

in this month's REVIEW). By encouraging children to have pets among domestic animals, showing kindness to them, and having a thought for birds and other wild neighbours in times of scarcity of food. By showing children that it should be a pleasure as well as duty to help on the farm and in the home; and that the truest joys of childhood's days are those simple pastimes where work and play and regular hours help to make active bodies, healthy minds and contented homes.

Our Wild Neighbours.

While I am writing this a little chipmunk is looking over the contents of a waste-basket at my feet to see if there is not a stray nut hidden there among the papers. Failing to find one, he is scamp-ering about the cottage to find out if we have not hidden one away for him in some corner. This we often do to encourage his visits. He does not care much for pea-nuts, but a partially cracked walnut makes him sit up and return thanks with the most lively satisfaction.

And yet our little chipmunk friend is not a loafer by any means. Nuts will lie on the lawn for whole days not far from the entrance to his home without being touched, so absorbed is he in scouring the neighbourhood to provide his supply of food for the next winter.

This morning as we were taking breakfast on the lawn he came forth, and, seeing us, hopped up to the table in a succession of graceful little leaps without any sign of fear. He stood on his hind legs, and as plainly bade us a good morning as an intelligent, well-trained collie would do. But unlike the latter, he declined to partake of a share of our breakfast, but was soon off to pursue his searches in the cherry and bilberry trees in the vicinity.

How much more pleasant and profitable it is for us to observe our little wild neighbours of the woods and fields than to shoot or stone them? They will repay any attention on our part by the cunning little ways they have of providing for themselves, and of acting well their part in the world of nature. Moreover, if we are gentle toward them, and of the right mind, the shyest of wood creatures will enter into the most charming friendship with us. There are many of them—perhaps the most of them—with whom we would not care to be too intimate. A snake, for instance, is an animal for which most

people have a great dislike, even loathing, which is possibly inherited, and has been handed down by tradition from the past.

I was walking in the fields the other day with two well-grown lads when we espied a beautiful little garter snake coiled up on the ground. Both lads rushed for stones or sticks to kill it. I took it up in my hands, where after a few attempts to escape it lay contentedly in my outstretched palm. "Won't it sting you?" "Isn't it poisonous?" "My father always runs for a shot-gun, if it is near, and blows a snake to pieces when he sees one." These were the questions and comments that these young men raised, and I have no doubt they had truly believed that our snakes are venomous reptiles, the "sting" of which is certain death; and so far as my observation goes this feeling is shared by ninety-nine out of every hundred people that you meet. But all our snakes in eastern Canada are perfectly harmless, and are very useful to the farmer. Strange to say, our farmers are the most relentless enemies that these innocent beings have. They will pursue and kill them with the greatest ferocity and cruelty, and the consequence is that these useful creatures are fast disappearing from our fields. So hard is it to believe that snakes are quite harmless and to educate the general public to look upon them as benefactors. But one would have to travel to Southern Ontario or to the banks of the Saskatchewan river to find a really poisonous snake—the rattlesnake. Ours, of which we have some half a dozen species, are all innocent. Their "stingers" which they dart out with such lightning-like rapidity are as incapable of doing harm as are the tongues of birds. They are incapable of biting, for they have no teeth, or at least very immature ones. The larger ones feed on young mice and the larvæ of insects so destructive to the farmers' grain fields; the smaller ones destroy many noxious insects.

The pretty green, or grass, snake, one of the most useful of the latter, is the most friendly. I have seen one coil round the wrist of a young girl, where it made a prettier ornament than a bracelet, and remain there as long as the wearer chose to keep it, probably attracted by the warmth which is grateful to snakes.

One word more to the reader: Make friends of your wild neighbours. Don't be frightened by the word snake, nor by any silly stories about their poisoning you.

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