preference for harness straps, and it seems to positively relish a yard or two of night-shirt when it can get near the clothes-line.

The lonesome calf has convinced me that there is something in the law of heredity. Its mother is probably about as impudent a piece of cow-flesh as ever was allowed to live. She was raised as a pet, and human beings have no terrors for her. Nothing ever proved more clearly than she does that familiarity breeds contempt. I could safely defy any one to carry a pail across a field that she is in without having her get her nose in it. If a gate or door shows a crack an inch wide, she will work it open, and, followed by her darling yearling, will proceed to get into mischief. If she happens to be in the lane when some one comes along in a buggy, she will stand right in the middle of the path and stare in the most unmannerly way. It is useless to yell at her. The only thing to do is to get out and use the buggy whip on her and her yearling. Now, I have noticed that the calf is developing along the same lines. Every day I have to push it out of my way, and it has the same investigating spirit. It pokes its way into everything, and then looks surprised and hurt when it is reproved. Sometimes it is hurt, too, for some people inherit hasty tempers. But the point I want to make is that the calf has really inherited its exasperating ways. It hasn't learned them from its mother, because they are seldom or never together. They are bred in its bones. I hope that her good qualities, as the producer of a liberal supply of milk, rich in butter-fat, are also inherited. If they are, I shall forgive much. Anyway, I have learned that heredity is a real thing, and if I ever go in for a herd of cows, I shall take care to get a few that will have all the good qualities that a cow should have, in the firm belief that their offspring will inherit their virtues. It seems to me it should be just as easy to have good cows as poor ones, if one started right.

A couple of weeks ago, the red cow and her yearling got on the road and started off to see the [Pg 309] world. Of course, it was the wettest day of the season, but that didn't matter. I had to hitch up

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

When I got home in the rain with the stray cows, the lonesome calf was standing humped up under the drip of the granary. "Blaa-aa-aa-umph!" [Pg 310]

A BALLADE OF NUTTING

Whenas October putteth on
  Her bravery of green and gold
And far horizons dimly don
  A purple veil of filmy fold,
  When days are warm and nights are cold—
Dawn hath a frosted coronal—
  Then I betake me, as of old,
To nut-trees—hickory, ches-, and wal-.

The song birds gather and are gone
  To where the year is summer-souled.
The squirrels scamper in the sun,
  The blue jays in the orchard scold.
  The quail are whistling in the wold
(Rare word, that fits a madrigal),
  While forth we go, with spirits bold,
To nut-trees—hickory, ches-, and wal-.

Time was when I as climber shone,
  But younger legs must now take hold,
And younger shins be barked upon
  The shell-bark, grievous to be tholed.
  (These fruits drupaceous, I am told,
In proteid value are not small.)
  But now my gay ballade is trolled
To nut-trees—hickory, ches-, and wal-.

ENVOI

Prince, if you have ever lolled
  In autumn days, or ever shall,
You'll swell the praise that here is doled
  To nut-trees—hickory, ches-, and wal-.

[Pg 311]

NOVEMBER

Nov. 1.—The gentle rain that Portia commended so highly as dropping from heaven did not blow up with an east wind. B-r-r-r! Ever since, and probably before, it blasted the ears of corn in Pharaoh's dream the east wind has been spreading desolation. At this time of the year it carries the coldest, wettest brand of rain known to suffering humanity, and can make it beat on the inside of an umbrella as readily as on the outside. In fact carrying an umbrella when an east wind is blowing is simply a form of exercise. A bedraggled man with an umbrella that had been turned inside out told me, in a peevish tone of voice, that the east rain we have been having had drenched every part of his anatomy except under his porous plaster, and it had lifted a corner of that. The storm that is now raging—no, I mean whining, for the east wind is altogether too ornery and mean-spirited to rage—has put the world out of joint, and what it has done to the roads "would not be good to hear." Nevertheless I met a cheerful soul who had a good word to say for it. He has a windmill and he assured me that an east wind is the most dependable of all when one

wants to grind chop-feed. It blows more steadily than any other wind. Oh, yes, it is steady all right. It usually blows for three days at a stretch, and when it is done a man has become so sour on life that he hates his best friends. Even though I respect my informant, I refuse to give the east wind credit for good intentions in the matter. It can't understand the use of windmills. It must think that when it gets them creaking and clacking it is doing mischief.

The creatures of the barn yard contend with the storm in different ways. When the cattle and [Pg 312]
horses are driven out to be watered they turn their backs to the pelting wind and rain and drift to the nearest shelter. The turkeys, on the contrary, stand and face the storm with their heads huddled down on their breasts at the point where the carver inserts the fork. The turkey, by the way, is the true weathercock. When roosting in the open he invariably faces the wind. The reason for this is plain. The wind blowing on his breast packs his feathers down closer and so makes their protection complete. If it were allowed to strike in the opposite direction it would ruffle up the feathers and leave the bird practically naked to the elements. As for the chickens—well, if there is anything in nature more disconsolate-looking than a wet hen the tragedy of its existence has never been adequately described. The hogs are the weather prophets of the barn yard, and those that are not penned up began to burrow into the strawstacks even before the newspapers reported the coming storm. When called to the feed-trough they respond reluctantly in spite of their much-maligned appetites, and when the east wind strikes them they let out a concert of squeals that makes one understand just what the good Sir Walter meant when he described the singing at a conventicle as sounding "like a hog in a high wind." But enough of this, lest some patient reader should be tempted to exclaim with Job: "Should a wise man utter vain knowledge and fill his belly with the East Wind!"

Last Sunday afternoon there were a couple of black squirrels on the beech knoll, and I was glad it was Sunday, because the sight roused in me certain predatory feelings that I thought I had outlived. In the old evil days to see a black squirrel was to run for a gun, and there is no knowing of what might have happened if it hadn't been Sunday in a community where there is a proper regard for the Lord's Day Alliance. Still, the squirrels were comparatively safe. My own rifle is twenty miles away and the nearest shotgun that might be borrowed is in a farmhouse at a distance of three miles. But although circumstances made it possible for me to restrain myself, it [Pg 313]
will probably make little difference to the squirrels. They will almost certainly go into the bag of some city hunter. At the present time these gentry are ranging through the country, shooting up everything from chipmunks to stray hens, and no doubt imagining that, like Nimrod of old, they are "mighty hunters before the Lord." Why can't they stick to clay pigeons and spare the feelings of those who haven't got guns handy? It is really no wonder that the farmers are beginning to disfigure the country with "No shooting" and "No trespassing" signs. The few squirrels and quail that remain are farm pets rather than wild game. A few more seasons of the city hunter, and the boys in this district will know nothing about black squirrels, except what they learn from Sam Wood's vivid article in the new Fourth Reader.

Let no one imagine that, although winter is at hand, the country is without its hours of excitement. The first storm is the signal for tying up the young cattle in the stable for the first time, and any one who officiates at such a function will not lack an overflow of emotions. You can't take a dehorned yearling by the ear and tell him persuasively that a well-bedded stall and a full manger are much to be preferred to the pelting rain and the scorn of the outer dark. Whatever else has changed on the farm, the young cattle are just the same as ever and just as stubborn. The method of handling them, however, is changed somewhat. The old way used to be to take a stake out of the cordwood rack and try to make them see the light. At the present time the buggy-whip seems the handiest thing to use, and the whole family is called out to enjoy a game of "bull-in-the-ring." In spite of the best efforts of every one, including the collie dog, some of them will break away to the far end of the lane. Even after they have been driven one by one into the stable it is hard to make them understand that only one should go into a stall. They seem to prefer to go in bunches, and sometimes the language of the inside workers whose task it is to tie them up is feverish and painful.

Nov. 7.—We were starting to town to have the children's photograph taken for Christmas when [Pg 314]
some one shouted:

"Look at the turkeys!"

Sure enough the turkeys were coming home. All fall they have been living in a coop at the woods where they could have plenty of territory to range over and live the semi-wild life in which they thrive best. They were so placed that they could forage in the woods or steal from the cornfield, besides getting their regular rations, and life for them was one grand sweet song. Every time the gobblers gobbled they did it so lustily that those who heard involuntarily murmured "Merry Christmas!" They had not visited the home buildings since being put at the woods, but now they were coming all together as fast as they could run. First, they would run a little to the left, then a little to the right, like the merry villagers approaching the front of the stage in a musical comedy. You would almost imagine that they were dodging between invisible trees. When they reached the barn yard the gobblers all gobbled and gave every evidence of being glad to be home again. We might have suspected that there was something going to happen when the turkeys acted in this way, but, being mere human beings depending on reason for guidance instead of instinct, we bundled ourselves into the buggy and went to town.

Having photographs taken, like everything else in this progressive age, has become a commonplace affair. We went about it without any more excitement than if we were buying groceries. After the group was placed, not posed—for it is no longer necessary to take a fixed position and hold it for a time exposure until all the feeling of a human being leaves one—the

photographer squeezed a little rubber bulb, the shutter clicked, and the operation was over. Of course, there was the little matter of father getting down on all fours in a far corner of the studio and making believe that he was a bear so as to make the serious-minded baby smile, but we will not go into that. Still, it was a task requiring considerable artistic skill. The acting had to be [Pg 315] finely shaded, with just enough realism to make the baby smile without making the older children laugh. While I have never set much store by my histrionic abilities, I venture to think that if the critics had seen my performance they would have given me press notices that would be worth preserving. As it was there were those present who mourned because they could not get a snapshot of me in that character. I think I played the bear just about as well as Bully Bottom would have played the lion. I roared "as gently as a sucking dove." As I have suggested, the act was very brief, and perhaps that was as well. I might not have been able to sustain the character for any length of time. I couldn't help remembering how different it was the first time I "had my picture took." I had a new home-made suit of which I felt duly proud and somehow got the necessary funds to have a tintype taken. I was placed in the most awkward position I have ever been in, and under the orders of the photographer I gazed steadily at a feather duster until the tears came into my eyes while he held his watch and counted like the referee at a prize-fight. Years afterwards it took two strong men to hold me when that tintype was brought out for the edification of a mixed company.

When we came out of the photographer's we realised what had ailed the turkeys. The snowstorm of the season was in progress. A strong wind was blowing from the east and driving the big flakes before it. It would have been an interesting sight if it were not that we were over three miles from home and would have to face it all the way. There was nothing to do, however, but to pile into the buggy and start for home. There were no woods anywhere to break the force of the storm, and soon we were all as white as Santa Claus. The children began to get cold, and father—oh, well, it was a trying situation. There seemed to be twice as many people in the buggy as when we were going down, but now that I think it over in a serene frame of mind I can see that nothing makes cramped quarters seem so over-crowded as a little touch of temper. Of course we got [Pg 316] home safely, though cold and storm-beaten, and we finally got thawed out. Hereafter when the turkeys begin to act up in an unusual way I shall stay at home to see what happens. The ancients used to foretell the success of journeys by the flight of birds and I am inclined to think there may have been something in it. Those turkeys certainly seemed to know that our journey would be made uncomfortable by a storm.

Some people are trying hard to believe that we have sleighing, but I have no delusions on that point. An inch or two of light fluffy snow on a lumpy gravel road isn't sleighing. For the past week it has been threatening snow every day, and some has fallen, but it will take a lot more to make good sleighing. The temperature has ranged from zero to twenty-two above during the past week, and we have had real winter weather. From what I have heard about the temperature from others who own thermometers I am beginning to believe that watching the weather is something like fishing. People like to get an unusual record. I have heard four degrees below zero reported, but my thermometer is a prosy, unimaginative instrument that seems inclined to record things as it finds them. I also find that there are people who do not hesitate for a moment to dispute the thermometer. When the mercury is standing at twenty above I have heard them assert vehemently: "I don't care what your old thermometer says; it is colder to-day than it has been since the storm started. I guess I know when I feel cold, don't I?" Of course it is not the function of a thermometer to warm people up when it rises in the tube. If they choose to go out without enough clothes it does not record that fact, but they do. The use of thermometers seems to be having an influence on the climate. Judging by the stories one hears, we don't have such cold winters as they had before thermometers came into use. The effect seems to be the opposite of that reported by the Irishwoman who was asked how far it was to a certain town.

"It used to be only three miles, but one day a surveyor came along and measured the road and it has been five weary miles ever since." In that case science made things harder, but the reading [Pg 317] of the thermometer in this section makes the climate seem less severe.

Driving to school with the children these mornings is a task full of interest. The white page of the snow is scribbled over with all sorts of stories. I never knew rabbits and quail to be so plentiful as they are this year. Their tracks are everywhere, though where they hide themselves is a mystery. I have seen only one rabbit this year. That one was poked out of a culvert, and I saw it only for the three or four seconds it took to get under a stack, yet the whole neighbourhood is tracked by them as if mobs of them played about at night. There are three flocks of quail on the farm and yet I have never seen them except when I set out to search for them diligently. I hear them whistling in different directions almost every morning and evening, but they manage to keep themselves out of sight. This makes me wonder a little about the sharp-sighted heroes of modern nature stories who can't walk through a page of printed text without seeing game and making observations that would take me hours of hunting and watching. If it were not for the snow, which reveals every movement of the little creatures, we should hardly know that there is life of any kind in the fields. To the children these tracks are a never-ending source of wonder and delight. They are sure that the rabbits or quail are under every bush to which the tracks lead, if I would only stop the buggy long enough to let them go and see. But I looked too often years ago when trudging through the fields and woods with a gun to feel much enthusiasm. These winter tracks seem to lead everywhere and nowhere. One almost imagines that they are purposely confused so as to conceal the hiding-places.

Nov. 9.—The turkeys in Appin district are not wild, but their owners are. This is the season of the annual round-up, and if it were not that Canadians are a peaceable and law-abiding people the

results might be disastrous. The confusion is equal to that of a round-up of wild cattle in Texas in the old evil days. Flocks are inextricably mixed. It is true that some of the tough stringy old [Pg 318] gobblers and hens are marked with bits of gaudy rags tied on their wings, but the young, plump, edible birds are unbranded. Hence the confusion and heart-burnings.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Once more the gobblers in convention assembled gobble furiously.

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

"When my hens were setting I noticed that all their eggs were sharp-pointed, and I've heard it [Pg 319] said that gobblers always hatch out of that kind."

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

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

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

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

Nov. 11.—During the past couple of days I have had a chance to give some close study to the hen. It was decided to shift one of the flocks to another house. This was done at night—the time when [Pg 320] so many hens are shifted. They were picked from their roosts, stuffed into canvas bags, and carried squawking to their new home. Chicken-thieves must have a knack that I cannot discover, or they would be caught every time they make a raid. It doesn't matter whether I catch a hen by the legs or by the neck, or by both at once, she is sure to squawk, and after she is put in a bag she keeps right on "searching her soul for sounds to tell how scared she is." Merely as a matter of scientific interest, I should like to know how the chicken-thieves manage their work so quietly. If there happen to be any among the readers of this page, I wish they would write me a line privately, telling how the trick is done. Communications will be treated as strictly confidential, and I promise not to make bad use of the information given. I really want to know, for it is an irritating mystery how a creature so full of assorted noises can be taken away in silence. Those who know will please write, instead of coming and giving a practical demonstration. They need not disclose name and address as a guarantee of good faith. Write soon.

The only thing in the first night of the moving that seems worth recording was the conduct of the sporty Leghorn rooster. He had been plunged head-first into a bag, squawking like the most chicken-hearted pullet, but when he had been dumped on the floor of his new home he began to strut around and talk hen talk just as if everything had turned out as he had expected. He crooned and clucked to his flock, and acted for all the world like the leader of an Opposition that had suffered a humiliating defeat. He seemed to be telling his followers not to be discouraged, for when the right time came he would rip things wide open and crow over the wreck of the

Government. On the day after the moving the old chicken-house was taken away, or every hen would have been back in it next night. As the phrenologists used to say, "The hen has a wonderfully developed bump of locality." When she gets settled in one place she becomes very much attached to it. Unless carried beyond her bearings, she will come back as inevitably as a [Pg 321] cat. Knowing this, we were not surprised, on going out with the lantern on the second night, to find a lot of the hens huddled where the chicken-house had stood. The snow was pelting down on them, but they seemed to prefer the tender associations of the old place to the warmth and shelter of the new. There was nothing to be done but to grab them by the legs and carry them to their new home again. Wishing to get through with the job as quickly as possible, I put one under each arm, took two in each hand, and carried the lantern with my teeth. I was just about as fully occupied as a man could well be, but it is always at such times that things begin to happen. I hadn't walked two rods before my nose got itchy. Wow! It wasn't a gentle little tickling, but a wild, exasperating, fiery agony that made me wrinkle up my face till my eyes were shut. I couldn't raise my hands without dropping chickens, and I couldn't get comfort from the wire fence because the lantern was in the way. For the next few seconds I was as busy as Rex Beach's "one-armed paper-hanger with the hives." But it was no use. Luckily the hen-house was not far away, and I rushed towards it. As soon as I reached the door I scattered chickens all over the place and clutched my nose. It is all right for you to laugh, but if you were the right kind of person you would rub your nose in sympathy as you read this. I wonder how many of you did.

Among the chickens that had to be carried were four pure-bred Brahma cockerels and a pullet. They interested me, and from now on I am going to cultivate their acquaintance. All fall they have been ranging over the whole farm, and even trespassing on neighbouring farms in search of sunflower seeds and other delicacies. This had caused me some surprise, for my early recollections of Brahmas were that they were exceedingly sedentary fowls, slow movers, and without ambition, save the overmastering ambition of the hens to set. As I remember them they were setting all the time and all over the place. If they were thrown off the nests they would cuddle down contentedly on a door-knob or piece of broken crockery, apparently with the idea of [Pg 322] hatching out some egg-cups. When approached they would ruffle up their feathers and snarl, but they wouldn't move unless lifted. It was useless to hold them under the spout and pump on them, for that only seemed to make them mad—which justifies the proverb, "Mad as a wet hen." It was practically impossible to break them of setting. But I am assured that these up-to-date Brahmas are non-setters. They can't be induced to set. I can't help wondering how the strain was developed. As these are July chickens and there is only one pullet, I haven't had a chance to see if the marvellous change has been really accomplished. But I do know that they range around as no old-time Brahma ever did. When they hear a beechnut fall in the woods they stretch out their long necks, unlimber their long legs, and almost seem to shake the earth as they bounce across the fields to get it. As yet they are all feathers and skeleton. They look as big as turkeys, but they have no meat on them, though each one has enough neck and feet to make a boarding-house chicken fricassee. They seem to be like Sir John Macdonald's Holstein cattle: "The more you feed them the more bone they grow." I am assured that it takes them about a year to get their growth and fill out, and I am curious to see what they will be like when ready for the table. They didn't look very dignified the other night when I found them standing where their old home used to be, trying to protect themselves from the snowstorm by sticking their heads under one another while the wind seemed to be whistling through their ribs. But I am going to make a sympathetic study of them if they will only stay at home long enough to let me.

Nov. 14.—We have now reached that part of the harvest which I most thoroughly understand and enjoy. Earlier in the season we changed work with the horses, so as to provide the food needed for them and the cattle during the winter, and the surplus was sold for "rascal counters," with which we can get the things not grown on the farm that we need for ourselves. Now, however, we [Pg 323] are putting away that part of the produce which we shall need for home consumption. Apples are being stored, potatoes pitted, celery and cabbage trenched, and other vegetables protected for the winter. I say that I understand this part of the harvest better than the other and I'll tell you why. We are all the time being told to go to the ant for an example of wisdom. Well—one time I went, and I am afraid that the lesson I learned was one that my teachers did not intend. Instead of having money invested in bonds or a good bank account, the ant simply had a plentiful store of provisions. As I put away these vegetables I have a comfortable feeling that I have learned the lesson of the ant as it was intended to be taught. Food is the most important form of wealth and to have a plentiful supply stored away is the highest form of wisdom. In more primitive times the wealth of kings consisted of full granaries and countless herds, and they were considered rich because they had ample food for themselves and all who were dependent on them. I suppose if I sold the celery, which is a somewhat costly luxury in the cities, I could put money in the bank, but I am fond of celery, and the wisdom of the ant is good enough for me. There is no knowing what may happen to the banks when the Bank Act comes up for revision, but I feel moderately secure regarding the vegetables.

Speaking of celery, there is one thing I should like to know, and perhaps some gardener who reads *The Farmer's Advocate* can tell me. I have no doubt that the trouble is due to some mistake I have made, but I wish to be set right, so that I can do better next year. When trenching the celery I found that part of it had grown very rank, and was so pithy that it is practically useless. The celery was grown in an old barn yard, where the ground was just about as rich as it could possibly be, having been used as a barn yard since the land was first cleared. I am inclined to think that this is about the first crop ever raised on this bit of soil, and that the original fertility is still there, as well as what has been accumulating during the past seventy years. Most of the [Pg 324] celery is just about as fine as it could possibly be, large stalks, crisp and tender and as sweet as a

nut. Besides, the stalks are about the largest I have ever seen, but some of the very largest are almost useless. What is the trouble? Has the growth been too rank or have I neglected something that should be done? Most of the trouble is with the Giant Golden Heart variety. The White Plume is all firm and sound, and both kinds were cultivated in the same way. Should I have treated the two kinds differently?

Two correspondents have asked me to give in *The Farmer's Advocate* the receipts for Force Meat and Dried Beef, which I described in an article elsewhere about a year ago. We prepared the dried beef, which proved to be excellent, according to the following receipt:

"Take the best of beef, or that part which will be the most lean and tender. The tender part of the round is a very good piece. For every twenty pounds of beef use one pint of salt, one teaspoonful of saltpetre, and a quarter of a pound of brown sugar. Mix them well together and rub the beef well with one-third of the mixture for three successive days. Let it lie in the liquor it makes for six days, then hang up to dry. A large crock or jar is a good vessel to prepare the meat in before drying it."

This dried beef is good either when cut in thin slices and fried or made up in the various ways in which "chipped beef" is used.

The force meat I had reference to is an old-fashioned country dish, and not the kind that usually goes under that name in the cook books. It strikes me as being more like pemmican than anything else. Take any convenient quantity of lean beef. The better the cut, the better the result will be, but any part may be used from porter-house steak to the neck. Chop this beef as finely as possible with a chopping-knife, but do not put it through a meat-chopper. Take about one-third the amount of suet and chop it in the same way, then mix the two and add salt and pepper to taste. When the beef and suet have been thoroughly mixed and flavoured, press it into small [Pg 325] cakes by hand and put it away in a crock. It is ready to use at once, and is fried like steak. If there is any better eating for cold weather I have yet to find it. This is a truly pioneer dish and one of the best. Some day I may gather and put in shape the pioneer receipts that I have come across while gathering information about the first settlers. Quite a number of the dishes they used are no longer in vogue, but most of them that I have sampled have been good, though rather strong food for palates that are trained to sweets and delicacies.

Nov. 17.—This morning I did something so foolish that I hate to tell about it, but duty must be done. How are the young and the city people who are moving back to the land to be properly warned of dangers unless some one tells of things that happen on a farm with shameless truthfulness? It would not be so bad if I didn't know better, but I did, and now most emphatically do.

You have all heard of the foolish man who got a fall by sawing off the limb he was sitting on. The story was one of the favourites of my youth, and I have seen it used scores of times in political cartoons. It illustrates human foolishness better than any joke I know of, and yet I did exactly the same thing as the man in the story. I cut off the limb I was standing on. Looking at it thoughtfully, I have a humble feeling that there is no form of foolishness of which I am not capable. Of course, there were extenuating circumstances. There always are. A man does such a thing as that only when he is feeling that he is wiser and smarter than other men, and I thought I was altogether too skilful and cautious to let that limb get out from under me. I would cut to the right point and then stop. That's what they all say, but, as usual, the scheme didn't work out right.

This is how it happened. I went to the woodlot to forage for stove-wood, and noticing that the heavy sleet last February had broken down a number of big branches, I decided to use them. They were resting on the ground, but still connected with the trees by a few splinters. I had to [Pg 326] climb to cut the splinters and bring the branches down. All went well until I came to a big beech, from which a branch about a foot in diameter was hanging by a stout slab. The break was about fifteen feet from the ground, and there were no other branches at that point. When I had climbed the tree, I found that the split-end of the branch made a good platform to stand on, and, after figuring out the situation, I decided that the easiest way to do the trick would be to chop nearly through the connecting slab while standing where I was, and then get close to the trunk and finish the job by swinging the axe with one hand and clinging to the trunk with one arm. But I had forgotten that the sapwood of the beech gets brittle when it has been drying for a year, and I had not given more than half a dozen strokes before there was a sudden snap, and the excitement began. I hadn't time to think, so must have acted on instinct, or from reflex action. I grabbed at the trunk of the tree with both arms and both legs. I just splashed myself against it, while the axe went flying. But before I could get my brakes adjusted, I had slipped about six feet down, and the legs of my trousers and sweater had slipped about two feet up. And the bark of that old beech was rough—very rough. After coming to a stop, I surveyed the scene, and felt thankful that I was not mixed up with the axe and the big limb on the ground. Then I shinned down the rest of the distance with a chastened spirit and a sprained thumb.

While chopping the branch into stove-lengths I meditated much on the foolishness of what I had done, and felt properly ashamed of myself. If one of the boys had done such a thing, I would never have stopped laughing at him. And now I had done it myself. Oh, well, I have a suspicion that most men do things that are just as foolish, when no one is looking, and have the reputation of being wise and careful just because they escape and keep quiet about it. Sometimes I think that there is something in us that makes us try to do things that we know are foolish. It helps to keep us humble, if we are wise enough to learn the lesson. To-night I am feeling very humble. I [Pg 327] don't think I should laugh, even if the baby took a spoonful of salt in mistake for granulated

sugar. It is a mistake that might be made by any of us.

Whoever worked out the plan of planting young trees that is given by the Department of Forestry certainly knew what he was about. I doubt if it could be improved upon. Lifting a sod and turning it back kills all the grass and weeds around the seedling, and gives it a chance to get a good start. To-day I looked over the trees I planted in the spring, and found that they are all beautifully mulched. The little hollow from which the sod was taken, and in which the tree was planted served as a trap for the drifting leaves. Around each tree there is a mulch of packed leaves three or four inches deep, and the work could not have been done better by hand. I don't think they mentioned that result in the bulletin on Reforestation, so it came to me as a surprise which aroused my admiration. The trees should come through the winter safely with such protection, and the rotting leaves should furnish them with the food they need next spring. Of the thousand and eighty trees I planted, at least eight hundred came through the scorching summer safely, and I expect that they will make quite a showing next year. The pine suffered the most. Though I have always understood that walnuts are very delicate, I find that almost all of mine lived. I was also pleased to find that thousands of young maples got a good start this year because the cattle had been kept out of the woods. Little as they are, these seedlings help to keep the leaves from drifting, and it looks as if the sod that had made such headway before replanting was attempted will soon disappear. Next spring, if the Forestry Department is kind, and I am feeling equal to the task, I shall plant out a couple of thousand more young trees, and try to get at least five acres back to natural woods. Of course, I know there are plenty of wise people who will say that I am foolish to be planting out trees in the garden land of Ontario, instead of clearing away those that remain; but, as I told you in the first paragraph, I am now convinced that I am capable of any kind of foolishness. Still, there is a saving remnant of the people who believe that reforestation is a wise thing. I do not think I am making a mistake in casting in my lot with them.

[Pg 328]

First let me tell you how the whole thing started
(For I have seldom troubled you with rhyme),
I woke this morning feeling happy-hearted,
Lulled by the dreams of a supernal clime,
And ere the drowsy glamour had departed
I heard soft music, like an elfin chime;
It seemed as if the old house had begun
Like Memnon's statue to salute the sun.

An Indian Summer dawn of amber haze
Along the east was glowing luminous,
Ushering one of those Canadian days
Of rare perfection, warm and languorous,
That well deserve such mystic strains of praise
As still were rising faint, mysterious—
Although their source I sought in vain, until
I chanced to look upon the window-sill,

And there a child's harmonica was lying,
Just where the south wind on the reeds could blow;
It roused the music with its fitful sighing,
Æolian chords, sweet, tremulous, and low.
Finding what set the elfin music flying
"My lungs like Chanticleer began to crow."
Meanwhile the sun had risen, red as blood,
And poured its light, a ruby-tinted flood.

I tell all this because it made me vow
To weave the doings of the day in song,
From dawn till dark, as I am doing now;
Jotting down verses as I go along,
Hoping some Muse will with her charm endow
The flying fancies to my brain that throng.
Whether it is worth the doing we shall see,
For I shall give you what the gods give me.

[Pg 329]

The fire was blazing and I started calling
The little sleepers, and the morning noise
Began at once, with giggling, tickling, squalling,
Laughing, romping, yelling, such as boys
And girls delight in. Now, there's some one bawling!
'Tis sweet domestic music, but it cloys!
I think I'll do the chores and 'scape the pother
And leave the task of dressing to their mother.

The air is frosty, but a south wind purrs
Across my ears, and though all else is still
A flock of sparrows in a spruce confers
With much politic chirping. Now a mill
Blows its loud whistle and the world bestirs

Itself to work, of which it has its fill.
(Although of work I am not quite a hater,
I'll have some things to say about it later.)

The Collie greets me, romping wildly round,
Barking and fawning for his morning petting;
The gobblers gobble (joyous Christmas sound),
"Their little hour" so proudly strutting, fretting;
The roosters cluck, some muddy titbit found,
Each for his dames an early breakfast getting;
The driver whinnies and the lonesome calf
Bawls with a peevishness that makes me laugh.

I feed them all and then, the milking done,
Go in to breakfast with an appetite
For eggs and bacon, that I feast upon
With earthly, unpoetical delight.
When satisfied, the day's work is begun— [Pg 330]
Winter is coming, all things must be right—
And though the day is fine I still remember
To make due haste for it is now November.

Corn to haul in and stalks to bind and stack,
Potatoes and apples to be snugly pitted;
Of urgent work to-day there is no lack;
To every hour a needful task is fitted.
To honest labour I must bow my back,
But still that back is cheerfully submitted;
And what is more, if I could spare a minute,
I'd show you that there's philosophy in it.

Driving afield, the splendour of the day
Charms like a mighty masterpiece of art:
The fields and woods all stripped to sober grey,
The golden sunshine flooding every part.
Surely the hours will blithely slip away
And joy of life will throb in every heart—
So chants the poet, but the toiler knows
The world he works in is a world of prose.

All day with diligence that men applaud
I picked the golden ears and bore them in;
The world was fair, the south wind was abroad
Offering me joys I could not stop to win.
Yet was I well contented to defraud
My soul of all the beauty there had been;
This heavy price it is our fate to pay
To win our freedom for another day.

Poets there are who sing with frenzied passion
Of endless toil, who never felt its bane;
To call it glorious is now the fashion,
Drowning with song man's wretchedness and pain
My Pegasus I'll never lay the lash on, [Pg 331]
Pursuing such a folly-bitten strain;
I say, and say it boldly to your face,
That needless labour is a foul disgrace.

Labour that knows the seedtime and its hope,
And waits the harvest with a trusting soul—
Strong in its faith with every ill to cope,
Trusting in God and his benign control—
Scorning the slavery in which they grope,
Blind and defeated, who make wealth their goal—
Such would I sing for he who looks may see
The end of labour is to make men free.

And being free, with clothing, food, and shelter,
What, that is toil-bought, would you envy more?
Why should you struggle in the human welter?
Why should you sink when you were meant to soar?
Life has been made a hurried helter-skelter
Of aimless effort without guiding lore.
Believe me, friend, though you have wealth past measure,
Living itself is life's completest treasure.

If some good people would but take the time
  To look about them they would be surprised
To find their house of life is more sublime
  Than poet ever feigned or sage surmised.
Stop and look forth! It will not be a crime!
  And if you think I have not well advised—
Preferring some one who of toiling proses—
Back to the grindstone with your stupid noses.

Our fathers toiled, but in a glorious fight,
  The God of nations led them by the hand,
With pillared smoke by day and fire by night
  They wrought like heroes in their Promised Land;
The wilderness was conquered by their might, [Pg 332]
  They made for God the marvel he had planned—
A land of homes where toil could make men free,
The final masterpiece of Destiny.

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

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

Well, I have wandered and the day is spent,
  My morning vow forgotten and the throng
Of fancies vanished that I truly meant
  To spread before you as I went along—
Showing what beauty with the day was blent—
  Minting the gold of sunset into song—
Pouring my heart in rapture or in mirth—
Singing with pride the land that gave me birth.

But though I fail I shall not be ashamed;
  My brothers of the fields will understand
The patriot ardour in my heart that flamed
  And by what breath that sacred fire was fanned;
The blood still courses in our veins that tamed [Pg 333]
  The waste to fruitfulness at His command,
And ye all feel as I have felt to-day—
Born of this soil and kneaded of its clay.

Nov. 25.—Is there such a thing as an official score-card for marking up the points of a cow? If there is I should like to see one. I want to know just how many marks are given for powers of digestion. This week the red cow did something that almost lifts her out of the cow class and places her with the ostrich and boa-constrictor. The other day after the cows had been turned out to water she was somehow left untied. True to her predatory instincts, as soon as she discovered her freedom she started to nose around for something she could steal and had the luck to find a tub full of corn in the ear, from which the hens were being fed. She promptly began to wrap herself around it and before being interrupted in her feast she had eaten over a bushel. Now, *The Farmer's Advocate* has never published any "First Aid to the Gluttonous," and I didn't know what to do. When I asked for advice people told me sad stories of the death of cows from over-feeding. Some had been killed by eating tailings after a threshing, others by bloating after eating clover, others by a surfeit of chop feed. It was all very disheartening for a fresh cow that gives eight quarts of milk rich in butter-fat at each milking is a valuable asset in these days when the bank act is being revised so as to allow farmers to raise money on their cattle. I couldn't call up the veterinarian for we have no telephone, and with the roads in their present condition I did not feel like driving three miles to consult one. Still I was not so much worried as I might have been. The look in her eye was reassuring. She looked more like the cat that had eaten the canary than anything else. She wore an air of unmistakable satisfaction and when she began to eat some clover hay that was in her manger as dessert to her banquet I felt that she might pull through. Her previous raids on the swill-barrel, soft-soap, apples, and other things gave me confidence in [Pg 334] her powers of digestion, so, after murmuring a few words, "more in sorrow than in anger," I gave her Shakespeare's blessing—"Let Good Digestion Wait on Appetite"—and left her to her fate.

At milking time she was still perfectly normal though kind of lazy about standing over and "histing." Acting on advice, I cut out her evening ration of unthreshed oats, so that her stomach would recover from the surprise she had given it in the afternoon. Her gastric juices had their work cut out for them without having their troubles increased. But she made no protest when the other cows were fed and she was skipped. In fact she reminded me of the bereaved fowl described by "Pet Marjory," the little girl whose rhymes and sayings were recorded by Sir Walter Scott:

> "She was more than usual calm.
> She did not give a single dam."

And yet, though she was in such good form I couldn't keep from worrying. All evening I listened to tales about cows that had come to untimely ends through over-eating, and look at it in any way I tried, a bushel or more of corn seemed a big dose for any cow. So after the others had gone to bed I lit the lantern and went out to the stable to see how she was doing. As I opened the door she heaved a sigh of repletion, like an alderman after a banquet. Then she stretched out her neck, brought up a cud, and began to chew placidly. Still, I was not entirely easy in my mind. If I could only get to see her tongue, or to feel her pulse, or take her temperature, I would be more satisfied. But how to get her to put out her tongue was the problem. The only way I could think of would be to hold an ear of corn before her nose and let her reach out her tongue for it, just as I had seen her try to lick grain through a knothole in the granary. But I was afraid to try that scheme for I knew by experience that she would probably get the start of me and add that ear of corn to the pile she had already accumulated. When it came to feeling her pulse I was stumped worse than in trying to get her to put out her tongue. How do you feel a cow's pulse anyway? The [Pg 335] longer I live on a farm and grapple with its problems the more I find I have to learn. And all the time I was fussing and worrying she kept on contentedly chewing her cud. Restraining an impulse to give her a kick for looking so exasperatingly comfortable, when in the best judgment of the neighbourhood she should be dying, I closed the door and left her to her job of digesting a bushel of corn. And she did it to the king's taste. In the morning I went to see her before I gathered the duck eggs and found her bawling for her morning feed. She never batted an eyelid —never turned a hair. And at milking time she gave a brimming pail of milk, just as if nothing unusual had happened. Later in the day, when she was turned out for water, she bolted for the spot where she had found the corn on the previous day and seemed ready to repeat her exploit. It is not because she is starved either, for she is beef-fat.

DECEMBER

[Pg 336]

Dec. 1.—Here is a chance for the Weather Bureau and the oldest inhabitant. In their records, real and imaginary, have they noted a first day of December like this? Last night there was a sharp still frost, but this morning the sun is shining "on both sides of the fence." A south wind that is balmy and yet has a tang to it like hard cider is dawdling over the fields. The day is perfect, and as I view it through the open window the typewriter becometh a burden. There is a haze in the air that makes the woods look dreamy and inviting. This seems to be a case of Indian summer lingering in the lap of winter, and nobody has the slightest objection to make. Those who work are still busy ploughing and getting ready for next summer's crops. Even the bees are out for an airing, and our Christmas dinners are in the woods filling their crops with beechnuts. Every once in a while I hear a shotgun banging, and know that a city hunter is scaring our corn-fed black squirrels. A couple of days ago one of these powder-burners fired seventeen shots at a squirrel on the beech knoll until the little animal got ashamed of being a party to such a rumpus and retired disdainfully into his hole. There doubtless are city hunters who can shoot, but they are not taking their holidays at present. Possibly the fellows who are tramping through the woods just now are doing it for their health, but, though they may work up excellent appetites, they will never be able to satisfy their hunger with the game they kill. Those I have had a chance to observe in action couldn't hit a "No Trespassing" sign at ten paces. The country boys say they couldn't hit a barn even if they were standing inside of it.

[Pg 337] With the last roots and potatoes pitted and the cattle stabled the world is waiting for winter. The trees are stripped to bare poles, so that they may not be broken by clinging snow. It is interesting to note how much character the trees retain after they have parted with their foliage. The accustomed eye can pick out the elms, oaks, maples, beeches, and hickories as far as it can see, by their form and the distribution of their branches and twigs. Even where they are crowded together in the forest they are as easy to recognise as individuals in a crowd of people you know. Thoreau speaks somewhere of making friends with the trees, and to one who has been neighbouring with them for some months the idea is attractive. Just now it seems as if it would be easier to scrape an acquaintance with them than at any other time of the year. Although they look dignified and self-sufficient they are without the pride and pre-occupation of summer. It is in the winter that they perform for us their friendliest office in breaking the wind. The trees on the farm are the last thing we see when leaving home and the first thing we see on our return, so it is just possible many of us are friends with them without knowing it. Anyway, it is comfortable to be back among them after one has been away, whether they share the feeling or not.

Outside of the trees, about the only other things encountered on country walks just now that are of interest are the fences, and these are sufficiently varied to satisfy either an artist or an

antiquary. Many of them are picturesque and all mark a stage in the development of the country. It is still possible to find examples of the stone, log, and stump fences of the pioneers which served the double purpose of bounding a field and clearing the land. The stone fences were built from necessity rather than choice. Something had to be done with the stones that were picked from the land in some districts, and the obvious thing to do was to throw them in the fence corners or make fences of them. The latter course was usually adopted where they were sufficiently plentiful. Stump fences were usually made of pine, and some may be found that are over fifty years old. When properly put together and blocked they made a fence that would turn [Pg 338] the "breachiest" horse or cow that ever made life a burden to the farming community. But under no circumstances could a stump fence be considered ornamental. "As homely as a stump fence" is still a current simile in the country. As suggested above, the building of a stump fence served a double purpose. It was the same with the log fences that are now somewhat rare. They were made of such timber as would be used in building houses and barns. These fences were practically straight, the ends of the logs being connected and held together by short cross pieces, on which each tier rested. The rail fences that are still plentiful were made of free-splitting timber ranging from black ash to black walnut. It is probably some years since rails were split in any quantity, owing to the value of timber. As sound, well-seasoned rails will last almost a century, it is probable that they will be plentiful in the country for some time to come, though in some places the farmers are finding that they can sell their old rail fences for fuel at a price that will pay for wire fences. On the farms where rails are still in use many styles of fence are to be seen, varying from the stake-and-rider snake fence to straight fences with posts, to which the rails are fastened with wire. Almost every farmer has a scheme of his own to make his old rails go as far as possible, and the results are sometimes absurd. To make a fence that is horse high and hog proof with insufficient material requires more than ordinary ingenuity.

Board fences were once quite the fashion, but they have practically passed out because of the price of lumber. Wire fences of infinite variety are now being put up, but, judging from the criticisms of the farmers, the ideal fence has not yet been invented. Properly constructed wire fences are serviceable, but there are so many kinds of wire and so many ways of building them it is quite evident that there is still confusion in the public mind regarding them. Hedges have been tried in some parts—and thereby hangs a tale. Some years ago a number of smooth-talking [Pg 339] agents went through the country taking orders for hedge fences at what seemed most reasonable terms. The finished hedge was to cost, say, one dollar a rod. It would attain its growth in three years, and the hedge-builders were to attend to it each year until it was completed. If the farmer agreed to buy fifty rods of hedge he was to pay for it in three instalments. On the first year he was to prepare the ground for the seedlings and pay $20. A second payment of $10 was to be made on the second year when the hedge-makers returned to replant any spots that had been missed. On the third year the hedge was to be trimmed, splashed, and completed and the farmer was to pay $20. It looked like a reasonable arrangement, and many farmers signed contracts for the new hedge. In the spring of the first year the hedge-makers appeared with waggonloads of seedlings, which they dropped in a furrow made by the farmer, who then covered them with another furrow. The job was just about as hard as planting a row of potatoes. The schemers then collected the first instalment. Next year they were prompt in calling for the second instalment and making the trifling additions to the planting that were required. The kind of thorn they had planted grew like Canada thistles, and the prospects of a good hedge looked promising. But on the third year the little joker in the scheme was discovered. Trimming, splashing, and completing the hedge meant work, and the hedge-makers never came back. They had already received two liberal payments for practically no work, and they took no interest in the last payment that would have to be more than earned. Because of this raid on the unsuspecting farmers, one sees occasional hedges that are forty feet high and still growing. Hedges will, doubtless, be used in the country as it grows older, but the man who undertakes to promote the industry will have to hit on a new scheme before he can make it popular.

A drive through the country at night is one of the dreariest experiences imaginable. Every house appears to be deserted. Not a light is to be seen anywhere. The front parts of many farm houses [Pg 340] seem to be built for outward show, and not for inward use. Some of those who have the finest houses persist in living in their kitchens. The kitchen is also the dining room and living room. This no doubt saves fuel, but one cannot help wondering what is the use of having a parlour or sitting room with plush furniture, crayon portraits, and vases filled with dried flowers if it is never to be used. In the daytime the prospect is not much more alluring. A house that has smoke issuing from only one chimney does not look hospitable, but in most country houses they do not light a fire in the parlour unless they are expecting a call from the minister. All of which goes to prove the truth of the comment made by the Indian, who said: "Indian builds a hut and lives in it. White man builds a big house and lives in the kitchen." Moreover, in some cases the kitchen is simply an addition to the house proper, so that he really does not live in his big house at all.

Dec. 5.—"Every man to his taste," as the old woman said when she kissed the cow. That good old maxim applies everywhere, even to the dumb creatures on the farm. I was reminded of it last night while doing the chores. While poking around with the lantern I came across the ducks—the waddling, fat, all-consuming ducks. They were resting and carrying on a light conversation in a sheltered corner where there was plenty of straw and where they had what most creatures would consider a chance to be comfortable. I did not disturb them in any way, but presently, after a few vigorous remarks, they started off in Indian file across the yard and out into "the great big dark." As they were nowhere in sight when I had finished my chores, I had the curiosity to hunt them up. Following the direction they had taken when leaving the yard, I soon found them in an old creek bed. They were huddled together on the ice, with their heads tucked under their wings,

and apparently settled for the night. On telling of this when I got to the house, I found that this little pond has been their roosting place at night ever since they deserted the indignant hen that mothered them. They even kept a hole open in the middle of the pond until the frost became [Pg 341] altogether too severe. I have often seen the wild ducks flying from the Niagara River out across the ice into Lake Ontario, and have been told that they were going out to roost, or sleep, or whatever it is that ducks do on the open water. Probably our hand-raised ducks are acting in obedience to some ancestral instinct. I wonder if I ought to try to break them off it? As a matter of fact, I have never looked into the question of how to raise ducks, having always contented myself with the instructions given in the cook book on "how to carve ducks."

Those ducks will never know how near they were to a general slaughter one day last week. I was working at the barn when some one at the house called a question to me. Before it was half finished, six ducks flapped their wings, drew deep breaths, and spontaneously exploded with a "quack," "quack," "quack!" When they had quieted, I tried to ask what was wanted, but this was about the way my question reached the house:

"What do you—'quack,' 'quack'—"

Then a noise might have been heard from the barn yard which sounded something like this:

"Get out of that, you waddling—'quack'—'quack'—'quack.'

"If I had a stick I'd—'quack,' 'quack,' 'quack.'

"Shut up, you—'quack,' 'quack,' 'quack'—"

"Oh, what's the use—'quack,' 'quack,' 'quack.'"

Then as I started to the house to find out what was wanted of me, those ducks quacked as exultingly and flapped their wings as foolishly as a political party that has managed to howl down its opponents in debate. And I have no doubt that it is that victory they jabber to one another about every time I go to the barn, but they'll not enjoy their triumph long. They are eating their heads off every day, and presently we will all get together and eat their bodies off. "Quack!" "Quack!" "Quack!"——He quacks best who quacks last.

This morning, while sawing wood with a bucksaw, I began to remember vaguely that when I was [Pg 342] a boy we had a playful name of some kind for this convenient implement, but, do my best, I could not remember it. As some one has said, the name "kept tickling my memory with the tip of its tail," but I couldn't catch it. I tried to get it back by every system of association of ideas that I could think of, but they were all of no use. I tried to recall every kind of work that a bucksaw can be used for in the hope that that would suggest the name, but I failed. Naming over the alphabet slowly, and thinking of as many familiar words as possible, beginning with each letter, failed to locate also. Of course, I knew it was of no importance, but when one starts his mind working on even a foolish problem it is hard to stop. That missing name bothered me for a couple of hours before something more important drove it out of my mind. And along in the afternoon, when I was looking up something in the encyclopædia, the name popped into my head with surprising suddenness. "Corporation Fiddle!" Have you ever heard it? That is what all the boys called a bucksaw when I went to school. I wonder why. Nowadays if I were going to call anything a "corporation fiddle" I would probably apply the name to some great newspaper, for I have noticed that the corporations generally manage to play whatever tunes they please on them. But in boyhood days the village or town corporation was the only one heard of. I wonder if it was ever the custom to sentence tramps to saw wood for the jail or town hall, and that the name "corporation fiddle" originated in that way. I seem to have heard some explanation of this kind long ago. But, now that the name has come back to me, I feel that we should find a use for it. Most of our leading papers proudly proclaim themselves "party organs." Would it be a good idea to name those that serve the Big Interests "Corporation Fiddles"? It sounds satisfying to me. I wonder which one we should apply it to first?

A good-natured correspondent writes that he wishes he could drop in on me or that I could drop [Pg 343] in on him, so that we could have a good talk. I wish we could. He says he is tired of talking about fat steers and the price of hogs and such things. How can that be? I can't get any one who is skilled in those subjects to talk to me about them. They do not seem to take my views on the proper feeding of steers and hogs seriously. It is quite true I have no steers or hogs, but is that any reason why I should not have opinions? Still, though the real farmers refuse to take me into fellowship on these matters, I have no hard feelings. I have my own way of getting even. For instance, I do not take their political opinions seriously. Honestly, I do not think there is anything funnier in life than watching people acquire views on a public question. If the question is one that comes up unexpectedly, the caution of the people is something wonderful. They frown and shake their heads and appear to be thinking with both lobes of their brains. But wild horses could not drag an opinion out of them. They must think and think. Then some fine morning the party organ or "corporation fiddle" they patronise comes out with its opinions. Now, behold the change! Thinking has stopped and talking has commenced. All the fogs have cleared away and they have settled opinions on the troublesome question. They know just what should be done. Yes, indeed, and their fathers before them knew just what should be done, and any one who doesn't agree with them is more kinds of a fool than they could mention in half a day. To save my peace of mind, I agree with them entirely, whatever their views may be. Still, I have a sneaking suspicion that their views on public questions are no more worthy of respect than my disrespected opinions on fat steers.

Dec. 9.—Long winter evenings are a reality in the country. At this time of the year they begin about 5 o'clock and last while the lamp holds out to burn. How to put them in without yawning

one's head off is something of a problem. The children no longer tallow their boots in the evening so that they will be warm on the next day. No, indeed! They must have overshoes, so that they [Pg 344] can make themselves felt in the family by wearing out two pairs of shoes at the same time. As no teaming is done, it is seldom that there is any harness to be patched, and whittling wooden spiles to be ready for the sugar-making in the spring passed out of vogue at least a generation ago. Of course they have papers to read—loads of them, from the local weekly with its neighbourhood news to the city daily with fiery cables about the Budget. There is material in them for all kinds of talk from gossip to philosophising. But the average man can't read and talk for five mortal hours at a stretch with any degree of satisfaction. This leads the observer to regret that the art of sitting before the fire and twiddling one's thumbs has also gone out of fashion in these days of strenuosity. It is pleasant to remember the old-timers who used to sit before the open fireplaces twiddling their thumbs and staring at the coals. Being ignorant of "the three r's," except perhaps enough arithmetic to enable them to keep track of their money, they were unable to feed their minds with the latest sensational news. They therefore sat and twiddled their thumbs; but let no one despise this seemingly futile occupation. One of the shrewdest critics of life known to modern times asserted that "doing nothing is the hardest and most intellectual of all occupations." It was among such that Whitman found his "great uneducated" men, and Touchstone his "natural philosopher," who knew that "the more one sickens the worse at ease he is, and he that wants money, means, and content is without three good friends; that the property of rain is to wet and of fire to burn; that good pasture makes fat sheep and that a great cause of the night is lack of the sun." Where is one to find such men now? Packed full of information of all kinds by their favourite newspapers, even the humblest can "profess apprehension" and have opinions on all manner of subjects.

If Canada should produce a Burns among its multitude of poets and he tried to do a "Farmer's Saturday Night" he would be forced to go at it somewhat in this fashion:—

[Pg 345]

The honest farmer, when his chores are done.
  Pulls off his boots and sits beside the fire;
Toasteth his toes and holdeth forth upon
  The little things that have aroused his ire.
  He mourneth for the men he used to hire—
Great brawny giants, who would work all day,
  Then do the chores and never loaf or tire—
And wait a year at least to get their pay.
Thus peevishly he frets and wears the night away.

Or else he takes his weekly paper down
  And reads it—even the editorial page;
Talks of the wicked things they do in town,
  Where financiers in pirate schemes engage.
  Or works himself into a sputtering rage
About the things that politicians do,
  Disgracing both their country and the age—
Believing all he reads as being true.
O *Globe*, and *Mail*, I fear some things are "up to you."

Their homework done, the children from the loft
  Bring down the nuts and have their nightly feed;
The noise they make their mother chideth oft,
  To which, alas, they give but little heed.
  Then rings the telephone, and you may read
On Jenny's cheek the old, eternal tale—
  She answereth it with startled, nimble speed,
Feigneth surprise and striveth hard to veil
The converse that she hath with some adoring male.

Somehow the telephone doesn't seem to harmonise with words ending in "eth." The future Burns will be wise to choose some measure more tripping and up-to-date than the stately and rumbling Spenserian stanza.

Do the quail and black squirrels keep posted on the game laws and know when it is safe to appear in public? Kipling says that the wild elephants know to a day when the hunting season ends, and celebrate the occasion with a dance. Our wild game must have knowledge of the same kind. All summer and fall I saw but two flocks of quail, and I wouldn't have seen them if I hadn't happened to walk right among them. Since the shooting season closed I can't cross a field without scaring up a flock, and "their tameness is fearful to me." The black squirrels are [Pg 346] positively impudent when one goes walking through the woods. Since the snow fell, rabbit tracks are to be seen everywhere, but the rabbits themselves manage to keep out of sight. They are not protected by the game laws; at least that is the belief in the country, and they are liable to be potted at any time. Some boys not more than a hundred miles from here have been trying to snare rabbits. So far, they have managed to snare two cats and a pullet without disastrous results to any of the victims. Having snares out is strongly recommended to distracted mothers as a means of getting schoolboys quickly dressed in the morning. The snares must be visited just at daylight, and a normal boy can be warranted to jump out of bed and into all his clothes in less than five minutes if he wants to visit them. Apparently, it does no harm to the rabbits, so you

must not accuse the boys of cruelty. The cats need exercise anyway, and no doubt a copper wire snare can give the huskiest tom cat a busy five minutes that will work up an appetite for his breakfast.

Dec. 14.—No matter what happens, we have had a spell of old-fashioned winter. The January thaw may come and be followed by open weather, as so many are prophesying, but we have had sleighing and everything else worth while that winter can offer. First we had a week of cold weather ranging from zero to twenty above. Every day it was cloudy and threatening snow, and enough fell to cover the ground. Then the papers predicted a warm wave and the trouble began. On the morning when the change was due snow began to fall in big flakes, and there was a moderate wind from the south-west. While there was no thawing the snow was soft enough to stick to everything it touched, and soon the buildings, fences, and tree trunks were white with it. I was driving along the road when the change came. Without a moment's warning the wind began to blow a hurricane from the north, and the temperature must have fallen ten degrees in less than a minute. Under the lashing of the wind the snow on the ground rose in blinding drifts. The driver was brought almost to a standstill by the force of the wind. The robe was nearly whisked [Pg 347] off my knees, and a loose corner of the curtain on the buggy top flapped and snapped with a sound like pistol shots. For half an hour the air was a smother of drifting and falling snow. All the while the wind steadily increased in violence, then it died down as suddenly as it came, and the sky cleared. The mercury had fallen to eight above zero, and it stayed there. All afternoon the weather continued about the same, with occasional flurries of dry, powdery snow, but at nightfall it began to snow in earnest. Not a breath of wind was stirring, and the fine, dry snow came down as quietly as a mist. It covered everything. It rested on all the branches of the trees, and even on the little twigs. On the following morning there was a blanket of snow four inches deep, and big, glittering frost-flakes were sifting down from an almost cloudless sky. The thermometer registered two above zero, and it was an ideal morning to take out the cutter. While driving to school to the music of bells it was almost impossible to look towards the sun, everything was so blinding white. But everything was beautiful. The distant woods were picked out in white and brown, and every weed, thistle, and stalk of grass was fluffy with snow. There was a little white cap on every fence post, and here and there the snow rested on the wires, the air was so still. The stillness, hardly broken by a sound, continued all day. The snow rested where it fell, feathery light and sparkling like diamond dust. The sun went down through a cold, coppery haze. It had been a perfect winter day. About eight o'clock the mercury suddenly began to fall, and kept on going down until it touched six below. In the still, glistening moonlight the world was a frozen fairyland. Then the sky clouded over, and the weather began to moderate. Since then we have had moderate temperatures, ranging from ten above to twenty-eight, and the sleighing has been of the best. There have been cutter-rides both by night and by day, snowballing, sliding on the government drain, and such coasting as an almost flat country affords. No matter what the future has in store for us, we have had a taste of the best that a Canadian winter can give. [Pg 348]

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

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

While the talk progressed there were apples and winter pears to eat, and then came the walk home through the frosty moonlight, with the snow crunching faintly underfoot. On the road we [Pg 349] met others who had been lured away to neighbourly visits by the beauty of the night, and it was good to feel that, instead of killing sociability, the winter weather had really aroused it to more activity. Winter weather and winter pleasures at their best are very good.

Dec. 17.—A few nights ago the boys were testing their skates, and the familiar ringing sound seemed good in the frosty moonlight. And yet it was sporting under difficulties. All the ice they had to practise on was a frozen puddle about three rods long and a rod wide. As a matter of fact, skating, like everything else, has moved to town. I can remember when we had whole fields for skating ponds, but that was before the days of government drains and underdrainage. Now there are very few ponds or swamps left, and skating is no longer a country sport, except in specially-favoured localities. But every town and practically every village has its skating rink, where they hold carnivals on the solid ice in the winter time, and political meetings in the summer, when

statesmen skate on thin ice. Of course, I am not regretting the fact that the country is too well drained for skating. I am merely noting the fact that this change has taken place, and I am afraid that skating is not the only sport that is lost to us. Baseball also seems to have retreated to the cities and towns, and hockey has taken the place of shinny, and is played almost entirely on the town rinks. But there may be another reason for this. Where could a boy find a shinny stick nowadays? The average woodlot in which cattle have been pasturing hasn't a stick left in it that is under thirty or forty years old. It is getting rather hard for country boys and girls to have fun of any kind without going to town for it and paying an admission fee. This may not seem of much importance to serious-minded people, but I am inclined to think it is very important. Most of us like to remember the homes of our childhood by the games we played in them, and to have no games is to have fewer ties binding the children to the land. I am afraid the country is getting [Pg 350] altogether too practical and joyless. In the big cities they now have "play-masters," who teach the children how to play in the parks and vacant lots, and it has been found that they work better and behave better because of the good times they have. It seems to me that something should be done in the schools to interest the children in suitable sports that will take the place of those that made life richer for their fathers and mothers.

Dec. 26.—"The country looks just like a Christmas card," said an enthusiast of city breeding, which goes to prove the truth of Whistler's observation that "Nature is looking up." The sleighing came with Christmas and made it perfect. There had been flurries of snow before that had drifted to the hollows and fence-corners, and had given the country a sketchy, unfinished look, but on Christmas morning the fields and roads were covered several inches deep with an even layer of crisp snow. Cutters were dusted and brought out, and before noon there was a constant jingling of bells on the country roads. Ever since there has been good sleighing, and holiday visiting has been worth while, if for no other reason than the drive through the clear, cold air. Even the turkeys and mince-pies and plum-puddings seemed to taste better after an appetising outing with the thermometer at fifteen above. Since the sleighing began the towns have been crowded with visitors from the farms, who were out more for the drive than for any shopping they had to do. As a matter of fact, sleighing is now simply one of the pleasures of the country. There is no more heavy teaming to do, and really practical farmers who look at things from a business point of view would be just as well pleased if we did not have sleighing at all. As long as there is enough snow to protect the wheat they are satisfied. Sleighing makes it necessary to have sleighs and cutters instead of waggons and buggies, and that is an added expense. Thank heaven, there are still enough inconsequential people living to like sleighing just for the fun of it. They hitch up their roadsters and go out for a spin because they like to feel the exhilaration it gives. May their [Pg 351] tribe increase.

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

> "A winter fog
> Will freeze a dog."

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

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

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

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

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

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

It is worth while to take a trip along the side roads where they still have rail fences to see the snowdrifts. The briars and withered golden-rod stalks form shelters where the drifts can form and be carved into wonderful shapes by the driving wind. Along the main roads where wire fences are in use the drifts do not have a chance, but on the side-lines they can gather and lie undisturbed, save for the tracking of the wild creatures that now more than at any other season

"do seek their meat from God." Sprawling rabbit-tracks abound everywhere, and here and there the loosely-woven lacework of quail-tracks may be seen. Where the briars and weeds are thick they bend down under the weight of the drifts, but hold them up sufficiently to provide hiding-places for the rabbits and quail, and shelter them from the cold. Occasionally one sees the jumping track of a weasel or mink that finds in the drifts an ideal hunting-ground. Everywhere flocks of snowbirds swoop down among the weeds to feed, and add their tiny tracks to the strangely-written history of the winter struggle for existence.

A few mornings ago the predatory members of the family, who, if there be truth in Spencer's lucid observation that the ontogenesis may be traced in the philogenesis, must now be in the stone age, came in with the news that there were rabbit-tracks in the garden. Of course, that meant a rabbit hunt to be organised at once. With outward signs of reluctance, but secret joy, I took a squirrel rifle and joined in the chase. While we were trying to unravel the tangle of tracks and find the freshest, a neighbour told us where a rabbit had been seen not five minutes ago. Following the direction we found the tracks, and started wolfishly on the trail, giving the best imitation we could of

> "The long, hard gallop which can tire
> The hound's deep hate, the hunter's fire."

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We had not travelled far before it was apparent from the tracks that the rabbit was frightened about something. His easy lope had changed to frenzied jumps. In some places he had cleared fully fifteen feet at a spring. We increased our pace, climbed fences impetuously, floundered through snow-filled ditches, and tried to get through a thorn hedge, but after due consideration, induced by some ugly scratches, decided to walk around the end of it. Finally we came to the tracks of three people, and found that the rabbit had started along this broken path. Just then we realised that the tracks were our own, and that the rabbit had led us around a circle. Although we had not seen him, he had seen us, and it was at our pursuit he had been frightened. Feeling sure that he could not be far ahead of us we kept on, and finally he left the circle and loped off through the woods. But the pack was on his trail and would not be shaken. By actual count we climbed eleven wire fences, floundered through a government drain twice, crossed three farms, and then found that the rabbit was leading us around a larger circle. Once more we followed our own tracks to where he branched off again. This time he ran into brush heaps and then doubled back on his own trail to throw us off. At last he struck off across a field, and, observing the curve of his path, I made a hasty calculation and decided that he was going to circumnavigate the earth on his next circle. So I pantingly called a halt, and led my protesting young barbarians straight home. We had not seen hide or hair of the rabbit during the chase, though he had certainly seen us. It was disappointing, of course, but the disappointment was forgotten in the ravenous appetites we had developed. In a Toronto restaurant we would have been bankrupted before being satisfied, but in the country they like to see one eat heartily. It is proof that the food offered is being appreciated. Having no ill-will against the rabbit, we hoped that he found a good supper and enjoyed it as much as we did ours.

Dec. 28.—"Eben," said Mrs. Summersox in the tone of settled resignation which she adopted on the day they had moved into the country. "The cook has gone away to visit her mother, and you will have to look after the fires." [Pg 354]

"Yes, my dear," said Mr. Summersox brightly, without moving his paper.

"The kitchen fire went out while you were at the post office, and I don't understand the draughts on the heater, and——"

"You don't tell me," said Mr. Summersox, putting down his paper, and taking up his rôle of spontaneous joy-maker. In order to square himself with his wife, the world, and his own conscience, he had to see the rosy side of everything.

"The fire is out, you say. Well, well. Now you mustn't think, my dear, I induced you to come out here to live without foreseeing just such little troubles as this. Nothing will please me better than to look after the fires. Fires are one of the few things I know all about. I have lit all kinds of them, from a clay pipe to a political bonfire. Lighting the fires will take me back to my happy youth when I used to light the wood fires every morning. Gee, it fairly makes me shiver to think of some of the mornings I used to get up in, and I didn't wear pyjamas then either. I remember lots of times when I left the kettle boiling on the stove when I went to bed, and got up to find it full of ice. Those were the happy days when I laid the foundations of my constitution. And the stove I used to light was no halter-broke coal stove, with all the modern improvements, but a rip-snorting, bucking high-oven stove, with a back draught that would blow out the kindling, and I never used coal oil to light it, either. Now you just watch me renew my youth with that fire."

"You had better light it now so that it will be ready to turn off when we go to bed."

"Nonsense. I'll lay the fire to-night, and to-morrow morning I'll pop out of bed, touch a match to it, and then rush back between the blankets as I used to when a boy."

"Very well," said Mrs. Summersox with a little sigh.

Taking up a lamp Mr. Summersox went down cellar and broke up a packing box for kindling. Then he returned to the kitchen, and while he slithered off slivers with the carving knife he sang "Old Dan Tucker," for his mind was in the past. Then followed much banging of the stove-lids and rattling of coal, while he laid the fire. When the task was done to his satisfaction he returned to the sitting-room, and took up the tale. [Pg 355]

"I tell you this life just makes a new man of me. There is nothing like having to do things for oneself once in a while. It was the self-reliance that I cultivated when a boy in the country that made me get along so well in the city that we are now in a position to retire modestly. You just mark my words, Verbena, when you have been here a year you can't be hired to go back to the city to live."

Mrs. Summersox smothered a sigh, and her husband resumed his paper.

Next morning when the alarm clock went off at six o'clock the thermometer had lost its grip on the higher register. But Mr. Summersox was not to be daunted. Flinging back the blankets with an energy that uncovered his patient wife, he bounded out on the floor as well as the chalky deposits in his joints would allow.

"You'd better put on some clothes or you'll catch your death of cold," said Mrs. Summersox in a tone as crisp as the atmosphere.

"Tut, tut," said Mr. Summersox as he groped his way towards the kitchen. Mrs. Summersox tucked the blankets into the small of her back, and awaited developments. Presently Mr. Summersox called in a restrained voice:

"Where in—in this igloo do you keep the matches?"

"Under the pantry shelf."

"Under which shelf, Bezonian?"

Mr. Summersox rarely paraphrased Shakespeare except under the stress of deep emotion.

"Under the bottom shelf."

There was some stumbling, a gratified grunt as the matches were found, and after a pause a sharp exclamation of pain. Mrs. Summersox didn't need to be told what had happened. In spite of [Pg 356] all her protests he would insist on lighting matches on his trousers, and now he had forgotten that all he had on was a thin pair of pyjamas. She stuffed a corner of the blanket in her mouth and began to take an interest in life.

"Did you light this fire last night?" came from the icy kitchen.

"Indeed, I did not," was the reply from the cosy depths of the blankets. The cheerfulness of her tone was not lost on Mr. Summersox.

"Well, it is burned out," he bawled.

"Hadn't you better come back and put on your clothes?" she asked in a choking voice. "Probably there was a live coal in the ashes and it started the fire after we went to bed. Do be sensible and come and put on your clothes."

If the world was one vast storehouse of fur-lined overcoats Mr. Summersox wouldn't have put on another stitch after realising that she was laughing at him. No, by thunder. He would show her. Disdaining to make any reply to her chirpy explanation of the calamity, he went down cellar for more kindling. For a couple of minutes he made a noise like a railroad wreck, and as he returned to the kitchen he was whimpering to himself:

"You needn't tell me! I don't believe C-Cook or P-Peary ever went to the P-Pole. B-r-r-r!"

In the darkness of the parlour bedroom Mrs. Summersox laughed a noiseless laugh. She hadn't had so good a time since she had left the city. She could already see visions of a detached house in Rosedale, with a subdued husband, who was thoroughly cured of his foolish hankering for the country. Meanwhile, the lids banged, paper rustled, and coal rattled. Despite the condition of the temperature Mr. Summersox was evidently working with feverish haste. After a pause, during which he watched the lighted paper flare up and die out, he suddenly yelled in desperation:

"Where do you keep the coal oil?"

"In a wicker-covered carboy in the cellar entrance." [Pg 357]

Once more the lids banged and Mr. Summersox splashed the contents of the carboy lavishly over the paper, kindling wood, and coal. Then he struck a match and applied it to the soaked paper. It spluttered once and went out. He lit another match. Same fate. As the last vestiges of his self-control were slipping away he lit a third match. He waited until it was burning brightly and then plunged it into the midst of the paper and kindling. It went out quicker than the others. Then Mr. Summersox lifted up his voice and tore a passion into tatters.

"Confound the greedy, griping, soulless Standard Oil Company anyway. If I didn't want it to light that confounded oil would explode at the sight of the cook's red hair, and here I can't light it with a forced draught. The whole cursed corporation ought to be rooted out and drowned in its own incombustible product. What is the flash point of this condemned coal oil anyway?" Not being a swearing man, Mr. Summersox was greatly handicapped in dealing with so universal a sinner as the Standard Oil. Just as he was going to start on a second outburst his wife called softly:

"Eben, dear. Are you sure you didn't take the carboy of vinegar? It stands beside the coal oil."

"Vinegar, woman? Did you say vinegar?" He sniffed at the fluid, and then his whiskers began to bristle with rage.

"What in blazes do you think I am trying to do? To make a salad? If I didn't have more sense than to put the vinegar beside the coal oil I'd go and run a junk shop, instead of pretending to be a housekeeper."

Mrs. Summersox was altogether too happy to resent the attack. The cosy bed shook with her silent laughter. Meanwhile her husband put fresh paper under the kindling and poured on so much oil to neutralise the vinegar that when he touched a match to it it started with a blaze that singed off his eyebrows. Banging the door shut he started for the parlour bedroom with [Pg 358] chattering teeth, and feet so numb with cold that he hobbled rather than ran.

"Turn on the draughts on the heater," shouted his wife.

"It's out!" he snarled as he still approached rapidly like a runaway iceberg on the high seas. Mrs. Summersox was filled with sudden alarm.

"Eben Summersox! Don't you dare to come bouncing into this bed and giving me my death of cold. If you touch me with your cold hands or feet I'll——" But she never told what she would do. With a wild, despairing scramble her husband clawed at the clothes with numb fingers, and then plunged between the blankets like a hunted thing.

"Well, I hope you are satisfied," said Mrs. Summersox tartly. "If this is the way the joys of your youth are going to turn out I should think this would cure you."

"W-what are y-you talking about? The whole trouble is that we tried to bring city conveniences with us to the cu-country. A man needs a course in a technical college before trying to run one of those coal stoves. I am going down town to-day to get a couple of wood stoves, and I'll throw those confounded coal stoves on the scrap heap. The country is all right, but if you are going to live in it and enjoy it you must live as country people do. I am going to root out of this house everything that has to do with city life, and then I can live as a man should."

At this point Mrs. Summersox resumed her air of resignation and sighed deeply. There was silence for a while, and then a knock sounded from the kitchen door. Mr. Summersox blazed with wrath.

"What miserable idiot is knocking at this hour of the morning? He can just knock till he is tired, and then come back at a reasonable hour." The knock sounded again, louder than before. Mr. Summersox sulked. His wife sighed once more and stirred as if about to get up, but was careful not to uncover herself.

"Oh, well, I suppose I must get up and see who it is."

Mr. Summersox threw back the clothes and went to the door intending to work off his wrath on [Pg 359] the intruder. When he came back he was almost cheerful.

"It's the cook," he volunteered.

"Well, I am glad she had the kitchen fire lit when she came in out of the cold."

"She hadn't. It went out," snapped Mr. Summersox.

Then silence reigned in the parlour bedroom until the warmth from the newly-lighted heater began to take the chill off the air.

Dec. 31.—I want to fulfil a promise I made some time ago that I would sum up the results of my experiment at farming before the end of the year and tell frankly what it means to get back to the land. I cannot do that in facts and figures because I have not received the returns for my shipment of apples, and yet I feel that I got enough from it to justify me in saying something. But what I got is not the sort of thing that a man can store in his granary or deposit in a bank. It can be set down only in terms of personal satisfaction with the world we live in. What I am treasuring is chiefly the memory of spacious days, serene hours, and emotions that were not even productive of thought. That seems rather hazy, does it not? And yet it seems everlastingly worth while. After having felt the grip and grind of the world it is something to feel peaceful and secure for a few hours.

And now let us get back to the real advantages of farming and country life. The prevailing idea with many people is that it is monotonous and lonely. It has never struck me in that way, and I take much satisfaction in quoting what Thoreau replied when questioned about the loneliness of his life.

"What sort of space is that which separates a man from his fellows and makes him solitary? I have found that no exertion of the legs can bring two minds much nearer to one another. What do we want most to dwell near to? Not to many men, surely—but to the perennial source of our life, whence in all our experience we have found it to issue, as the willow stands near the water and [Pg 360] sends out its roots in that direction. This will vary with different natures, but this is the place where a wise man will dig his cellar."

There are joys surpassing the joys of any success, of good harvests, of fat steers, or anything that most farmers desire and take account of, but these joys cannot be set down in words. I can only ask the poets to suggest them for you. Whitman says in one of those seemingly egotistical passages where he is really voicing the soul of things:

"I will never translate myself at all only to him or her who privately stays with me in the open air."

In the supreme hours of the open life of the country those who are able to feel and see and enjoy reap a harvest that is beyond all sordid dreams. At such times they care little for your trusts and

mergers, or for what the future may have in store. And though these days cannot last those who have once enjoyed them feel that they counterbalance all the failures and worries and bitterness of life.

A FARMER'S DEFENCE

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

But oh, it seems another world,
  Out there where things are done,
Where glories worth a king's desire
  We see so bravely won.
But something clutches at my heart [Pg 361]
  When I would rise and go—
Who wins the most shall lose the most!
  The world is ordered so.

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

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

[Pg 362]

INDEX

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