

common interests, rather than setting them at variance; to obtain justice and fair dealing for all, and make more sure and more abundant the necessities of human life—this and much more is comprised in the work founded by David Lubin.

Nature's Diary.

By A. B. Klugh, M. A.

The earliest migrant of the season is now arriving in many parts of Ontario. This is the **Prairie Horned Lark**, a bird which is common in Ontario from February to October, but is scarce, or altogether absent, in November, December and January.

This species is about seven inches in length, of a light pinkish brown above and whitish beneath. The outer tail-feathers are black and there are black patches on the breast and cheeks. The chin and throat are a pale yellow, and the little tufts on the head, which give the bird its name of "horned" lark, are black. These tufts can be erected or depressed at will.

The prairie horned lark has not always been an inhabitant of Ontario; it being one of the birds which moved in as the forest gave place to fields. It was first observed at Hamilton in 1868 by Mr. McIlwraith and reached Muskoka in 1887.

It haunts the open fields and roadsides, and this species and the Vesper Sparrow are the two birds most frequently seen on the road, both being often termed "grey-birds"—a common name covering a good many species of small birds.

The song of the prairie horned lark is a cheerful tinkling ditty, usually delivered from a stone or clod of earth, but it also, in the mating season, rises high in the air and sings while on the wing, like the Skylark of England. The call-note is a characteristic short-whistled note, usually uttered while flying. It is one of the few small birds which walk instead of hopping, and it keeps to the ground, being very rarely seen in a tree or even a bush.

This species is a very early breeder, the full set of three or four eggs often being laid by the end of March. Sometimes the nest is found under an overhanging snow-drift, and occasionally the eggs are frozen by a late "cold snap." W. E. Saunders, of London, Ont., one of our foremost Canadian ornithologists, records having once found young hatched in March.

The nest is built of grass in a depression in the ground, and is lined with horse-hair and feathers. The eggs are dull olive in color, spotted and speckled with brownish purple.

The prairie horned lark, being a bird of the fields, is one of the birds whose food habits are of the greatest interest to the farmer. Its food has consequently been investigated by the Biological Survey of the United States Department of Agriculture, the work being done by W. S. McAtee. This bird has been accused of eating sprouting wheat, and the investigation shows that it does so, but to an extremely limited extent. Nearly all the grain taken is eaten during the winter months, thus being waste grain and being no loss to the farmer. On the other hand, the prairie horned lark is one of the most efficient destroyers of weed-seed. It is particularly fond of the seeds of green foxtail, yellow foxtail, smartweeds, bindweeds, pigweed, purslane, ragweed, crab grass and barnyard grass. It also eats the seed of the corn-cockle, a weed which is a serious nuisance among wheat, as the size and weight of the seed make its separation from the wheat difficult, and because of its poisonous nature. Animals are sometimes poisoned by eating wheat with seeds of corn cockle in it, and fatal cases of poisoning of human beings have been known to result from the consumption of flour made from such grain.

The gizzard of the prairie horned lark is extremely muscular, and it has been found that the combined action of the gizzard and the gravel which it contains crushes every kind of seed which is eaten. Even the exceedingly hard nutlets of the gromwell or puccoon (*lithospermum*) are ground up and cherry pits are broken. Thus no seeds eaten pass through this bird's digestive apparatus in shape for germination.

A few seeds of cultivated fruits have been found among the stomach contents of this species, but no fruit pulp has been found, so that it is probable that the seeds were obtained from garbage heaps.

The prairie horned lark eats large numbers of insects of various kinds—beetles, grasshoppers, butterflies, moths, ants, flies, and wasps all being taken. The most conspicuous element of its insect food, however, is weevils of various species. Among the insects eaten are wireworm, cut worms, flea beetles, and many of the worst pests of the farm.

Thus, from a study of its food, we see that the prairie horned lark is the friend of the farmer and is eminently entitled to protection.

HORSES.

Now is the time to begin putting the "finishing touches" on the horses, and equipment in readiness for seeding operations. Read "Whip's" article in this issue and act.

In planning the spring's work for the horses, manage to give the in-foal mare and the newly-broken colt the easiest of the tasks. Giving them a little the advantage on the double-tree helps. Avoid putting the pregnant mare on the tongue on heavy-drawing implements, or where there is likely to be much swaying motion.

The Percheron Society of America is offering a number of special prizes at several Canadian exhibitions in 1913, in addition to the long list of United States shows. Calgary, Toronto, Magrath, Brandon, Macleod, Edmonton and Brandon Winter Fair are the Canadian shows to get these grants, which are given only to animals recorded in the Percheron Stud Book of America, and their owners must be members of the Percheron Society of America.

The total number of prizes awarded by this Society, including 46 American and 8 Canadian shows, reaches \$17,000 for 1913, the most of the money going to American-bred horses.

Many horses are, and many more would be benefited greatly by being clipped before going into the spring's work. A long shaggy, thick coat that brings forth undue perspiration, which causes the mass of hair to become soaked, and as soon as the horse stops working this entire "blanket" becomes as cold as well as wet, is a condition which is not in the best interests of the animal. Properly attended to the clipped horse is in a better position to withstand the demands of the greater exertion necessary during seeding operations than his unclipped mate. The horse may be kept clean with greater ease, and will usually show more vim and vigor. Every teamster knows how difficult it is to clean his team at night if they have a coat of long thick hair on them. They are often wet the next morning. Such a condition cannot be comfortable for the horse. Clip him, and the moisture leaves his body steadily and almost as fast as secreted.

Favors Grading Stallions.

Editor "The Farmer's Advocate":

In reference to the present stallion enrolment act, so frequently referred to in your columns and so heartily endorsed by some, permit me to say that the act, as it stands at present, fails to accomplish the purpose for which it was intended, namely, the elimination of the "scrub horse."

Even were the act so amended as to provide for compulsory inspection, it would still fall short of its intended object—for instance: a man may own a horse whose size, breeding and quality render him worth, say, \$2,000.00. His neighbor may own a horse whose under-size, inferior breeding and quality leave him worth, say, \$500.00. Both horses are registered and both are sound. On the payment of \$7.00 each horse is inspected and enrolled, and each owner receives exactly the same kind of certificate from the Enrolment Board, with the result that the owner of the "scrub horse" can point out to the intending breeder that his horse has just the same standing as his neighbors, in fact "is just as good," and the fee is say \$5.00 less. The procedure so far has defeated the very object it was intended to serve—namely the production of a better class of horses.

I think all good horsemen are agreed that an advance along the line of horse production is desirable, and that such advance can only be expected by the use of good sires. I know a poor man who started out on a small farm with two good grade brood mares. He used the best horse available; then adopted this with his fillets until he reached the required number of crosses for registration. He has produced in this way a span of two-year-old fillies which recently sold for \$1,200.00, and were cheap at that price.

Some one may object that the elimination of the "scrub horse" would cause a dearth of stallions in some neighborhoods. I think not, in fact I feel sure there are many men who would willingly invest their money in good horses, were it not for the competition of unfair ones costing perhaps less than one-fourth the price, and the proverbial short-sightedness of many breeders who, to save \$5.00 at time of service, will forfeit \$25.00 to even \$50.00 at time of sale. I would suggest, therefore, that the act be so amended as to provide not only for compulsory inspection and enrolment, but also the grading of the horses by a committee of competent judges. The horses, according to size, breeding and quality, to be graded as standard one two and three. The grade of the horse to be stated in the government certificate, and inserted in all advertising matter. I would further suggest that after a period of, say two years, a horse failing to reach standard three be disqualified from standing for public service.

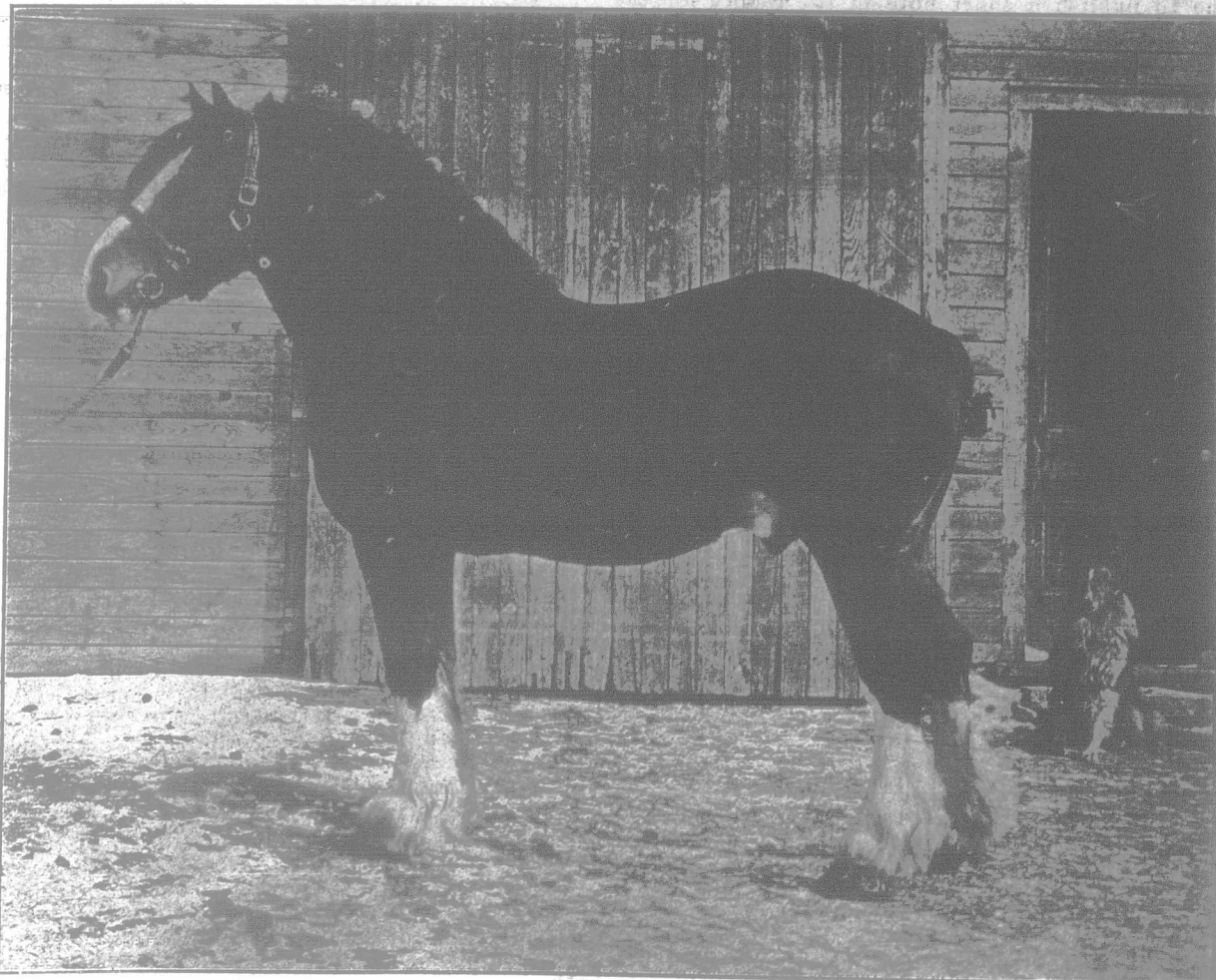
There would be, of course, a court of appeal to which an aggrieved stallion owner could resort.

I may add that I had the honor of moving a resolution to this effect, at a meeting of horsemen held during Guelph Winter Fair. It was carried almost unanimously.

I feel sure our legislators are only too willing to meet public opinion in this matter, and any discussion that may lead to a clear full expression of that opinion is to be greatly desired.

Middlesex Co., Ont.

R. S. McVITTY.



Pacific [13173] (13113).

Clydesdale stallion, imported in February, 1912, by W. L. Mossip, St. Mary's, Ont., and sold to W. J. Cowan, Cannington, Ont.