

The Farmer's Advocate AND HOME MAGAZINE.

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Something Not Yet Understood.

Agricultural Canada swallowed the pill, through which vehicle was administered the railway tariffs increase, without much ado, but it was felt all the time that it was not the proper medicine for the trouble. This pill was thinly candy-coated with a rider which deprived the prosperous Canadian Pacific Railway of somewhere between twelve and twenty millions of dollars, which the increase would add to their already handsome profits. Considerable credit for these few millions being obtained for the public treasury is taken by a small committee of agriculturists, who in turn publicly declare the valuable services of George Pepper in compiling some of the most startling information concerning the financing and operating of Canadian railways that has yet been revealed. In 1915 Mr. Pepper was engaged by the Dominion Government to assist the Department of Agriculture in matters pertaining to transportation. After the unpopular and unfair decision of the Dominion Railway Board, granting the railways a horizontal increase of fifteen per cent., was made public Mr. Pepper turned his attention to the operations of these institutions. He made an extensive study of reports and statistics and assisted the Solicitor, retained by the agricultural interests, in preparing a memorandum which the Government considered at length, and which, no doubt, delayed their final decision until the eleventh hour. Now, for some reason yet unannounced, Mr. Pepper's services have been dispensed with. In the absence of any definite statement the impression has been left with the agriculturists, in whose interests he has been working, that the hand of the railways has fallen and Mr. Pepper's presence in and about the Agricultural Department at Ottawa is objectionable to an element whose power in Canada has never yet been measured. We would not like to believe that a Government with such a mandate from the people as the present one enjoys, and a Minister of Agriculture, himself a farmer and a farmers' candidate, could be influenced thus. However, a man who has done

something has been "let out." A correct understanding of the impression this has made on the live-stock men of Canada can be gathered from the minutes of the recent annual meeting of the Record Board, held in Toronto. Surely there is a mistake somewhere.

In any case, if Mr. Pepper's public services in behalf of agriculture are no longer desired by the Government, his past efforts should be recognized, and the information concerning the railway question, which he compiled, should be printed and preserved against such time as the question again arises.

Feeding Calves Sometimes Vexes.

BY SANDY FRASER.

I've heard some people say that the mon in the country has a better chance to live a good life than those men who have to spend their days in the city, where one will be all the time runnin' intae chances tae get intae crooked deals an' where the temptation to go to the bad wi' the drink, or wi' something else, is always before ye. But I'm beginnin' to hae my doots about this. If there's ways o' gaein' wrang in the city that's no' to be found in the country there's also opportunities o' rinnin' off the track in the country that they ken naething about in the city.

What brings these things to my mind is some experiences I hae been havin' lately and which I have every year at this season, for the matter o' that. I had juist been giein' the auld wumman a sort o' a lecture on patience. She's had bad luck wi' her baking, and it took sae muckle o' the conceit oot o' her that what wis left wis in pretty bad humor. "Hoot Jean", says I, "Ye shouldna be takin' on sae about a thing like yon in war-time. Even if yer bread did get chilled last night ye canna help it ony by gettin' sae hot about it. Dae ye no' remember the sermon we got last Sunday frae the meenister an' how he tauld us about the patience o' Job? Ye're a lang way frae havin' to stand what he came through."

Jean didna say onything an' after a while I went oot to the barn to milk the coos an' dae up the evening chores. Alang wi' ither things I had a bunch o' young calves to feed, an' twa or three amang them hadna learned as yet the latest style in drinkin' milk. Sae onybody that has lived for a part o' their lives on the farm will ken what I meant, a while back, in speakin' about the temptations o' the country. There are times where it takes all the self-control ye've developed in the course o' a lifetime to prevent ye usin' language that ye wad be surprised to see in the children's school-books, for instance. I remember one time watchin' one o' my neebors tryin' to drive his horses oot o' a field o' oats that they had got into by breakin' doon the fence. He wad drive them doon to one end o' the field, where was a gate, but the horses pretended not to see it an' turned back on the auld chap and had a free-for-all race tae the ither end o' the field. He then tried tae pit them oot where they had come in, but there wisna sae muckle inducement for them tae gae ower the fence in that direction, sae back they went again, ilka horse making a road for himsel' through the lang grain. There wis a friend o' mine wi' me that day, Duncan, his name was, an', as we watched the chap an' his horses, he turns tae me an' says he, "Weel Sandy, I dinna ken o' onything more vexener than that." I felt that Duncan was about right, even if he did hae tae mak' a new word to express his ideas. But by this time oor neebor friend wis walkin' up and doon through the field o' aits after the horses, talkin' to them in a way that would hae put fear intae them if they had had a better understanding o' the Gaelic language. He had his straw hat in his hands and it looked as though some cow had been tryin' to mak' her breakfast on it. "Duncan", I said, "We'd better gie him a hand or he'll hae a fit, to say naething o' his being pit oot o' the church if onybody comes alang and hears him". So we helped him get the ponies rounded up and intae the stable, but he wis sae mad that he wouldna speak to us, but went off tae fix the fence. Or maybe he wis thinkin' o' the pet names he had given his horses an' wonderin' if they would be suitable for all occasions.

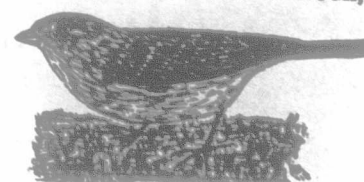
However, this is no' what I wis intendin' to be tellin' ye. It wis thinkin' about those calves o' mine that reminded me o' the chap an' his horses. That night after I had got the coos milked an' the oldest o' the calves fed I went at the job o' teachin' the twa wee bossies, that were juist a little mair than a day auld, the method whereby they wad be enabled tae grow up an' be o' some benefit tae their country. But they were stubborn little beggars an' it wisna lang before I felt mysel' gettin' riled up a bit. The calf I wis feedin' wis willin' to hae its nose onywhere but in the pail, while the ither one cam' at me frae behind wi' a bunt that made me spill mair than half the milk. Wi' that I grabbed the calf by the back o' the neck and jammed his heid doon intae the pail an' says I "there noo, drink or droon, ye deil. Moral suasion is na guid for the likes o' ye." I might hae said mair or maybe drowned the calf but juist then someone says tae me "What about the patience o' Job? I'm thinkin' the meenister will need to go ower the story again for yer benefit." It wis Jean wha had come tae the barn to tell me I wis wanted at the telephone. She hadna forgotten what I had said about her troubles wi' the bread, an' the meenister's sermon. She had me pretty well cornered but I put the best face I could on it an' says I, "Oh, na doot Job wis a fine auld gentleman all right, an' what we hae been hearin' about him is probably true enough, but what I'm willin' tae bet on is that he never raised sic a fool calf as that one there in a' his life. They say Job had boils.

What is there about that to try a mon's temper alang-side o' feedin' calves?"

Jean went back tae the hoose wi'oot sayin' onything mair but I'm thinkin' she thought she had the best o' it. And maybe she had in a way. The mon that undertakes to do ony preachin' has to be pretty careful about daein' the practicin' as weel. Tellin' ither what they should dae is a poor business unless ye're able to gie what oor teacher calls a "practical demonstration" o' the doctrines ye are preachin'. All the same I dinna feel like takin' ower muckle blame to mysel' in the matter o' losin' my temper ower that calf. Because, as my friend Duncan would hae said if he had been there, "There's naething mair vexener."

Nature's Diary.

BY A. B. KLUGH, M. A.



Vesper Sparrow.

The Vesper Sparrow is with us once again and with its clear and beautiful refrain is joining the matutinal chorus of bird-song, and singing its vesper song in the waning twilight.

This species is very common in fields and along road-sides, and its favorite perch when singing is the top of a fence-post or picket. The official name, Vesper Sparrow, is well-chosen since it sings most continuously in the evening, but it has several other common names. It is termed Bay-winged Bunting, on account of the chestnut color of the bend of the wing, Grass Finch because of its preference for fields and open grassy places, and is frequently called "Gray-bird." This term "Gray-bird" is not the specific name of any species but is a general name which is often applied to any small grayish or brownish-streaked bird and the species to which it is most frequently applied are the Vesper Sparrow, Prairie Horned Lark, Savanna Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, and Song Sparrow.

The Vesper Sparrow is about six inches in length. It is grayish-brown above, thickly streaked with dusky-brown; white beneath, usually tinged with buff, with brownish streaks on the breast and along the sides. The crown is like the back but the streaks are finer. The bend of the wing, that is the part which is often termed the "shoulder" in birds, is chestnut. The outer tail-feather is wholly or mainly white and the next one or two tail-feathers have white tips. These white outer tail-feathers, which are very conspicuous in flight, are the main identification mark of this species. It is such marks as this which the beginner in the study of birds should try to establish in his mind for every species, as when they are known a very brief glimpse of a bird is sufficient to allow of its recognition. I have frequently had lengthy descriptions of birds submitted to me by people who wished to ascertain their names, but because the observer had failed to record the main points which constitute the identification marks of the species I have been unable to recognize the bird described with certainty. The range of the Vesper Sparrow in Canada is from Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia to the Eastern border of Manitoba. From Eastern Manitoba to the Pacific it is replaced by the Western Vesper Sparrow, a sub-species very similar to the Eastern bird but paler and with a more slender bill. On Vancouver Island the sub-species is the Oregon Vesper Sparrow, which is smaller, browner above, and with more buff beneath.

The Vesper Sparrow arrives in Ontario from March 24th to April 14th, depending upon the season, and leaves about October 20th.

The nest of the Vesper Sparrow is built in a depression in the ground, the brim of the nest being level with the soil. It is composed of grass and grass-roots, lined with finer grass and frequently with hair. The eggs are from four to six in number, and are grayish-white in color heavily clouded with chocolate-brown. The bird when incubating is a very close sitter and often does not flush until almost trodden upon.

The song of this species may be recognized by the opening phrase, which may be written as "Whee-oo-whee-oo-whee-ee" and in which there is a rising inflection in each of the three components. After this introductory phrase comes a complicated and beautiful trill.

During the time which the Vesper Sparrow spends in Canada its food consists of about eighty per cent. animal matter and twenty per cent. vegetable matter. Beetles and locusts make up the bulk of the animal food. As soon as the beetles begin to crawl and take wing this bird is on the alert to capture them, and in May they constitute one-third of the total food. As locusts become more and more abundant with the progress of the season they increase proportionately in the menu of the Vesper Sparrow until by mid-summer they are the chief constituent, and in July they make up forty-one per cent. of the total food. Cutworms, army worms and other smooth caterpillars are freely eaten and form a larger proportion of the food of this species than of that of any other sparrow.

Towards the end of August the Vesper Sparrow begins to eat seeds and during the late fall and throughout the winter they are its sole source of food-supply. Three-quarters of the Vesper's supply of seeds is derived from weeds, such as Rag-weed, Lamb's-quarters, Pig-weed, Purslane, Knotweed, Pigeon-grass and Crab-grass. The other seeds taken are those of the grains, the main one being oats. These are picked up on the stubble