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IS IT WORTH A CART?

Not very many years ago, a farmer of France, looking on a nest which a pair of small birds had built in the loose hay that lay in one of his carts, seriously revolved in his mind, "a same mind too—the question, "Is it worth a cart?" and, what is more curious still—until the whole circumstances of the question are known—he deliberately settled that it was.

The question has a strange history, and the history has a wide lesson. For just before this time the people of the farmer's immediate locality, and of leagues around it, had tried a new experiment. Let us see what the history and the lesson are.

The experiment they had tried was of a world without small birds. Ignorant of what the small birds were doing, the crop-grower conceived a desire to be rid of them, for their Maker had fixed that part of the pay of their unknown work should be made in tithe of summer fruit. The birds were his little Levites, serving in the great Nature-temple, and He could not forget their claims, they lived for the fruits, and He decreed them to live by the fruits bunting and finches, the farmer should pay blackbird and thrush, the gardener Wisdom and kindness filled the whole plan—a wisdom and kindness which, whilst it gave first place to the creature man, did not, could not, exclude the creature bird. But farmers and gardeners were not yet aware how much these feathered servants befriended them. On the contrary, they were held to be pests—perhaps beautiful and charming, but certainly costly pests. Some might permit them to collect their fruit and corn dues, but not as a justice, only as a benevolence. Others shot them down, there was no benevolence, said they in permitting waste of human food these were useless creatures.

In the interests of economy, they snared, trapped, shot, poisoned. So complete was the massacre that for miles the summer saw not the flutter of a wing, heard not a chirp. Cold, calculating theorists had their way. But hope had scarcely kindled before it began to fail. What simple sentimentalists and short-sighted humanitarians had felt, what believers in the divinity of the scheme of nature had known, hard-headed utilitarians now began to fear to learn. The crop-growers' enemies—their service and their song—were indeed no more, but what those enemies would have eaten was by no means saved, for fruits and corn, nay even roots, were now exposed to new attacks—attacks more hideous and more costly than any from which they had suffered before. To their surprise they found that they had exchanged winged birds for grubs, a few songsters for hosts of caterpillars. But of course clever man would soon remedy all this. Expedients were invented and applied, but these were not so successful as the intentions and applications of the Creator, and soon it was found that they were far more costly to boot. Men had altered their world, and made it a world more after their own theory, and it turned out to be a world of plague. Cold-blooded utilitarianism had soon had enough of itself.

In the national interest, a commission stepped in, examined the evidence, took up the cause of the birds, and affirmed that, until they were restored to their original place on

the land, doing their free will again, nature could not yield her full supply of food.

Birds were now welcome guests. They were looked for, loured for, indeed, they were bought in other lands, imported, and tended with care. Let who would undervalue small birds, men who had seen summers without them could not. It was at this time when birds were being reintroduced, whilst the memory of famine-threatened summers was still fresh in the people's mind, that a pair of birds on a grub-stricken farm chanced to build their nest on a heap of hay which lay in a temporarily disused cart. The nest was finished when the farmer's boy, who had been sent to prepare the cart for use, discovered it. Most farmers' boys (who had not passed through the experience of this boy would, it is to be feared, have made short work of a bird's nest in such a place. Farmers' boys go to church and to school, but they don't seem to learn whatever

they may be taught, respect for the feelings of God's creatures, but the boy had been to the school which is said to make fools wise—the school of experience—he had seen and felt, too, what it was to have summers without birds. So he left the little house undisturbed and fetched his master, and the master did not meet at the lad's dilemma, he felt it himself. To move the hay that he had so carefully put away would ensure the birds' forsaking. The only alternative was to destroy the nest, or to leave the birds in undisturbed possession of the cart until the eggs were hatched and the young birds flown, and, meanwhile, buy another. He must give up the nest or the cart, and he settled to give up the cart, for he said within himself, "The nest was worth it."

Yes, it is true, once in the world's history it has been proved, by the lack of those small co-workers, human labor becomes less valuable, land is less productive, sunbeams bring less to maturity, food rises in price, commerce does not pay so well, taxes are a greater burden to bear, laborers have shortened hours and less wages, farmers look bankruptcy in the face, and the country has a glimpse of ruin. Those economical farmers at length got hold of this one clear bit of practical knowledge.—*Sunday Morning*

A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. —*Proverbs, XVII., 17.*



MAKE GIRLS SELF-SUPPORTING

A writer in *Harper's Bazar* says:

In all other relations of life outside of wifehood and motherhood women may be held to be more or less dependents upon those that are obliged to furnish them with what they require for comfort, clothes, food, shelter, and pleasure. Many of these women, meantime, render services altogether worth what they have, but even under such circumstances it is galling to receive, for these women know that the person giving might not, perhaps, be able to afford the luxury of this service if not obliged to make the best of the facts of the case.

In some instances this dependency, in a house, for example, where the means are limited, is not altogether honorable to the dependent. The daughter of a poor man, or of one with moderate income, has two hands

and her health and a modicum of intellect, and if she is not needed at home, is to blame if she do not find her way to become, if not wholly, yet partially independent and she can render great assistance merely lifting a small portion of the weight the father has to carry. If it is the more gratification of pride that hinders this, her position borders on the disgraceful, and no endeavor to "keep up appearances" can justify it; and if it is the gratification of indolence, there is no excuse for her at all. Something of the dis-

grace, too, in such case attaches to the parents of this daughter, not only that they have not inculcated principles that would make her scorn her indolence, but that they have not from the outset given the child to understand that she was to be self-supporting, and that there was honor in that path, and have not strained every nerve to afford her, moreover, the means, the education, the special training of the special talent that, followed up, would make her so. That is a course they will not pursue with their son; it is a most short-sighted and foolish tenderness or shirking of responsibility that allows them to pursue it with their daughter. They mean to leave her well to do in the world, perhaps, they mean to marry her well, or they are sure if she does not marry that she will have a home with her brother or with some sister who does marry. But none of the sisters may marry; the brother's wife may not wish for her, and ear make that home a horror to her, and the well-to-do portion may

vanish into thin air, and under all these possibilities it is plain that a most positive duty is neglected by the parents.

It seems indeed, to be a very general opinion among mothers, and fathers too, that the boys must be helped, whenever it is in the least practicable, to make a way for themselves; but that the girls can slip along anywhere; that the boys must be planted and rooted and watered, but the girls may blow about like a leaf, and as the father has really the directing and governing power, even if he abdicates, men have only themselves to thank for the great number of female dependents. It is to this want of wisdom that so many wretched marriages are due, that so many daughters, cruelly assorted, are forced into a life-long unhappiness, because, according to the ideas of their training, they have nothing else to do but to marry—and then bring up their daughters the same way.

But when a woman has really struck out for herself, frequently to the consternation of her family, what a benediction it is to her in mental and moral strength! How soon her family come to see the matter as she does, and how sweet she finds it to handle her own money! The sister who feels herself, so far as externals go, as well off as the sister who has married, infinitely better off than if she had married the person repugnant to her, feeling that some of the best blessings of life could have no blessing in them if owed to him, the daughter who can add her share to the comfort and beauty of home, the mother who is able to contribute to the happiness of her children with her own hands—none who have not felt the sting of their dependence can tell the glory of their independence.

TAKE COMFORT—It is well enough to provide for a rainy day, but that man is very foolish who saves his umbrella for a future storm, while he is allowing himself to be drenched with rain. We do not take pleasure and enjoy contentment as we should do. We live too much in the future, and too little in the present. We live poor that we may die rich. We get all ready to be happy, and when we are quite ready, infirmity or disease steps in and the chance to take comfort in this life is gone. If we could only be content to seize upon the little pleasures that lie just outside, and fit within our daily pathway, they would make a large sum total at the end of our lives. Too many of us scorn pleasures that are cheap and near and within our grasp, and complain because we cannot have such as are costly and remote. But if we would only magnify the little things that make life pleasant as we do those that make it unpleasant, the cup of our joys would continually overflow. Be content to take life as it comes, and always make the best of the present and let future sorrows be future, and let them not intrude upon the present by unnecessary apprehensions and forebodings.—*Collegian*

WHERE DOES THE DAY BEGIN?—The day begins on an irregularly curved line drawn southwardly from Behring's Straits, through the Pacific Ocean. Islands which received their civilization from this continent are on the east of this line, those which received it from Asia are on the west of the line. It starts from Behring's Straits at about near the 150th meridian, and comes westwardly along the coast of Japan, passing between the Philippine Islands and Borneo, thence eastwardly to a point near the 180th meridian on the antarctic circle. Practically the change of date in the log-book is made by navigators on passing the 180th meridian, unless they have touched, or are intending to touch, at the Philippine Islands, in that case the change is made between those islands and Borneo.—*Ed. Journal*