



The Chicken Thief

H. Percy Blanchard, Hants Co., N.S.

JUST imagine what your feelings may be when, morning after morning, you count your prize stock of R. I. Red chickens, great big fellows, almost as big as hens, and little wee ones, and on nearly every occasion find the count running shorter and shorter. "If you have swears, prepare to swear them now." But why stand disconsolate; the rather, it is time for action! Certainly our chickens were diminishing in numbers. Mr. Williams and I talked it over. Mr. Williams was the old foreman on this farm when it was owned by my predecessor. Likewise, he is an expert woodsman, and a man of resources.

Now, I thought the depredator was a mink; but Mr. Williams said skunk. One morning, among the survivors I found a chicken with its comb almost bitten off, just hanging by a little bit of flesh. Here was a trail. Now, according to Mr. Williams, skunks are the chicken by the throat and suck its blood; whereas a mink grabs it by the head, bites it through the skull and brain, and so carries it off. It looked as if my guess were right. But one bright moonlight night I was awakened by a tumult among the bunch of chickens that were roosting on an open box below our open window. I was out of bed and gazing into the night at the instant; and surely I saw some small animal prowling round below. When I shouted and clapped my hands, it slowly and unwillingly made off. I might get enough clothes on that I might follow it out into the chilly night; it had disappeared. Mrs. Blanchard upbraided me because I did not have a loaded shotgun in the bedroom, so I could have shot the beast; but then, how did I know the beast would come that night; and besides, if I had had a gun, I never would have seen the thief. I have proved that conclusion far too often to dispute it to-day.

On the morrow, Mr. Williams and I again consulted. The beast was about the size of a large cat, forward end dark, and hind part lighter. It moved as good deal like a cat. "Skunk," said he; "if you had met it last night, we would have had to bury your clothes." I was glad then I had not met it. I would hate to have my clothes buried, even if I were not inside them. But the insolence of the brute increased. The hen-fowls were all shut up in the hen-house, with no entry but the small run-in hole from the yard. One morning we found on the floor a somewhat dilapidated dead hen. So after dark the next night, we closed up that one entry, and Mr. Williams hunted up an old mink trap and set it just outside the hole.

Next Morning the Trap Was Sprung. But there was no mink in it. However, we both could plainly smell skunk. He would likely come back, as he were not hurt. Now, a peculiar coincidence was that on that same morning, Randolph's big old white and black tom cat came

home, with one front paw smashed off and the other broken. Randolph shot him to put him out of misery. Another coincidence is that we have lost no more hens. That trap must have so scared the skunk when it snapped, that the beast has abandoned its evil ways.

At the same time, now that he is dead and cannot defend himself, a suspicion has fastened itself upon that tom cat. Some of the neighbors missed poultry, and they blamed Tom. Randolph himself lost some. Since Tom departed the chickens have not been molested. But what I would like to know is, how was it that on that morning when we found the trap sprung, we smelt skunk?

* Calves Without Milk

EDITOR, Farm and Dairy.—On reading "Herdsmen's" letter in Farm and Dairy of November 25th re calf rearing without milk, I was much struck with the great difficulty he attaches to the process, and I'm not surprised that his only attempt was a failure. Now, having raised many fine calves without milk, I take the liberty of telling "Herdsmen" my method, and being a milk seller I speak from practice, not theory.

The calf is taken right away from its mother and taught to drink. For the first few days it gets all the milk it needs. When about four days old I begin adding a little gruel, gradually reducing the milk and increasing the gruel, commencing with a tablespoonful, till about a teacupful is reached, which is the most they ever get; this quantity is not reached till the calf is about a month old. After they are two weeks old, they get only a taste of milk; they are never fed as much gruel as we would feed were they getting milk, the idea being to get them eating as soon as possible. When about two or three months old, I stop feeding the gruel as they are then eating a sufficient quantity of other food; they start on solid food as soon as ever they will begin to eat, which they generally do in about a week. They are given a little pulped turnips and meal (chop), with fish hay always within their reach, and fed according to their capacity. Give fresh clean feed at regular meal times and cold water as they want it. In making the gruel, I noticed better results when I used less quantity than the directions call for, and I always let it boil a few minutes when making it, adding water as needed when fed. We have raised as many as five calves on 100 pounds of meal. We have been using it for several years with the best results.—"Dairymen."

[Note.—Before publication, this letter was submitted to "Herdsmen," who wishes to call "Dairymen's" attention to the fact that the only calf he ever fed without milk didn't get any milk whatever, not even during the first day or two. He has followed a method similar to that advocated by "Dairymen" with good results, but not so good as where lots of skim milk was available.—Editors.]

The Canny Scot

TWO friends, a Welshman and a Scotsman, happened to be lunching together recently in a certain restaurant. The latter kept turning round to see that his hat and coat remained still on the peg where he had left them.

"You are a suspicious chap," said his friend at last. "Who do you think is going to walk in here and steal our coats?"

"Canna say," replied Scotty, "but I'll tak' guid care nobody pets mine; yours went ten meenutes ago."

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