

The Farmer's Advocate and Home Magazine.

THE LEADING AGRICULTURAL JOURNAL IN THE
DOMINION.

Published weekly by
THE WILLIAM WELD COMPANY (Limited).

JOHN WELD, Manager.

Agents for "The Farmer's Advocate and Home Journal,"
Winnipeg, Man.

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London, Canada.

Tramps and Human Derelicts.

BY SANDY FRASER.

I had a visit frae an auld tramp one day last week. The hardest lookin' ticket ye ever laid eyes on. When he rapped at the door an' Jean went to open it she gave one look oot an' says she to me, "here's yer uncle come to pay ye a visit, Sandy. Will I let him in?"

I got up an' went to the door to see what kind o' a joke she wis tryin' to get off on me this time and the auld chap says to me, "could ye gie a bite to a hungry man, mister?" "Na, I dinna think so," I replied, "but my dog could if he happens to be on where around. Juist hang about for a few meenutes an' I'll see gin I find him."

The tramp wis startin' off wi'oot anither word but Jean says to me, "Dinna be sae hard-hearted, Sandy. Call him back an' I'll gie him something tae eat. How wad ye like to be gaein' hungry yerself?"

Sae I gave the fellow a call an' he cam' back quick enough. Jean pit the tea-pot on the stove an' a plate an' some ither dishes on the table. Then she pit down enough bread an' butter an' ither stuff to satisfy a guid-sized family, I thought. But these women always like to be feedin' something, be it man or dog, and the mair that is eaten the better they are pleased. It's a compliment tae their cookin', I suppose. If that is the idea Jean had reason tae be satisfied the day she fed that tramp. When she saw the last o' her bannocks disappearin' she went back to the cupboard for some mair, as weel as some butter an' anither dish o' maple syrup. She had already given the chap his third cup o' tea.

When he wis gettin' within sight o' the last o' this second installment o' grub he turned to Jean an' says he, "ye don't happen to hae any cold meat on hand, do ye, ma'am?" "No," replied Jean, "I don't happen to." "Or any cold potatoes?" he inquired. "No," says Jean, wi' a kind o' a laugh.

Haven't ye onything hearty for the gentleman," I broke in. "I think I'll gae oot tae the barn an' get him half a bale o' hay an' a gallon o' aits. I thought ye liked to see people satisfied when they left yer table, Jean," says I.

Jean went to the cupboard again an' brought back half o' a layer cake that had been left frae supper the night before. When the tramp had finished this he got up. He seemed to think that maybe he had eaten all he should in conseederation o' guid manners an' that sort o' thing, but ye couldna say that he looked a'thegither satisfied.

After he had taken himsel' off Jean says: "Puir

chap he couldn't hae had onything tae eat for a week." But the next day I wis talkin' to my neebor on the next farm to mine but one, an' says he to me, "Did ye hae a tramp at your place yesterday, Sandy? All toggled up in the latest Paris style o' gents furnishings too," he says.

"Aye," I replied, "And if it wis in Paris he got his claithes, I'm thinkin', to judge by his appetite, that it must hae been there he got his last meal before he called on me yesterday. I gave him his supper, an' about all the wife could scare up for breakfast this mornin' wis oatmeal porridge."

"Weel, that's a caution," says my neebor, opening his eyes pretty wide. "I gave him his supper too."

For some days aifter this I wis half expectin' to hear about a dead tramp bein' picked up by the wayside, but not a word did I hear, an' it begins tae look as if he might still be trampin', lookin' for "a bite for a hungry man."

Dae ye know that aften when I see one o' these quare specimens o' humanity, that by some means or ither got switched on to the wrang track in his young days, maybe, I get tae thinkin' what this chap might hae made o' himsel', or juist naturally hae developed into, if it hadna been for some wee accident that gied him the slant that made a "hobo" oot o' him an' a failure o' his life.

Drink gets the credit for bein' at the bottom o' maist o' these shipwrecks o' humanity, but there are ither things besides that that will be takin' men oot o' the straight road that generally rins up hill an' mak's hard climbin' for the maist o' us. And the thing that mak's some men gie up the attempt is juist laziness. By nature they may be guid heads and wi' less effort that some o' us have to mak' they might hae made all kinds o' a success o' their business, an' in the end hae got to the top o' the pile, where they say there is yet all kinds o' room. The "Standing Room Only" signs juist hae tae be posted pu around the bottom o' the hill, it seems.

I wis acquainted wi' a young fellow in my early days that comes to ma mind again in talkin' about this sort o' thing. When he wis gaein' to schule he didn't seem to dae mair than to read his lessons over once to hae them all by heart. He went through high school, an college later on, wi' about half the wark an' effort that it tak's from the average mon. He never learned what real wark was because it didn't seem to be necessary. But when it cam' to puttin' his knowledge to some practical use it wis anither matter. To turn it intae dollars an' cents that wad buy his bread an' butter needed some effort on his part an' that wis one thing that went against the grain wi' him. Steady labor seemed tae gie him a pain o' some kind or ither. So he got intae the habit o' loafin' around the town until he got sae hard up that when one day he got the chance, he juist swiped about a hundred an' fifty dollars frae a friend o' his an' moved to anither place that he thought might hae a mair comfortable climate. But it went wi' him as it does wi' maist o' the rest o' the chaps that tak' that sort o' a chance.

When he got oot o' jail he took tae the "road" an' that wis the last I ever heard o' him. His life wis the best example o' wasted time that I ever kened, I think; but one thing, he taught some o' us that knew him a lesson that it is worth oor while to learn. An' that wis that what comes easy isn't generally any good in the lang rin. We never find oot its value an' we mak' na use o' it. But what has come to us through oor toil we'll hang on to, gin it's o' value.

I hae figured the thing oot tae this conclusion since I had that visit frae the chap that cleaned oot oor cupboard the ither day; since he put me thinkin' as I said. And if my thinkin' is to some purpose I willna begrudge what it cost to get me started.

But it's an unco' thing to think o' the possibilities there are for ilka one o' us that come intae this world and how far the maist o' us fall short o' reachin' them. If that auld tramp, wi' his three weeks growth o' whiskers an' his Josephs' coat o' mony colors, had made the best use o' his time in his young days he might hae been Premier o' Canada to-day, or a Cabinet Minister at the very least. It wis up to him. But he took the ither road and it's gaein' to land him on the scrap-heap. Juist where it will land ony o' the rest o' us that willna mak' a better choice when we come tae the partin' o' the ways.

Nature's Diary.

A. B. KLUGH, M. A.

Nature in Poetry.—No. 4.

Having considered in previous articles how the poets have dealt with nature as a whole we now turn to their treatment of birds. Naturally there are thousands of references to birds in poetry. Comparatively few of these passages, however, appeal to the naturalist, as many of them are only philosophical reflections inspired by a bird or its song. Thus Shelley in his well-known poem "To a Skylark" starts out by telling us that the bird is not a bird but a "blithe spirit" and goes on to compare the bird and its song with various other things. Wordsworth in "To the Skylark" strikes a true note in his suggestion that the song is intended for the ears of his mate:—

"Mount daring warbler! That love-prompted strain
Twixt thee and thine a never-failing bond."

The reason why the Nightingale has been such a source of inspiration to the poets—because he sings when other birds are silent—is clearly stated by Shakespeare in "The Merchant of Venice":—

"The Nightingale, if she should sing by day
When every goose is cackling, would be thought
No better musician than the Wren."

It will be noticed that Shakespeare here refers to the Nightingale as "she," and why the great majority of poets persist in the error that it is the female of this species that sings is somewhat of a puzzle to the naturalist.

Scott's reference to the Bittern in "The Lady of the Lake":—

"And the Bittern sounds his drum
Booming from the sedgy shallow"
is an excellent description of that habitat and the call of this bird.

One of the finest descriptions of the song of a bird which occurs in poetry is the following passage in Bliss Carman's "A Mountain Gateway":—

"And in that sweet seclusion I shall hear
Among the cool-leaved beeches in the dusk
The calm-voiced thrushes at their evening hymn
So undisturbed, so rapturous, so pure."

This is a perfect description of the song of the Hermit Thrush, and not only this but in these four lines the poet has sketched the environment of the bird and its time of singing.

The Bluebird and the Robin are to the northern States and Canada what the Cuckoo is to England—harbingers of spring—and they are consequently frequently referred to in the poetry of the New World. Longfellow in "It is not Always May" sings:—

"The sun is bright—the air is clear
The darting Swallows soar and sing,
And from the stately elms I hear
The Bluebird prophesying Spring."

Lowell, in "Under the Willows" very truly pictures:—

"The Bluebird, shifting his light load of song
From post to post along the cheerless fence."

Emerson's reference to the Bluebird in "Musketaquid" is charming:—

April's bird,
Blue-coated—flying from tree to tree,
Courageous sings a delicate overture
To lead the tardy concert of the year".

Wilson, the famous ornithologist, has given us, in a poem which is not as widely known as it deserves to be a very fine sketch of the Bluebird:—

"When winter's cold tempests and snows are no more
Green meadows and brown furrowed fields reappearing,
The fishermen hauling their shad to the shore,
The cloud-cleaving Geese to the lakes are a-steering;
When the first lone butterfly flits on the wing,
When red grow the maples, so fresh and so pleasing
O then comes the Bluebird, the herald of spring,
And hails with his warblings the charms of the season."

When all the gay scenes of the summer are o'er,
And autumn slow enters, so silent and fallow,
And millions of warblers, that charmed us before,
Have fled in the train of the sun-seeking Swallow,
The Bluebird forsaken, yet true to his home,
Still lingers and looks for a brighter to-morrow,
Till forced by the horrors of winter to roam,
He sings his adieu in a lone note of sorrow."

A careful examination of these stanzas reveals the amount of natural history that Wilson has woven into them—all accurately and beautifully rendered.

Kipling in "The Flowers" takes the Robin as the harbinger of spring in Canada:—

"Robin down the logging-road whistles Come to me!
Spring has found the maple-grove and the sap is running free."

Pauline Johnson in "The Songster" thus praises the song of the Robin:—

"Music, music with throb and swing,
Of a plaintive note, and long
Tis a note no human throat could sing,
No harp with is dulcet golden string,
No lute, nor lyre with liquid ring,
Is as sweet as the Robin's song."

In "Hyperion" Longfellow says:—

"The Swallow is come!
The Swallow is come!
O, fair are the seasons and bright
Are the days that she brings
With her dusky wings
And her bosom snowy white!"

In this little verse there is accuracy of observation which appeals to the naturalist, as the breast of the Tree Swallow, which is the first of the swallows to appear in the spring is "Snowy white," while that of the Barn Swallow, which is the species of swallow most frequently referred to in poetry, is reddish.

(To be continued.)

Sows and shotes should be on grass, but they require some feed as well and protection from the sun.