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## Nature's Diary.

By A. B. Klugh, M. A.



The Brown Creeper.

The red squirrel is always with us. He is a bit of a villain and a good deal of a meddlesome chatter-box, but he is at least lively, cheerful and familiar, and adds a touch of wild life to many a scene which would otherwise be devoid of it. He is a great mixture of inquisitiveness and suspicion, he apparently longs to investigate you. He approaches you in funny little stiff jumps; nearer and nearer he comes getting more and more excited all the time—then suspicion gets the better of curiosity and he turns and flees with a scolding chatter. At a safe distance he turns and sits up and slangs you.

Though the red squirrel does not hibernate, as do so many of our rodents, it lays up great stores of food for winter use. In July it cuts the green cones of the white pine and buries them, half a dozen in one place, half a dozen in another. Later in the season it makes large hordes of butter-nuts, hickory-nuts, beech-nuts and acorns. One such store-house, which I discovered, contained a bushel of butter-nuts. The squirrels seem to have no trouble in locating these stores no matter how deep the snow may be.

But in winter the red squirrel does not, by any means, depend entirely upon its hordes for food as the hemlock cones retain their seeds all winter, and any fine day one may see the squirrels out on the swaying tips of the branches cutting off the cones.

In spring the red squirrel relishes a drink of maple sap. It cuts saucer-shaped cavities in the upper side of a branch and drinks the sap which fills them, returning several times a day to partake of the sap which accumulates from time to time. I have also seen them hanging up-side-down drinking the sap which exuded from a wound on the under-side of a limb where a branch had been broken off.

In summer the food of the red squirrel is very varied, consisting of berries, fruits, roots, fungi and insect-grubs. At this season, too, the tinge of villany in its character shows, as it robs birds' nests of their eggs. One squirrel that I came across evidently had a taste for turtle flesh, for in its nest I found seven shells of very small painted turtles, all carefully cleaned of their contents.

Red squirrels build nests in trees by arranging a platform of twigs in a crotch, placing moss and strips of bark upon the foundation and roofing it over with pine-needles and leaves. They also make nests of soft grass in hollow logs and stumps. When they can get possession of the deserted nest of a crow or hawk they roof it over with moss, strips of bark and pine-needles.

On these nests the young, which are usually four in number, are born in April.

There is a little bird in our winter woods which very few people see, for only those see it who look for it. It is a little brown bird, barred and spotted with tawny and white, with a long slender, curved bill, and stiff, pointed tail feathers. Its coloration so nearly resembles the bark of trees that it is rendered extremely inconspicuous, and it is an excellent example of protective coloration. It is called the brown creeper and is very appropriately named, for it spends its time creeping up the trunks and large limbs of trees, searching for insects and insects' eggs hidden in the crevices of the bark. It creeps up a tree till it comes to the end of the large limbs, then flies down to the base of the same tree, or another one, and starts up again. Its favorite tree is the elm, undoubtedly because the rough bark of this tree affords shelter for more insects and eggs than does the smoother bark of other trees. Its call-note is a shrill "scree-scree-scree," and in the spring the males sing a very sweet little song.

The brown creeper is resident in Ontario, though it is commoner in autumn and winter than during the breeding season. When we say that a bird is "resident" in a certain region we do not mean that a certain individual stays in the same locality the whole year round, but that the species is to be found in that region at all seasons. Those individuals which spend the summer in the northern part of the range of the species, say near Hudson Bay, winter in Central and Southern Ontario, those individuals which breed with us winter in the middle States. Thus the species is always present, but is not represented by the same individuals.

The nest of the brown creeper is placed in a crevice where the bark is partially separated from the trunk of a tree. In the crevice is placed a platform of twigs on which the nest is built, being composed of strips of bark and moss and lined with down. The eggs are from five to eight in number and are dull white, spotted with light-brown and reddish-brown.

## HORSES.

Sharp shoes on the front feet, at least of the in-foal mare, may prevent a serious accident.

Get your neighbors interested in the same breed in which you are interested. There is strength in numbers.

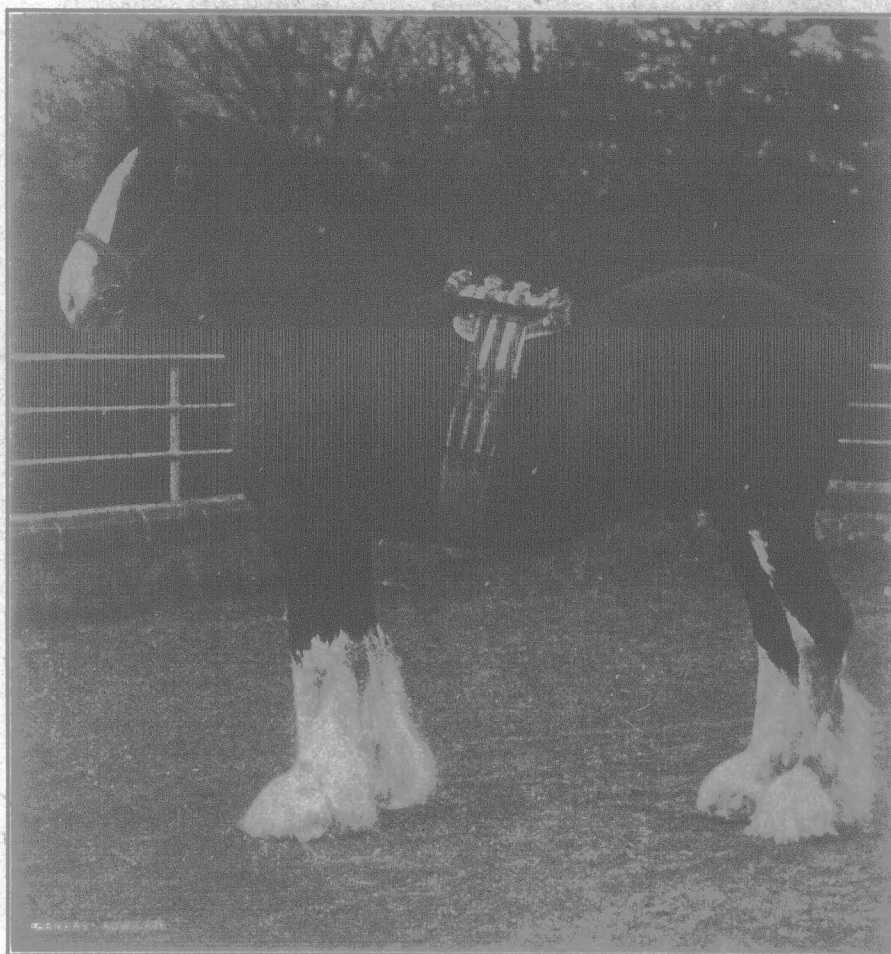
Do not turn the in-foal mare in the paddock for exercise at the same time as the colts are enjoying a frolic in it. There is danger of either the mare being kicked and injured, through playfulness on the part of the colts, or the colts being kicked through the wickedness of the mare.

### Winter Care of Colts.

Much is written from time to time upon the care of the colt in winter, but the necessity of following closely a few fundamental principles cannot be too firmly fixed in the minds of horse-men and colt raisers. Dr. C. C. Lipp, of Minnesota University Farm, gives a few good hints as follows:

With the winter season comes the increased necessity for the proper care of the spring colts. This is a matter of sufficient importance to demand careful attention. Two fundamental principles must be kept well in mind, because upon their observance depends to a very considerable extent the success or failure of the project.

In the first place, the quality and quantity of feed demands attention. The colts are growing and developing animals, whose value at maturity



Sir Hugo (10924).

Clydesdale stallion; brown. Sire Sir Everard (5858).

is measured to no inconsiderable extent by the degree of development of bone and muscle. Satisfactory development can only result when proper feed is supplied. The formation of bone and muscle require rations containing the so-called tissue builders in large quantities. In a grain ration of oats are combined the necessary elements for the formation of bone and muscle better than in any other single grain, and for this reason oats form a most necessary part of the ration. Other grains and mixtures may be substituted, but none of them are better than oats. However, if other rations are fed, remember that the demands of the animal require a quantity sufficient for tissue formation as well as for energy and warmth. To feed sparingly is to interfere with development to such an extent that its effects may remain in evidence throughout the life of the horse.

Daily exercise is the second fundamental principle in the successful wintering of colts. Only failure can result even if tissue building material is fed in sufficient amount, but the daily exercise is insufficient. Not only is the maintenance of vigorous health impossible, but the development of newly formed tissue is seriously hindered. It

is common knowledge that any tissue not in daily use soon becomes weak, and if the disuse continues long enough, becomes practically worthless. How can strong muscles be developed except by exercise, and how is exercise possible when no opportunity is provided for it? Time and place for daily exercise should be as regularly provided as feed. When this is done, much of the danger from kicks and other injuries will be eliminated, and the probability of the colts reaching maturity as perfectly sound horses is correspondingly increased.

### District Horse Breeding.

Good horses are seldom over-plentiful, and few horsemen would care to say that we have too many breeds, but many are the communities, districts, localities, neighborhoods, or whatever you choose to call them, which are breeding too many breeds of horses for their own good. If there is any branch of the live-stock business in which communities should practice breed specialization it is horse-breeding, for, unlike the breeding of most other classes of stock, the owners of the females are not often the owners of the sires. This has been a fertile cause of the motley breeding carried on in most localities. Three, four, or perhaps eight or ten men, each with his favorite breed of horse, have gone into the stallion business, and as many stallions of almost as many breeds have travelled the same districts, each with his quota of admirers and each getting some of the mares, regardless of whether he is likely to nick well with them or not. Good mares are bred first to one horse, then to another, and even where the mare is returned to the same horse each year there can be no uniformity in the

colts from that particular district, because there is no uniformity in type or breeding of the sires used. Let every man in a district breed one breed of horses, and one only, and see how quickly that district will become noted for its horses and colts. Buyers are not slow to locate such districts, and are willing to pay better prices, knowing that the breeding of the colts is right and that a large number, if desired, may be secured in the one locality. We are all agreed that it pays to advertise or "boost" a good thing. What better means is there of making an impression upon horse buyers and the horse-loving world than the yearly output of a uniformly-bred and even type of colts and young horses? By their colts are stallions known, and colts are the breeders' strongest magnet with which to attract buyers.

A large number of breeds encourages cross-breeding—not

good practice with most classes of stock, and certainly not with horses. True, comparatively few of the mares in the country are pure bred, yet the greater number of the best mares outside the registered stock are the result of more or less careful grading up—not cross-breeding. Yet, it is a common occurrence to see a mare have one, two, and often three top-crosses of certain blood in her veins and a very good type of mare of the breed of the stallions used bred to a horse of an entirely different breed, and usually with results scarcely such as would justify such policy. It is a distinct loss to cross-breed such a mare. If each community would stick closely to one breed, there would be little danger of much cross-breeding being done, partly because the stallions would not be available, but more particularly because the breeders would soon realize the advantages of community breeding through better stock, more buyers, greater demand, and larger prices. There is nothing to be gained by breeding to a stallion simply because he is a "nice horse." There are good stallions of all the important breeds, but the best of colts cannot be expected even by using the best stallion of the breed upon mares of different breeding and