

The Fate of "The Demon Rabbit"

By Peter McArthur.

The demon rabbit is no more, and the manner of his passing is as mysterious as anything else in his enchanted life. As nearly as I can determine he died of heart disease or from rupturing an artery through sudden fright. This is how it happened. A couple of days after my last futile shot at him I was driving to the village. After turning out of the lane I came to the spot haunted by the rabbit, and there he was "as big as life and twice as natural." He was sitting under a branch that had been blown from an apple tree about a rod from the road. The three younger children were with me, and as soon as they saw him they began to yell, but he never wiggled an ear. Pulling up the horse I looked at him carefully, and seeing that he showed no signs of moving I yelled at the top of my voice for a boy to come with the rifle. Still the rabbit did not stir. I had to yell four or five times before the boy heard me, and though I made a noise that roused the echoes over half the township the rabbit sat where he was. It took the boy fully five minutes to come with the rifle, and in the meantime the children and I were all talking at once while the demon sat and listened. Only when the boy was within a few rods of the buggy did he show any signs of nervousness. He slapped his hind feet on the snow a couple of times and I thought he was going to run, but he quieted down again. Then I drove on, for the horse is inclined to be gun-shy, and the boy dropped on one knee in the most approved Theodore Roosevelt fashion and took aim. When he fired the rabbit gave a jump that sent the snow flying and loped away across the orchard. The boy complained bitterly because I had not held the horse and allowed him to take a rest on the hind wheel of the buggy, and, while I watched the rabbit disappearing, I made a few restrained remarks appropriate to the occasion. But just as he was passing out of sight he suddenly jumped into the air, fell to the ground, kicked wildly and then lay still. I sent the boy running to where he was, and he picked up Mr. Rabbit stone dead. Then we proceeded to examine him. The first thing we noticed was a round bullet hole through his right ear that was partly healed. Across his rump there was a furrow through his fur, and a long scab where a bullet had raked him. Under his chin there was a similar furrow and scab. Beyond a doubt he was the rabbit from which I had been knocking the fur. But what mystified us completely was the fact that we could not find a mark to show where the last bullet had hit him. Not a sign of blood or a wound could we find. After I got back from the village I held a post mortem on that rabbit, and though he was full of blood, having bled internally, the closest examination could not discover a trace of a wound. He must have ruptured a blood-vessel in his wild jumping. In no other way can I account for his sudden taking off. Of course the boy was anxious to prove that he had hit the rabbit, but he was unable to find a bullet mark any more than I was. And now there is something else to prove that he was not an ordinary rabbit. When I passed his haunts yesterday I saw two more rabbits. Isn't that the popular belief about evil things? If you kill one two more will come to take his place. Now I am going after the two new rabbits to see if four will come to take their place. I tried the rifle on some English sparrows at the granary and find that my shooting eye is just as good as ever. Surely if I can hit such little targets as sparrows I should not miss rabbits if they are of mortal breed. Altogether it is a great mystery, and, in a more superstitious age, the incident would have given rise to a myth, but in this sceptical age I suppose most people will explain the matter by insinuating that we are a family of poor shots. Yet the boy and I can both pick off sparrows just as easy as easy.

For the first time since I can remember there are no quail on the place, and I have heard of only one flock in the neighborhood. Last year two flocks wintered on the farm, but they disappeared in the spring, and since then we have not seen a trace of them. Every year the first snow would reveal tracks and I seldom went to the village without seeing where several flocks had crossed the road, but this year I have not seen a trace. One flock has been reported a couple of farms away, and I am inclined to think that they are the only ones in the neighborhood. I do not think it was the hunters that got them for the gentlemen with the spike-tailed dogs have been made to understand, both by personal interviews and "No Trespass" signs that they are not welcome in this district. Skunks and weasels do not seem to be more plentiful than usual, so I am at a loss to account for the disappearance of the quail. I wonder if the plague of rats had anything to do with it? I have been told that rats sometimes eat hens' eggs, and if they do they would be likely to eat the eggs of the quail. Still, the old birds should

have survived. I am disappointed over this loss of the quail, for the young trees in the wood-lot are beginning to form a coppice that should make the best kind of quail cover. In a year or two it will be an ideal cover, and I am hopeful that the four survivors will multiply so that the place will be stocked again with these most beautiful and useful of our native birds.

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I have been looking through the bird books in an attempt to identify the pair of big hawks that have been living with us all the year round for the past couple of years. The only hawks I see mentioned as occasional winter residents are the red-tailed hawks and red-shouldered hawks. When these hawks are flying I see flashes of brown that might be called red, so I presume they are of one of these varieties. They are very tame, and, as they are never shot at, they allow us to get quite close to them, especially when we are driving. A few days ago one sat on the road-side fence until I was within three or four rods of it. What struck me about it was the blackness of its plumage. As it perched on the fence its back and wing feathers seemed almost as black as those of a crow, but its breast was white, or at least grey. It seemed whitest on the under side of the neck. These hawks stay with us all winter and seem to do all their hunting in meadows, where I suppose they are getting their share of the mice that are so plentiful. They are unusually large hawks. We see them every day and sometimes they come to the orchard to hunt, within a hundred yards of the house. Of course, the hens are afraid of them, but as yet I have not seen them attack anything. Last winter a couple of hens that died were carried to the wood-lot, and one day I found the big hawks tearing at them. This seems to show that they are, to some extent, scavengers, though I never heard of hawks eating anything but game of their own killing.

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While talking of birds I may as well get everything off my mind. Last fall a member of the family saw a strange grey bird that fluttered up into the air and sang as it flew. According to the description it must have been an English sky-lark. I have been told that there are a few to be found, though I have not heard of any being brought into the country. I wonder if anyone can tell me what this bird was.

Stallion Enrolment and Inspection.

Editor "The Farmer's Advocate":

In reading an account of stallion enrolment, compulsory inspection and grading stallions at a meeting at Guelph Winter Fair, and not being present or yet a platform orator, thought I would write a few ideas and suggestions of my own on the subject.

It appears to me the first point to be considered is the enrolment part of the Act, and I cannot see where it did any person any good in the past year only the Government or Stallion Board who got the money, and as there were many stallions stood for service that were not enrolled and those who did enroll got no protection for their money. I cannot see that it would be very hard to improve on the present Act, but I do believe if the Government wants to have a record of all stallions standing for service it would be necessary to have some form of enrolment, but all men keeping stallions should be used alike. As regards compulsory inspection and grading of stallions, I have given this point my most careful consideration for the last year and have arrived at the conclusion that so long as water runs or grass grows there never could be any satisfactory results obtained from either compulsory inspection or grading, for I am sure it would be impossible for any Government to pick inspectors to give satisfaction, and I consider the horse business has been run by private individuals or companies investing their own money on their own judgment, the same as a merchant of any kind invests his money, so why should the Government send around inspectors to grade stallions when the Government has no money invested in the stallions? I really claim it is the most absurd proposition I ever heard of and I am sure no practical horseman in the Province of Ontario would want to stand for such legislation. I could give many illustrations to confirm my argument, but do not wish to take up too much space in your paper. The main object, I consider, of the Enrolment Act should be to shut out the scrub stallion and if the Government wants to take any compulsory steps in the matter here is the place they should commence first, and that, to my mind, would be much easier done than to establish compulsory inspection or grading of stallions. If any man owning a stallion, grade, scrub or registered, could stand for a service fee not less than some stated amount, made compulsory by the Government (I would suggest \$15 for the lowest, for I consider any stallion's fee not worth \$15 should not be used for service), then the grading and inspection of the stallions would be in the hands of

the breeders, where I claim it should be, and not in the hands of any Government or Stallion Board, as the breeder pays the service fee, and when he knows that \$15 is the best possible price, there is no doubt in my mind but he will look for the best value for his money.

As I understand the Government intends taking some further action at the coming session I would strongly advise the breeders and stallion owners in every county of the Province to hold a few meetings and have the member representing their county in Parliament present, so that when the time comes each member will be in a position to take a stand in the matter when he has heard the different ideas of all parties in his county interested in the Stallion Enrolment Act.

York Co., Ont.

T. H. HASSARD.

Some Notes on Sweet Clover.

A good deal has been written of late about sweet clover as a hay, fodder and pasture crop. Not all who know this plant are agreed that it is of any great value, some still holding that it should be treated as a weed. At the Kansas Experiment Station it has been tried, and a few points from a bulletin recently issued by that station may be of interest. Here are a few of the statements made:

As a soil improver it is unexcelled; for pasturing purposes it has considerable value; and as a forage crop it can be utilized to good advantage where alfalfa or red clover cannot be successfully grown.

The white variety is generally to be preferred for farm purposes, although the biennial yellow is sometimes preferred where hay production is denied.

It thrives best on fertile land well supplied with lime, but will make a satisfactory growth on very poor soils. Where grown for hay it is best to plant on fairly fertile land. Where the sweet clover is to be pastured it may be planted on the poorer soils, and yet yield returns that will justify the growing of this crop upon them.

A thoroughly compacted seedbed is necessary with just enough loose soil on top to enable the seed to be covered. The lack of a good seedbed is probably the chief reason why sweet clover so often fails when seeded upon cultivated fields.

If it is necessary to plow the ground in preparing it for sweet clover, the plowing should be done several months before seeding. It is usually best to seed on corn ground or after some other inter-tilled crop, and depend upon implements that merely stir the surface of the soil to prepare the seedbed.

As a rule about twenty or twenty-five pounds of clean or hulled seed per acre is required. Where unhulled seed is used the amount of seed per acre should be increased five pounds. Only about one-half the seed germinates the first season. The remainder has such hard seed coats that it does not germinate the first season.

Rough, wooded or stony lands that are untillable may be seeded by sowing the seed broadcast during the last fall or winter.

Sweet clover properly handled produces a fair quality of hay which makes a desirable substitute for the more valuable forms, such as alfalfa or red clover. One cutting can be obtained the first year. This crop should not be cut until the crown sprouts have begun to show on top of the roots about one inch underground. At this time the crop can be cut close to the ground. Two and perhaps three crops of hay may be obtained the second year. The first one should be cut just before the first bloom buds appear, since the plants rapidly become coarse and woody after they start to bloom. The sweet clover should be cut sufficiently high to leave a few branches and leaves on each plant. If cut too close at this time many of the plants will be killed. The second cutting should be handled in the same way as the first. The time of cutting will have to be governed by the judgment of the farmer. The sweet clover will be continually in bloom soon after the second cutting comes on. Ordinarily it should be cut when about twenty inches high, and must be cut high, as at the first cutting. The third cutting may be mown close to the ground. The hay is cured in the same manner as alfalfa or red clover.

Where a seed crop is desired the second cutting of the second year's growth is the most practical one to leave, although maximum yields of seed can be obtained where the first cutting is allowed to grow to maturity.

It should be cut about the time three-fourths of the seed pods become dark.

For pasturing purposes sweet clover is of greatest value in supplementing other pasture.

As a rule live stock have to acquire a taste for sweet clover before they can be induced to eat it.

For quick results in improving the soil sweet clover is superior to most other crops.

The foregoing hints may be of some benefit to our readers who are considering the advisability of sowing some seed of this crop. Stock must be taught to eat it, and it will be noted that it can be used to best advantage where alfalfa