

Dehorning of Cattle.

[Essay read by W. H. Wilkinson, graduate of the Ontario Veterinary College, at a meeting of the Veterinary Medical Society.]

As dehorning is coming into practice more every year, I think we should try and find out the quickest and best way. We will find in different parts of the country that it has never been done yet. One need only to mention dehorning, in some farming community where it has never been done, to raise such a cry against it as would cause one to infer that he had proposed to torture in cold blood, for sport, some harmless and helpless animal depending on man.

And while this operation may appear as an act of cruelty, it is a remarkable fact that the criticism on the practice comes almost wholly from persons who have had no practical experience in the management and feeding of cattle; while its exponents are the men who know full well that more cruelty is directly traceable to the wearing of horns by cattle than can be charged against their owner by his act of depriving them of their useless weapons.

Farmer Miles, of Illinois, was once asked: "What do you think of dehorning?" His reply was: "In all my travels, I have never found a man who knew nothing of dehorning but what opposed it. On the other hand, I never met a man who had as many as twenty-five dehorned, who was not in favor of it."

We propose for a moment or two to analyze the facts of the case and see what has given rise to this popular misconception and unjust condemnation of dehorning cattle. Also to call your attention for a little to some of the reasons in favor of the system, and to justify the conclusion that it is a positive benefit to the cattle themselves, to say nothing of the vast amount of comfort to the stock raiser in handling dehorned cattle, against horned ones. It is certain that the operation causes no serious inconvenience to the animal, as it will continue to grow and thrive as before, with no apparent difference at the time. Milch cows will scarcely ever diminish in their flow of milk, and if ever they do, it will only be for a milking or two. Young cattle seem to pay very little attention to it at all. I have never seen an animal yet but what would eat in less than five minutes after the horns were taken off. The loss of blood is usually slight, but it is not an uncommon occurrence for one or more fine streams to spout out from the head for fifteen or twenty minutes after the operation. I have never yet found it necessary to put anything on the head to stop the flow of blood, or to assist in healing. The work may be safely done at any time except during the hot months of summer, when the flies would be troublesome. Some care should be taken to keep the cattle away from stacks or other places where foreign substances might lodge in the cavity and thus retard the healing. As to the after-benefit to the cattle themselves, there can be no doubt, as on the same food a drove of dehorned cattle will thrive better and keep in better condition than with horns. The reason for this is evident, as all can eat in peace and quietness without the constant dread of having a pair of horns thrust in their flank. The young cattle now will eat fearlessly beside the older ones, and get their full share of shelter, or can get a drink at the trough or pool when they want to without being driven away by some old cow that is guarding the trough and chewing its cud and seems as happy as a lark.

Any one who has watched a herd of dehorned cattle enjoying the coolness of a pool of water, in refuge from the flies, must have been struck with the contrast of former conditions, when one or two would occupy the pool, to the exclusion of the rest, while now twenty may enjoy themselves in quietness. Let me call your attention to the increased safety of other stock, such as colts and sheep, that may be in danger of the sharp horns that only wait an opportunity to let out their bowels, or inflict a deep flesh-wound, or do other damage that the human eye cannot see. Cattlemen, and those caring for stock in any way, will at once find a vast difference in the comfort to themselves, being surprised at the gentleness and docility of the most wicked cow or ugly bull when once they have found that their horns are gone. We have never heard of an instance yet where one was willing to go back to the old method after having tried the new. From those who have tried it, the verdict is unanimously in favor of dehorning.

I have tried numerous ways in holding them, and the best way I have found yet is to put the halter on them and a lead-rope about fifteen feet long, and then lead them out to a stout post where it stands alone, then put a strap around their neck and the post and buckle it up tight. Then I use the dehorning clipper, which is much better than the saw, I think, as I have used them both, for the saw does not cut them off near so quickly. I take the horn next to the post first, also taking time to get the clipper well down on the head so it will take a rim of hair. When ready, shut down quickly, and off comes the horn, and thus reduces the pain to a mere trifle. So whatever pain there may be attached to it, it will be in the after-condition rather than in the operation itself. I do not like to dehorn under a year and a-half old, as they might grow again, and also at this age they find the full value of their horns.

Instances might be multiplied without number to show the difference in comfort to the cattle themselves, but enough has been said to suggest to your own minds many such illustrations. Hoping to have suggested to your minds more than I have stated, I submit the whole to your judgment, claiming a decision in favor of dehorning of cattle.



MARRYING A FARMER.

BY L. F.

"My Dear Nellie, how glad I am to see you. I was so anxious; cousin Minnie tells me that since I went away you have been flirting desperately with a farmer. Can it be possible you could so far forget yourself as to toy with the iron heart of an honest son of toil?"

"There, if you will just stop and take breath, I will at once relieve your anxiety. I have no proof that he has an iron heart, but I can prove that I have not been flirting,—and as she spoke she held up a delicate white hand on which something unmistakably glistened,—and, furthermore, as we have never had any secrets between us, I need not blush to tell you that before the May buds have opened, this little circlet will—"

"Nellie Hammond! Am I dreaming? or are you a raving lunatic?"

"Neither, my dear; I am in my right mind; and you are just as wide awake as you were the day your brother Luke brought Hilliard & Harper's head clerk home with him to spend the vacation."

"It was someone else's turn to blush now; but her anxiety for her friend was not lessened."

"But, Nellie dear, consider; you, who have always lived in town, and have no idea of work, further than keeping your own room tidy,—you have never taken a thought about bread and butter, until it was set before you upon the table,—to think of you milking cows, and boiling pork and cabbage; the idea is preposterous. Your papa has taken so much pains to educate you, too, and what now will you do with your music, and drawing, and accomplishments?"

"Well, Mabel, I have not time to answer all your questions now, but I think where there's a will there's a way; and as for accomplishments, I think they are just as necessary to the farmer's wife as to the merchant's. But we will not quarrel about it, for I shall want to invite you out in strawberry time, when I hope to have the pleasure of serving you that luxury with rich sweet cream from my own dairy. But I must be going now. I have some more calls to make for the same purpose that brought me here. I am going to have a small party to-morrow evening. My farmer will be there, cowhides and all, so prepare yourself to be shocked with his uncouth manners, and his enormous feet and hands."

With a mischievous twinkle in her eye, she put her arms around her friend's neck and gave her a hearty kiss. A rippling little laugh, a light step tripping down the stairs, and Mabel felt that something like sunshine had just left her, and surely she could never be quite happy again, if Nellie buried herself again in a farmhouse.

The two girls were great friends—brought up in the same town, their homes but a few blocks apart, their schooldays had been spent together, and neither having sisters, there seemed to be a bond between them that could not lightly be severed.

Mabel Thornton had been spending the winter with relatives in a distant city, and upon her return, a spirit of rebellion within her when she realized her friend was about to be torn from her by a rough, brawny farmer. She mentally resolved to dislike him and to be very cool and dignified; in fact, to show him in every possible way the difference between him and his future bride.

Like her friend, Mabel was usually gay and light-hearted, but to-day there seemed a weight on her mind; her visit to the city was forgotten, likewise her own future prospects; her air-castles had rudely fallen; how often she had planned to herself how Nellie would come to visit her in her future city home, where she would find her hero, and their married lives would be inseparable as their girlhood had been. But now her hopes were all pulled down by that great ugly farmer, and her delicate foot came down with unusual firmness on the soft carpet.

The next day she was restless, and quite early in the afternoon found her on her way to Mr. Hammond's, with an excuse to help Nellie.

Nellie had planned that her farmer should arrive early, "to give Mabel a chance," as she termed it, to get used to his odd ways before the other guests should make their appearance.

The last arrangements had scarcely been made, and everything pronounced ready, when he was announced. Nellie, radiant with happiness, one hand extended toward him, the other holding Mabel's arm, said at the same time: "Herbert, this is my dearest friend, Mabel Thornton. Mr. Warrington—Miss Thornton."

And Mabel Thornton, who was always at ease in any society, felt herself blushing and trembling like a schoolgirl, and only recovered herself when she felt the friendly grasp of the farmer's hand. She raised her eyes to behold—a tall, broad shouldered, handsome young man, smiling down upon her, showing a row of white, even teeth.

Nellie, noticing Mabel's embarrassment, said in her good-humored way, "Now I will leave you two amiable people to amuse yourselves, while I go and see what mamma is about."

The door closed, and Mabel was alone with that terrible farmer. A very few minutes sufficed to drift into conversation with Herbert Warrington. Interesting and amusing, she soon found him to be well-versed in the topics of the day, and while a lively conversation was going on between them, she was rapidly taking notes.

Well-dressed,—he seemed to have accepted all the latest fashions, without that useless display so much affected by city gentlemen. His dark brown hair lay in thick clusters about his head, and rippled back from his temples in rich dark waves; the turn of the lips, all tended to make a most favorable impression upon Mabel.

Nearly half an hour had elapsed; so deeply interested were they in some paintings; they were discussing, they did not notice Nellie's entrance till she stood beside them, beaming with satisfaction that her two friends were getting along so well together.

The evening passed very pleasantly. When games and amusements began to lag, some one suggested that Mr. Warrington should sing. This was something Mabel had not thought of. She really felt a little provoked at Nellie for not giving her some idea of what he was like. Could he sing? She felt a little curious, and joined with others who were urging him.

Without further hesitation, he requested Nellie to accompany him on the piano. A short prelude and he began the ballad, "Old Orchard Cot by the Stream."

It was evidently a favorite, for his soul seemed to be in the song, and Mabel, watching him closely, thought his dark eyes took a far-away look, as though he were wandering in fancy by the orchards and brooks of his own country home; but to himself it was the vision of the fair and happy bride he was so soon to take to the cot beside the stream.

Mabel had suddenly come to the conclusion that Nellie might be happy after all, but she could not help wondering how he would look in cowhides and denims.

For fully a minute after Herbert Warrington's song was ended, an unbroken silence reigned, the audience seeming scarcely to breathe. Nellie, whose wits seemed always at her command, requested two of the young ladies to play a duet; but no one seemed inclined to break the echo of the song, and as the hour was late, they all made preparations for home.

Nellie insisted that Mabel should stop with her all night, and after Mr. Warrington's departure, they hastened to their room.

"Well, Mabel," said Nellie, "what do you think of my farmer now? I do hope, for my sake, you are not altogether disgusted."

"Oh, he is"—She was going to say splendid, when her conversation of the previous day and the resolution she had made came rushing to her mind. She checked herself in time to say, "Oh, he is well enough; but I can not bear the idea of you becoming a farmer's wife. I fancy I see you already; your dress pinned back; your sleeves rolled up; and yourself almost completely covered with a huge Holland apron, straining pail after pail of milk, making butter, cheese, etc.; or presiding at the table where your liege lord is dealing out bacon and beans to half-a-score of blue-shirted help."

"Yes," continued Nellie, "and my friend Mabel sitting at my right hand, partaking of bacon and beans with hearty relish, while she listens attentively to one of the said blue-shirts, while he relates his adventures with a fractious young team. But I must bid you good-night, for I have a deal to do in the next three weeks, and I think if I get a good nap I will feel none the worse to-morrow."

In a short time she was sleeping soundly and probably dreaming of her farmer. But Mabel could not sleep. Such a mixture of events had never occurred to her before. Surely the opinion she had formed of Herbert Warrington would not have been very flattering to Hilliard & Harper's head clerk; but of all things he seemed to be farthest from her thoughts to-night.

The three weeks sped round with their usual swiftness, and the appointed day, being the 10th of May, was all that could be wished for. Never did the sun shine brighter or birds sing more joyously; never was bride fairer, or groom more proud and happy, than those two for whom the sun seemed purposely to shine; and when the dainty white hand of Nellie Hammond was clasped in the broad brown palm of Herbert Warrington, it seemed to imply the words before they were spoken—"Whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder."

The parents of Nellie had raised no objection to the marriage; indeed, they seemed to be proud of their daughter's choice. Mrs. Hammond had been a farmer's daughter, and she felt sure her daughter would love the freedom of the country.

It had been arranged that after the wedding dinner at Mr. Hammond's, the happy couple should proceed at once to their future home, which was about fifteen miles from the town. Herbert had brought his own carriage for that purpose. The ride proved very pleasant; it could not be otherwise to two persons who so thoroughly enjoyed each other's society.

It was near sundown when a turn in the road brought them in view of Warrington Hill, and in a few minutes they were alighting at their own gate. Nellie had never seen the place. Herbert had often wished her to go, but she loved better to hear his descriptions of it. The house, which was quite modern, stood upon an eminence, but upon approaching, the ascent was so gradual as scarcely to be realized. A spacious dooryard, with an unusual amount of shade trees and shrubbery; the dear old lilacs; the flowering currant and sweetbriar bushes harmoniously blending their sweet odors with the evening air, while a large orchard just breaking into bloom extended nearly to the brink of the stream at the foot of the hill, which wound its way in and out among the tall beech and maple trees. The stream was spanned by a rustic little bridge tastefully ornamented with lattice work. Directly on the other side rose another hill much higher than the one on which the farm-house was built. At the summit, half hidden by tall trees, stood an old-fashioned stone church, its grey tower rising in dark contrast to the deep blue of the sky beyond. The ponderous clock was just striking the hour of six, which echoed over the silent hills and dales with solemn grandeur.

Nellie stood like one entranced; the beauty of the scene, the silence, the sweet perfume of the orchard, the prolonged echo of the church bell, and her own happiness, were too much for her, and the merry blue eyes filled with tears.

Herbert was grieved, for he had never seen her sad. He was about to speak when she laid her hand upon his arm and said: "Oh, Herbert! I fear we shall be too happy here and forget our duty to those around us."

"Darling!" he said, clasping her in his arms, "I thought you were disappointed."

"How could I be, when it is far more beautiful than anything you have ever described!"

They stood for several minutes, their silence expressing far more than words could do.

At last, as they turned toward the house, Herbert said: "Everything in the house is just as my mother left it when she died five years ago. I have made no alterations or improvements, because I wished to please you, and I thought it would be so much pleasanter for us to plan together."

"You are very kind," said Nellie, "but I really think it is so nice as it is."

Herbert had provided the services of a widow in the neighborhood, who lived with a married daughter, and who had agreed to stay as long as Mrs. Warrington wished her. They had not been long in the cozy, old-fashioned parlor when Mrs. Darwin invited them out to tea. Nellie's astonishment knew no bounds when, entering the dining-room, she found a table set with a snowy cloth, glistening with glass and china; there were jellies, fruits, and delicate cakes, and such delicious bread and butter. Nellie thought she would take great pleasure in preparing such a dainty meal with her own hands.

Twilight was fast approaching; the evening was lovely and Herbert proposed a walk. Down to the bridge, out by the way of the orchard, lingering awhile beneath the blossoms, slowly they wandered to the brook. The round full moon had just risen over the hill, lighting up the windows of the church with a spectral glow, and falling in silvery ripples on the gliding stream.

And there, enjoying the beauties of a balmy spring twilight, hand clasping hand, and heart blending with heart, we will leave them.

We will allow a period of ten years to pass before we again visit the farm. The old church remains the same; the blooming orchards are now laden with fruit, for it is the month of August. The board fence has been replaced by pickets; a neat gravelled path leads up to the verandah; on the right of the path is a croquet ground and other out-door games, while on the left are beautiful beds of flowers. Two little children of three and five years are sitting on the grass with their aprons full of flowers, making bouquets for mamma; as we reach the verandah we encounter a plump, rosy-checked boy of seven. We peep into the parlor, where everything is neat and new; at the piano sits a delicate girl of nine summers; further on we are welcomed by a sweet, matronly woman, busily engaged in preparing the evening meal, while up the path from the meadow comes a happy-looking man whom we have not forgotten.

Mabel Thornton had been a frequent visitor at the Warrington's during the first summer, openly declaring she was as enchanted with the farm as she was pleased with the farmer. Many were her rambles over the hills, gathering wild flowers and berries; or sitting in the shade of the kitchen door, shelling peas for dinner; even venturing into the dairy and rolling up her dainty sleeves to help with the much-despised cream and butter. She was married the following winter to her city clerk, where they managed to live showily, if not comfortably, on his salary; her husband's time being so much occupied, she has little of his society, and often, as she gazes from her window on the dismal roofs and chimneys, she sighs for the freedom of Warrington Hill, and the happiness of the inmates of the

"Old Orchard Cot by the Stream."