

pests, however, are the black-birds, and there is little satisfaction in shooting them, for on account of their size, they are not worth powder and shot. They swoop down in clouds. They are most presumptuous fellows, and you can scarcely drive them away. Yet even for the black-birds, I have a soft spot in my heart, for they used to cheer me up, and carry my thoughts away from my surroundings, into the clouds. Just in front of my shanty there was a water-run, and crossing it a bridge. In the evening, after feasting all day upon the fields near by, the black-birds used to congregate on this bridge, and pour forth in song the purest melody. It seemed to me, as I lay in the smoke beside the smudge-heap in order to protect myself from mosquitos, that the music was heavenly, "I lay entranced and had no room for thought." One after another they caught up the harmonious strain until two or three hundred voices had joined in a grand chorus. This they kept up from sundown through the long twilight into the night. I never expect to hear music more enchanting.

One can hardly call the gentle blue and white gull a pest, but he is a strange fellow, you hear his mournful cry hour after hour, day after day, as he persistently follows the plow up and down, apparently looking for earth worms. One would naturally expect to find earth worms in the rich black soil of Manitoba, but such is not the case, I expect the frost is the cause of their absence. There are a great many frogs. Many hundred-weights are sold every spring to Winnipeg dealers, and the hind legs of the frog are considered quite a delicacy in the Prairie Province. When nicely prepared a dish of frogs' legs is as thoothsome as a spring chicken.

Lizards are numerous and attain to large proportions; but are quite harmless, so are the snakes, the most common varieties, are the milk and garter snake. In the rivers, tremendous catfish, weighing as much as forty pounds, are caught. In the spring of the year, the Red River generally overflows its banks, and many fish go up the creeks and railway ditches. It used to be considered great sport to go out at night with torches, and spear catfish with pitch-forks.

Some animals, which are destructive and unusually busy in the early part of the season, and which are legitimate objects for gun-practice, are the mink, the musk rat and the weasel. They make short work of the poultry if they are not carefully watched. I had in my

possession the skin of a mink that had sucked the blood of fifty chickens in a single night. The mice and the gophers do considerable damage. The mice are larger and rather prettier than we have them, being a light fawn color, with sleek, long hair, and very long tails. They make themselves quite at home. At night, they used to run around the shanty and over my bed in swarms. The gophers are particularly fond of grain, and destroy sometimes half a settler's crop. Wolves, foxes and badgers are stirring and afford considerable sport to the hunter. Another animal, which I must not forget to mention, because it is so disagreeable and mischievous, one you have all heard about, and read about, and perhaps smelled about, but which you never like to talk about, its name beginning with S and ending with k, and whose Latin name is (*Mephitis Americana*), in early spring lords it over every other creature. I had many sorrowful experiences with this odoriferous Prairie habitant. I first met a s—k one moon-light night, near the town of Morris. I had gone to fetch the Doctor, and was returning on horseback, when I noticed, just in front of my pony, running along the trail, a small animal, which I could not clearly discern. I thought, perhaps, it was a wounded rabbit, or it might even be a prairie chicken. It occurred to me, that my best plan, if I wished to capture it, was to jog along until it got tired out, then to jump down and pick it up. The little animal ran along in front, neither turning to the right nor to the left, for some distance, then suddenly it left the trail and ran into the long grass. I did not mean to let it escape me without an effort, so I jumped off my pony and ran after it. I overtook it easily enough, for the little thing did not seem afraid of me, and stooping down, I caught hold of it gently by the neck; quick as a flash the supposed rabbit turned its head around and bit me through the hand, then, at the same time, without the slightest warning, it opened its rear battery upon me, and in a twinkling I was surcharged with the most beastly dose ever precipitated upon an innocent man. How I managed to beat a retreat I hardly know, for I was almost stupefied.

This my first encounter certainly left me a sadder and a wiser man. Life just then was not worth the living. I was an outcast, I dare not now return to my boarding house. Like the leprous men of old, I must now cry unclean! unclean! and keep without the camp.

(To be continued.)