Ways of Wild Things in the Woods of Ontario

[Peter McArthur, in the New York Sun.]

"WOULDN'T this be a good coon night?" asked the visitor to Ekfrid one day in early February.

"Coon night, nothing!" snorted the old-timer. "Things have changed here since you went away. It's warm and foggy all right and the coons will be out tonight. There is plenty of nice soft snow to track them on, too; but what's the use?"

"Why, what's the matter?"

"Say, one morning last winter I tracked a coon over half the township and located him in a little, measly, scrubby elm. Of course, with the woods so thin as they are now I knew I couldn't sneak around and cut the tree at night without being caught, so I went and asked the farmer who owned the tree if I might cut it. What do you think he said?"

"I can't guess."

"Well, he just said: 'I'll sell you that tree for $17, and then you can cut it down or climb it or do anything else you like with it.' Seventeen dollars! Just think of that, with the best coon skins not worth more than $4."

"That was pretty mean."

"Oh, I don't know as it was. You see, timber is getting so scarce that most any tree that has ambition enough to stay standing is worth real money. It's funny that the coons still keep here, for there are hardly any big trees left for them to make nests in; but they're fairly plenty. And do you know, I think they are changing their habits, just as a lot of the other wild things are.

"A couple of winters ago I was hunting along the Government drain for muskrats and mink, when I came on a little hole in the snow on one of the banks near a muskrat hole. I opened it up a little and knew that it was the breathing hole of some critter that was living there. So I got an axe and a spade, the ground was frozen so hard I had to chop through the frost, and I dug out that hole.

"Well, sir, I don't expect you to believe me, but what I actually found in that hole was a big fourteen-pound coon that was wintering there just as snug as if he was in a hollow elm or oak. We used to take an axe and saw with us when we went coon hunting. Before long the coon hunters may be carrying picks and shovels, and the dogs instead of treeing coons will be running them to earth.

"And that reminds me that the muskrats around here have changed their ways since we were boys. You remember the houses they used to build in the railroad ditches and ponds? Well, they don't build houses any more because there are no places for them to build them.

"The swamps have all been drained and so have the deep ditches beside the railroads that used to be full of rushes and willows. The muskrats now live in holes in the banks of the Government drains, and they are plentiful, too. With prices the way they are and for animals protected so well, I am not sure but there is more trapping going on just now than at any time since the days of the Indians and the Hudson Bay Company.

"The young fellows in the country and the villages have mighty little to do now that there is no chopping or lumbering in the winter months, and they just naturally take to trapping. They set out traps for miles around in this cleared and settled country where you wouldn't think there would be anything to get, and some of them do pretty well. I know of several who make as high as $100 in a season from mink, skunk, muskrat and ermine or weasel skins.

"Minks often fetch $5 each and a good black skunk skin is worth as much as $4. Rats are worth 60 cents, coon skins about $2 each, and weasel or ermine skins sell for from 25 cents to $1. You can tell from that that a man doesn't need to get such an awful lot to make $100.

"Most of the money is made from skunk skins, for the skunks are mighty plentiful, especially along the railroads. The woodchucks dig holes in the railroad embankments and then the skunks come along and drive them out. The hunters get most of the skunks by trapping them with the ordinary steel traps, though when the section boss is not around they sometimes dig them out.

"But speaking about woodchuck holes in the railroad embankments, you walk along the track any fine day in the summertime and you will see woodchucks sitting up to look at you every few roods. They are as plentiful as the telegraph poles beside the railroad. Nobody kills them because their fur is no good and there is no demand for their hides.

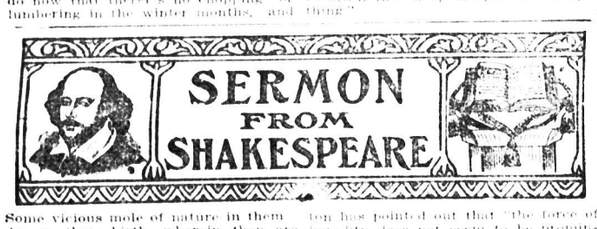
"It used to be that every young sport in the country had a whip with a lash of braided, home-tanned woodchuck skin and we used to pepper them every chance we got for the sake of their tough hides. But no one uses braided whip lashes any more. I haven't seen a braided lash or old-fashioned hickory whip stock in years. The woodchucks are having a glorious time of it, and they may overrun the country unless meat gets so high that we may find a use for them.

"As I was saying a while ago, the wild creatures seem to be changing their habits to meet the changes in their surroundings. Now that dead trees are scarce in the woods I have found woodpecker nests in fence posts and the telegraph poles are full of them. I even find them in dead branches of apple trees, and I heard of one that had been scooped out in an old-fashioned fence rail.

"The crows used to go away every winter, but now that so much corn is left in the shock during the winter the crows stay with us all the time. Even meadow larks and mourning doves that used to migrate every year find so much food in the winter that they stay right through.

"The partridges are all gone and the big hares, for there is no cover for them any more, but quails are more plentiful than ever in some parts. That is because the farmers are learning who are their friends and are protecting them. Young quails eat their own weight every day in grasshoppers and other insects and the seeds of weeds, and that means a lot to the farmers.

"In some parts the English pheasants are getting plentiful and I suppose they take the place of the partridge. Yes, everything has changed about the habits of the wild things in this section but it is wonderful how cheerful the lot keep in spite of every thing."



Some vicious mole of nature in them
As, in their birth, wherein they are not guilty.
—Hamlet, Act I., Scene 4.

SHAKESPEARE, like every other genius who has written, or played his part for the good of the race, was much in advance of his age. He was a modern man in the highest sense of the word. There are few scientific discoveries or theories that an examination of his dramas will not show to have been anticipated by him. Under the influence given to scientific investigation, and the application of observation of life, no word has been more frequently spoken than the word "heredity." This word never appears on Shakespeare's page, but he uses the word "hereditary" in the same sense in which the scientific expression is used by the scientists.

It is quite true as Prof. R. G. Moulton has pointed out that "the force of heredity does not seem to be prominent in Shakespeare's world, that it is conspicuous by its absence"; but this does not signify that Shakespeare was not fully aware of the operation of the law of heredity. The passage which serves us as a text and many other equally significant would indicate that the idea contained in the word "heredity" was quite as familiar to Shakespeare as to even such a specialist on the subject as the author of "Natural Law in the Spiritual World."

Physical and mental peculiarities, qualities and diseases are transmitted from one generation to another. Shakespeare has on Hamlet's lip crystallized into a single phrase this two-fold nature of heredity. How common it is to see physical marks of defects such as moles, etc., inherited by children from their parents. These are the "vicious moles" for which the guilty are often to be pitied rather than blamed. It is as true now as it was 4,000 years ago that "the iniquity of the fathers" is visited "upon the children unto the third and fourth generations." There is nothing new under the sun, and the modern scientist has merely elaborated and buttressed by illustration the idea of heredity contained in the Ten Commandments and in Hamlet's reference to the "vicious mole of nature."

Marc Antony was one of Shakespeare's favorite characters. He is portrayed as valiant, fearless, a genuine friend and an inspirer of affection in others, yet he had vicious moles of nature in him that in the end utterly destroyed the man. There were in Antony hereditary tendencies to vice so powerful that his will was unable to control them. The following words, placed on the lips of Lepidus, show how emphatically Shakespeare took the matter of heredity into consideration when developing the character of Antony:

"His faults, to him, seem as the spots of heaven,
More fiery by night's blackness; hereditary
Rather than purchased (acquired) what he cannot change
Than what he chooses."

These examples are sufficient to show that Shakespeare thoroughly understood the influence of heredity in human history.

Individuals are morose, passionate, modest and self-willed largely as a result of the character of their ancestors. Mental and physical aptitudes for work are inherited. The watchmakers of Switzerland, the linen-weavers of Ireland, the steel workers of Sheffield, have their skill largely through the accident of birth. Good and evil traits of character are beyond question inherited. These facts, however, do not permit any individual to excuse himself for his folly. The magistrate will not give the thief freedom because his grandfathers were pilferers.

While the law of heredity shows that there are tendencies in individuals to definite courses of action there is also a force that the individual can call into play to eliminate or foster tendencies. Will is that force! A self-conscious being can stand apart, as it were, from his love, his hate, the labors of his brain and his hand and say, "This will I do or will I not do." He can cultivate righteousness or unrighteousness. He has it in his own hands to become a criminal or a benefactor of society. While Shakespeare made Hamlet speak of the "vicious mole," the inherited devil in man, he likewise saw that the devil may be cast out. In Hamlet's appeal to his mother to change her course of life, he said:

"For use almost can change the stamp of nature,
And either lay the devil or throw him out
With wondrous potency."

A trained dog or tamed lion may consider man either God or devil. To a man's passions and appetites will is either God or devil according as he voluntarily surrenders himself to his good or evil tendencies. It takes hard work and patience to make an elephant the servant of man, and where passion and appetite are strong they cannot be easily controlled. A perfect will can only be attained by absolute surrender to the principle of good in the universe, to the divine will.

"I Suffered Years With My Back."

Backache resulting from weak kidneys, a bad cold or other cause, usually renders the sufferer unfit for work and often results in permanent disability.

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RAILWAY TRAVEL IN INDIA

Supplying Water to "Caste" Men—A Fakir's Chains.

[From the Railway Magazine.]

AN INDIAN railway timetable affords interesting study. It combines voluminous railway information with a considerable amount of matter particularly interesting to the tourist. Caste does not cause the railways so much trouble as might be imagined, judging by all one hears about it in England. Indeed, caste distinctions are found to resolve into two main principles. One only concerns us here, the other—the prohibition of intermarriage—having reference to matters outside the radius of a railway official's activities.

A "caste" man must not partake of food cooked or even handled by one of inferior caste. Food is a wide term. A very orthodox person would include medicine compounded by an apothecary. One of more liberal views might receive, say, a plantain (banana) from the hands of an individual beneath him, for the "unclean" hands of the latter would have come in contact only with the skin and not with the part to be eaten.

The first and most obvious requirement of any long distance traveller in a hot climate is fluid refreshment. The filter and the glass commonly found in an English dining-car would be no use in India, inasmuch as the native would first of all want to know who put the water in the filter, and then who last used the glass. If satisfactorily assured on the latter point he would nevertheless run no risk of contamination, but would pour the liquid down his throat while holding the glass a few inches above his mouth.

But the orthodox man, taking no risks at all, carries with him a brass water pot attached to a belt, and even then adopts the further precaution above-mentioned. At every station a native patrols the platform carrying a skin with a supply of water. Experience has taught the railway companies to be particular as to who is intrusted with this duty. Continuing, the writer says:

I once travelled with a Brahmin who parched with thirst eagerly called the water carrier at each successive station. But before replenishing his brass pot he cross-examined the man as to his antecedents, and not being satisfied that he was of sufficiently high caste, continued suffering agonies, till a wire was sent on ahead, the result of which was that the holiest man of all the countryside was routed out and induced to do duty pro tem.

Fortunately, very holy people seldom travel, and when they do they contrive to let it be known beforehand so that meals may be specially prepared for them in advance.

On another occasion a celebrated fakir was proposing to travel. His form of self-mortification took the shape of some two hundredweight of chain, with which his body was girded, and with which he tried to enter the carriage, assisted by his friends.

But the station master was there, and the result of a somewhat heated argument conducted in a language which for possibilities of vituperation has no equal in the world, was that the fakir and his chains were hauled off to the weighing machine and full passenger parcel rate was charged on the two hundredweight of old iron on the reasonable ground that it could not be regarded as wearing apparel.

The Hindu likes to have all his savings in a portable form. They do not take the shape of scrip and title deeds, but bars, anklets and armlets of gold and rudely set jewelry. When he travels all this wealth is frequently intrusted to the keeping of a young daughter, whose little legs and arms are wound round with golden bars, while her nose and ears are heavily weighted with jewelry. I once saw on a station platform a little girl of about 6 who was computed to be worth about £6,000 as she stood.

This practice, however, is not so common as it used to be, for railways naturally disclaim liability in such cases, and there have, moreover, been so many nameless outrages on little girls for the sake of plunder.

JEWELS OF THE PHAROAHS

The Egyptians Were Artists in Jewelery—Beautiful Ornaments of 9,000 Years Ago Resurrected.

RECENTLY a professor in charge of archaeological excavations in the land of the Ptolemys unearthed the mummy of a woman said to have lived about 9,000 years ago. Inclosed in the case with her well-preserved body were wonderful jewels, and personal ornaments of gold and silver so nearly like those now in use that a comparison of a jewel casket of a woman of 7,000 years B. C. and that of a modern woman of fashion followed. It was found that even to the little vanity boxes and cases the same idea of personal adornment and beautifying prevailed then as now. Which proves that vanity is as old as the world.

There were necklaces of rare carvings, with sculptured pendants; earrings set with lapis lazuli, cornelian, and amethyst; brooches carved in quaint shapes, showing the sacred hawk of Osiris, the Sphinx, beetles, frogs and elephants—all figures which are found in modern workmanship.

And besides these ornaments this lady of ancient days wore side combs not very different from those seen in modern shops. But most interesting of all were her vanity cases—tiny gold and jewelled boxes containing pomade, and one, with a miniature bit of slate, daintily carved, on which the beauty's eye paint was ground and mixed.

Besides these personal ornaments, the Egyptian belle had beautiful golden vases for her flowers, tiny bottles and oddly shaped receptacles made of gold and set with jewels, in which to keep her face paints, her perfumes, and her liquid aids to beauty, similar in many details to the toilet articles found in the most exclusive jewelry shops in England. Which proves again, or at least suggests, that the modern woman of fashion has much the same nature as her Egyptian sister of the very earliest period known to history.

The early Egyptians had fewer jewels to work with than we have. The diamond, pearl and emerald are rarely seen in their ornaments, but they were masters of the mosaic decoration, which is imitated by other countries today. You will find wonderful work done on some of their minute jewels. Here, for example, is a tiny brown sphere like a bead with a design in lighter shade running round its horizontal diameter. These lighter marks, when looked at through the glass, prove to be miniature faces perfectly wrought in inlay. Royalty was satisfied then with ornaments which did not sparkle and glitter, but which invited the closest scrutiny. The Egyptians used a great deal of lapis lazuli in their personal ornaments, the deep blue stone taking the place of the modern sapphire, which was practically unknown then.

An Egyptian pendant of unknown origin is shown in the Louvre. At the lower end is a bull's head, caparisoned, and the tip o feach horn is fitted with a ball like the embolados toros of the Spanish bull fights. The rein is double, and above this there are two rondelles of an unidentified material. Then comes a rondelle of lapis lazuli and after this a rondelle of gold. The whole is strung with twisted gold wire. In the centre is a hexagonal amethyst, evidently a crystal, the two faces of which had been polished and incised. One of these faces represents a priest holding an incense burner with the hieroglyph of the altar. With one hand he is offering two sacrifices, the mineral and the vegetable; in the other he holds a garland of flowers and leaves. Above this is an oriental pearl somewhat worn and abraded. All these are secured by twisted gold wire, to which four tiny gold beads of graduated size are affixed at the top of the pendant.

The occurrence of the pearl in this probably intimates that it was the product of a later age, after contact with Roman civilization.

The Egyptians were artists in the handling of glass in jewelry and ornaments. Their strings of glass beads of various colors and their colored glass pendants have never been successfully reproduced. They also wrought handsome pieces of mother-of-pearl as early as 3,000 years B. C. Necklaces, earrings, and other jewels found in the tombs are composed largely of gold set with crystal gems.

LIGHT FOR AVIATORS.

German scientific investigation has addressed itself with no little success to the question of lighting up aerial thoroughfares. If the term can be applied to the firmament and thus guiding navigators of the air when flying by night. Experiments which have taken place at Johannistal, near Berlin, have shown that small captive balloons can be used to provide for aerial navigators the light which street lamps afford terrestrial traffic, or which lightships and illuminated buoys supply to moritime navigation.

The captive balloons used for the test are of varying size, the largest having a diameter of eight feet, and the smallest one of three feet six inches. They are lighted by electricity, conducted along a wire communicating with the earth. The experiments at Johannistal showed that these lights were visible at a distance of six miles, and it is stated that their introduction for the use of aerial navigation in the States may be regarded as certain.

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EIGHTY MILES IN ONE HOUR

New Locomotives for London and Northwestern Railway.

THE locomotive department of the London and Northwestern Railway is adding considerably to its stock of powerful express hauling engines by building a large number in which superheated steam is the outstanding feature. The superheating system gives the steam immensely greater vitality, and its main recommendation is that it produces higher speed and greater haulage power with a diminished consumption of coal.

There are now under construction at the Crewe works twenty superheated engines, and in order to thoroughly test their efficiency from the point of view of prime costs and results another twenty engines, similar in every way, except that they will be without the superheating apparatus, are being built. The company will thus be able to determine almost to a penny the relative cost of construction and maintenance of the new type and the old.

Trials of the first engine of the new type, named George the Fifth, have been in every way satisfactory. With a heavy load of three hundred and forty tons it ran the hundred and fifty-eight miles from Euston to Crewe in 159½ minutes, not allowing for "slacks." On another spin to Holyhead the engine attained for some distance 80 miles an hour.

A START IN THE COUNTRY.

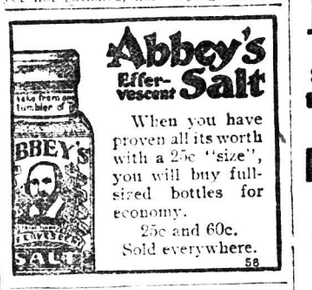
[By E. P. Powell.]

I have a good deal of sympathy with those who prefer to start their country experience with poultry raising. The price of eggs is not likely to fall below 30 cents in the winter and 20 in the summer. The market is always sure, and it does not vary greatly in different parts of the country. Only you must have a cheap home food, or the hens will not only take your table waste and steal your small fruits, but they will run up a mill bill, destroying everything, and yet not satisfied, nor laying enough to make it pay. At any rate, let the matter be well thought out and a good proportion established between cost of keeping and income from eggs and broilers.

Be sure also to have good poultry fences between yourself and your neighbors. A little management will give a good wide range for your hens, where they will keep lawns and vegetable gardens cleared of crickets and grasshoppers, curculios and other noxious bugs, while excluded from the gooseberries and the strawberries. It is a much easier problem in the south, where Biddy can range the fields 12 months of the year. You have only to add cassava and sweet potatoes, which you can grow in unlimited supplies. Always get your biddies, talk with them as if they understood you, allow no one to scare them, and they will soon be much more manageable.

Kill the crazy ones that fly and yell if you go near them. The tame ones are the best layers, and you will be taking your basket of eggs to market twice a week, from 20 hens, and bringing home instead what groceries you need.

I should like to make some figures here concerning broilers and eggs, but all of these estimates are dangerous. I simply think that, with common sense and study of conditions, raising fowls is a capital way of beginning home life in the country.—From an article in Outing Magazine.



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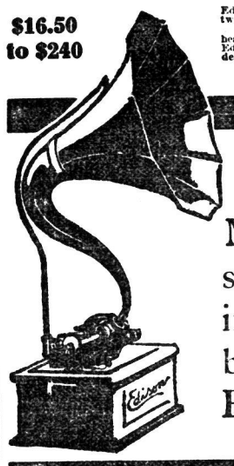

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