

APRIL 25, 1912

Jack Miner and the Bear.

It is as a lover of birds, and one who has almost magical skill in protecting and taming them, that Jack Miner is known to "Farmer's Advocate" readers. But to those who are more intimately acquainted with him, he is known also as a keen hunter of big game. Every fall he makes one of the number who go to the northern woods of Ontario or Quebec to shoot deer and moose. In his house there are so many deer or moose heads sticking up or lying around that the dusting of them is a formidable chore, and his wife threatens to give several of them away, so that visitors may be able to walk through the rooms without bumping their heads. But in all the years in which Mr. Miner has hunted large game, he had never, until the season of 1911, come across a bear. The story of his encounter with one of that species of game it was the privilege of the writer to hear from his own lips, and will be given as nearly as possible in his own words.

"It was up in the Spanish River district," said he, "where I went to hunt moose last November. One day I was out in the woods with my rifle looking for what might be seen. Up there, you know, the woods are rough. There is not only the standing green timber, there are lots of dead trees standing, too, and interspersed with these, fallen trees abound, many of them not lying on the ground, but held up by their roots and limbs about breast-high, or so. And all through there is an undergrowth of birch and poplar, so that one can't see very far unless he is on a hill-top, and through which he seems to make dreadfully slow speed if he gets in a hurry. Well, as I said, I was out one day, and, peering about as I cautiously made my way through the brush and logs, I saw in a kind of open space what looked something like a muskrat's nest. It was made of ferns that had been gathered and put in a heap.

"Says I to myself, as I considered the thing, 'that must have been done by a bear, sure. Nothing else here could have collected the ferns and piled them up so. And he must have used that for a sleeping-place, I believe.' The heap was wet and sodden, but looked as if it might have been comfortable in dry weather.

"Keeping pretty still, but yet looking around, I noticed a pine log that had quite a little sand in the cracks of the bark at one place. There were also, just there, marks as if some animal had a track across the log. Having, by this time, bear on the brain, I concluded that a bear had made a practice of getting over the log at that spot. 'But how,' thinks I, 'did the sand get there?'

"There was no sand to be seen—nothing but leaves and brush. Still peering about, and keeping quiet, mind you, I noticed, by-and-bye, where two pine trees had fallen apart—they were leaning pretty well over, but not nearly down—and between the two trees their roots had raised up off the ground, so that there was a sort of cave under, and down in there I saw the subsoil exposed clear sand.

"Now I've got it," says I. 'The bear must have lain in there some nights, and when he crossed the log he shook himself. That's how the sand got there.'

"I came up—cautiously, you bet—and examined around those trees. There was quite a large open space below where the roots had lifted up to form a canopy. At the side nearest to me there was an opening large enough for a man's body to enter, and I discovered hair sticking on the sharp ends of some roots around this hole. 'Bear's hair,' I was sure. Next I saw tracks—'bear's, and no mistake'—in the sand, but they were not fresh tracks; might have been made a month before. Growing more confident, and looking closer, I could see that ferns like those in the heap outside had been dragged in and placed to one side. Could just see the edge of them. Didn't care to get too close.

The whole situation, as I thought, was now quite clear to me. 'That bear must have dragged those ferns in to make a comfortable nest when it got too wet to sleep on the heap outside. And now, since the weather has become colder, he has gone somewhere else. Oh, yes! that's quite plain! Those tracks were made weeks ago!'

I got up on top where there was a little hole—a skylight, as it were—and looked down, but could see nothing. It was too dark. I prowled around to see if there were no other means of getting a peep in, still keeping my rifle in hand and tried ready, you understand. Stooped down and tried to look in at the big hole, but there wasn't light enough to see anything. 'I'd like awfully well to go in there,' said I to myself, 'but guess I'd better not.' But the longer I looked, the more eager I grew to see what was there. 'Where the bear had been,' you know. Got desperate at last and said, 'I'm going in, anyhow.' So, setting the gun up carefully, I crawled slowly in, head first, until there was nothing outside but my moccasins. I was trying hard to see what was

in one side of the cave when that bear swung his nose slowly around within eight inches of my face. Say! Nobody told me to get out, but if you had seen my moccasins flying around just then, as I frantically struggled backwards, you would have thought something was going on underground. Of course, I got out. How long it took, I can't say, but you may be sure it was no longer than I could help. I know it took longer to get my breath after I was out. But, grabbing my rifle, breath and reason both came back after a time, and I reflected that bear is not dangerous. He must have gone to sleep for the winter ever so long ago. I needn't have been so scared.

"So, with a rebound my courage returned, and I said, 'I'm going to get that bear, and I forthwith climbed up on the roof, and with a long stick made a hole through right above where he was, and punched him to make him go out. He would grunt, but he wouldn't move. I then sharpened the stick and prodded him until he stuck his head out, and I shot him.'

The story excites one's sympathy for the poor bear. No one can wish that the bear had got Jack Miner. And the hunter's quick self-possession and daring are beyond praise. But many will have wished that he had left the bear to his dreams. A vivid imagination will picture the possible feelings of the animal who had his sleep first disturbed by an unwelcome visitor, and then was afterwards routed out to be killed. It may well be hoped that Mr. Miner, who, from being

many sections tobacco-growing will be dropped, owing to the difficulties experienced in disposing of last season's crop. Tomatoes are clear y in the ascendancy, as is indicated by the numerous hotbeds which may be observed all over the vegetable-growing section.

The system of municipal drainage, vs. taxation, which has been pursued by the different localities under the antiquated "Drainage Act," is provoking heated discussions at this season of the year. The man who can produce and champion a system which can be conducted on a fairer and more just basis will be heralded as a public benefactor.

A. E.

Home and School Should Co-operate.

Editor "The Farmer's Advocate":

I have been interested in reading, in "The Farmer's Advocate" of March 21st, the letter on "Rural School Criticism," by Mr. Dearnness, and from it back to the letters in Feb. 29th issue, by J. O. Duke and Jas. Love.

When we note the decrease in our rural population, the doubling up of our farms as the "young men go West," or to "street cars or factories," we may well look into the "Why" and "Wherefore" of this live social question. Is Mr. Duke right in throwing the chief onus on the public school and our educational system? An all-round and thorough discussion of this crying

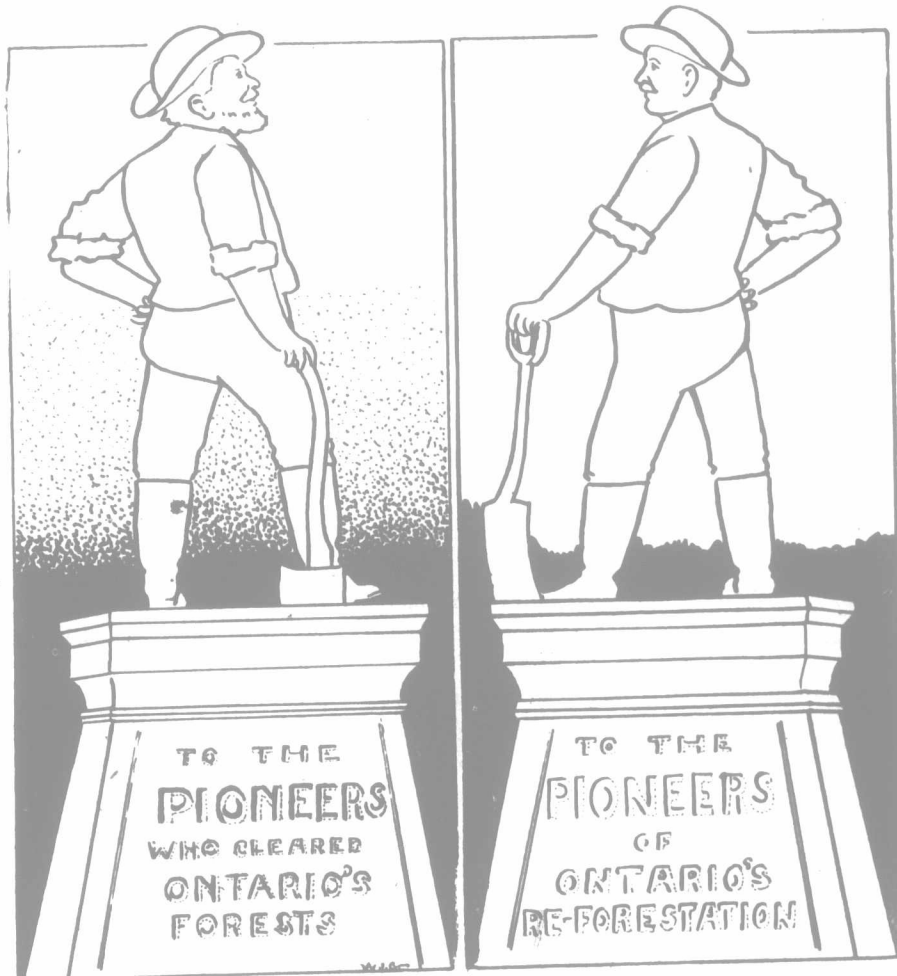
need, and the most effectual means of meeting it for the prosperity of our country, might encourage people to think and act. Would it not be wise for "The Farmer's Advocate" to devote a weekly column to these questions on education, and invite teachers, parents and all interested to contribute? Our Government is giving generous support to education and to moral uplift in our Province, through its educational curriculum and training schools, through its Farmers' and Women's Institutes and Children's Aid Societies.

In my opinion, this egress from the country to the towns is due to the false ideal set up by the home, rather than to the Public School. When children are taught that the most important thing in life is to make money, to secure the largest return for the least work, they will rush to that, even though the supply end of the social balance may lose. A secondary reason is the failure of rural life to meet the natural tastes and needs for our

of social, intellectual and aesthetic development. Wiser and more cordial co-operation between the parents and teachers would help much in this. The church and the school, the minister and the teacher, are usually the leaders in social, intellectual and moral life in the country. When these co-operate with the home, we may expect a manhood and womanhood to grow up in our land of which we may be justly proud, which shall make Canada second to no community in the world in intellectual and moral power.

I quite agree with Mr. Love that arithmetic should be retained and especially stressed upon a teacher's High School course. Upon no subject are the older boys of the school, bright or otherwise, so ready to find a chance to trip the teacher. How can she teach that of which she is not master herself?

I must, however, take decided exception to the outruling of Psychology from the Normal Training. It would be almost as sensible to outrule Physiology, or the study of the functions and operations of our bodily organs from the medical training of the doctor. Psychology teaches the operations and functions of the mind and their relation to the physical organs. "Education is the science of human development. Teaching is the art of promoting human growth or development." Education is wider than teaching, but embraces



Much as we appreciate the work of the former, it may be that the next generation will still more appreciate the labor of the latter.

a slaughterer of quail, has come to be their lover and protector, may also have the spell of the hunter overpowered by compassion for the larger victims of the chase.

T. B.

The Season in Essex, Ont.

The farmers are busy plowing and sowing in many localities. Seeding started on underdrained lands during the week ending April 13th, and is now quite general throughout the clay belt. Continuous wet weather during the autumn months of last year left considerable plowing to be done this spring, which will retard seeding.

Fall wheat, which promised well last fall, is very much damaged; scarcely one-third will be worth leaving. Many fields, owing to snow falling the ditches, were submerged by an early thaw, and then a sudden drop in the temperature completely covered them with a heavy coat of ice, which, shutting out the air supply, destroyed the roots by smothering. A few fields on the higher lands, however, give promise of a good crop. This loss will very materially increase the acreage of spring seeding. Barley is much in demand, and farmers are complaining of a scarcity, and likewise an exorbitant price. Despite the high prices quoted for potatoes (viz., \$2.00 per bushel), many of our truck gardeners are preparing to plant a much larger area than last year. In