

## In the Dairy

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tional Dairy Show in Chicago the latter part of February.

The train consisted of baggage, dining and observation cars, together with several Pullman sleepers and carried over one hundred Empire salesmen and newspaper men. The company remained at Bloomfield for four days, spending part of the time inspecting the factory, but the larger part of the time was spent in regular convention sessions.

The subjects discussed touched on all questions affecting the dairy industry in a broad and general way and especially with the means that can be taken to improve separator cream as it reaches the creamery. The formal program of the meet comprised a general discussion of separator trade or conditions. Topic after topic of pertinent interest to the business of selling cream separators was brought up. There were three key notes that were struck in every session. They were: "Tell the truth about the separator," "Don't knock the competitor," "Study every method by which the farmer can by use of the Empire make his milk cows pay him a bigger profit."

Much time was spent in the factory studying the construction of the machine in every detail, especially the improvements embodied in the "Improved Frictionless Empire." This new model is an ingenious ball neck bearing which renders the machine practically frictionless. There is so little friction that the bowl will continue to revolve for thirty minutes after it has once been put up to full speed, unless stopped by the brake with which the machine is now provided.

The up-to-date methods for which the Empire Cream Separator Company is noted, backed up by the high qualities of the machine, make the factory, are responsible for the immense trade that the company is doing all over America. They have published a most attractive catalogue descriptive of their 1906 model machines which will be forwarded free of charge upon application to the Empire Cream Separator Company of Canada, Limited, Toronto, Ont.

## Women's Institutes

Supt. Putnam has announced the list of Women's Institute meetings to be held in Ontario from May 24th to July 5th. The meetings will be held at the following places: Brant, Haldimand, Norfolk, Brant, Halton, Lincoln, Welland, Monck, Wentworth, York, Simcoe, Dufferin, Grey, Bruce, Wellington, Oxford, Perth, Huron, Waterloo, Peel, Elgin, Kent, Lambton, Middlesex, Windsor, Victoria, Durham, Peterboro, Hastings, Durham, Northumberland, Lennox, Amherst Island and Dundas. In all, 269 meetings will be held. The speakers include, Dr. Annie Becker, Aylmer; Miss Lillian May, St. Thomas; Mrs. Colin Campbell, Goderich; Miss Gertrude Carter, Guelph; Mrs. A. Kinney, Grand View; Miss Edna M. Ferguson, Stratford; Miss Isobel Rife, Hespeler; Miss Isobel Pease, Toronto; Miss J. Shuttlesworth, Guelph; Mrs. J. W. Bates, Broad Ripple, Ind.; Miss Agnes Smith, Hamilton; Mrs. F. W. Watts, Clinton; Miss Bertha Duncan, Emery; Miss Susie Cammell, Oranienburg; Miss Gertrude Gray, Toronto; Mrs. Helen Wells, Syracuse; Mrs. D. McTavish, North Bruce; Miss Lillian F. Sheffield, Toronto; Miss Bella Millar, Guelph; Miss Lulu Reynolds, Scarborough Jct. and Mrs. Wm. Purvis, Columbus.

## Nature About the Farm

Edited by C. W. NASH.

The editor of this department will be glad to identify for subscribers any specimens of natural history sent to this office for that purpose, and will answer any questions on the subject that may be asked through *THE FARMING WORLD*.

## OWLS AND FIELD MICE

The winter which has just passed was most remarkable; for not even the "oldest inhabitant" can remember one just like it before. Whether it was good for the country generally, or not, remains to be seen. In one respect, at any rate, I think it will prove beneficial, for owing to the absence of snow the meadow mice were exposed to attacks of their natural enemies and the hawks and owls which remained over the season for that purpose must have destroyed myriads of them. Whilst attending Institute meetings several of the more observant farmers told me that they had noticed a good number of these birds about their fields and in their wood lots all through January and February and that a great number of mice had been killed by them. One farmer in the County of Welland stated that early in February he found about half a dozen owls in a pine tree in his wood lot and he believed the birds had used that as their roosting place for some time, for the ground beneath the tree, within a radius of eight feet all round the trunk, was perfectly covered with field mice, which had been killed and dropped by the owls. In this particular case the birds which had been doing the good service were long-eared owls, a species which breeds regularly throughout its range, in the province, wherever there are sufficient trees to afford it concealment during the day and it is not subject to persecution by human beings, or its next great enemy the crow.

The long-eared owl is one of the most useful and at the same time probably the most inoffensive of all our birds of prey. In my own experience I have never known it to attack any kind of domestic fowl or bird of any sort. Dr. Fisher, of Washington, when conducting his investigations as to the food of hawks etc., examined the stomach contents of one hundred and seven of these birds. Not one of them showed any trace of poultry. Sixteen had eaten birds, mostly sparrows; eighty-nine contained mice or other small mammals; one insect; and the remaining were empty. The result of examinations made by other naturalists is equally favorable to this owl, not one of them having reported it guilty of destroying poultry or game.

All the owls are early breeders and the long-eared is no exception to the rule, their nests usually being occupied early in April. I say occupied advisedly, for it does not necessarily follow that, because they have possession of a nest, it has been built by themselves, for they very often appropriate the deserted nest of a crow, hawk, or squirrel even; they then patch up to suit their own architectural ideas and thus save themselves some trouble. These owls are common with the rest of the family and some few other birds are rather irregular in the matter of depositing their eggs; an interval of two, three, or even four days being allowed to

elapse between the deposit of each one. In the meantime in order to protect the eggs the female is required to sit close upon the nest and so the result is that the eggs are laid in small batches first and thus we generally find in an owl nursery infants of various ages and sizes, but all of them with most voracious appetites, which must tax their parents' energies to the utmost to appease them. The number of field mice required by a hearty, growing lot of young owls is something astonishing. I cannot find an exact record just now of the number of times the young are fed by the long-eared owl during the night, but the Rev. Gilbert White, of Selborne, an eminent English naturalist, accurately timed the visits of a pair of barn owls with food for their nest and found that either one or the other of the old birds brought a mouse to the young about once in every five minutes. As the barn owl and the long-eared owl are much of a size, feed in the same way and have the same number of young to a brood, it is more than probable that they would require to supply their nestlings with an equal number, so that the presence of an owl family upon a farm would be a very important factor in reducing the number of field mice.

## COLLECTING PLANTS AND INSECTS

I wish to call the attention of my young readers particularly to the fact that the directors of the Industrial Exhibition, Toronto, are offering very substantial money prizes and valuable medals for the best collections of Canadian insects and plants. For instance, here is one competition for which any intelligent boy or girl can enter, viz., "The best collection of fifty weeds injurious to farm and garden crops, the work of the exhibitor, open to school children resident in Canada, to be certified by the teacher or some other prominent person. Each specimen to be mounted separately on paper of uniform size—1st prize \$8.00, 2nd \$5.00, 3rd \$3.00.

There is another, viz.: "A collection of fifty of the best Canadian flowering plants, suitable for cultivation in gardens and school grounds, the work of the exhibitor; open to school children resident in Canada, to be certified to by the teacher or some other prominent person—1st prize \$12.00, 2nd \$8.00, 3rd \$5.00.

Then in the insect class good prizes will be awarded for "The best collection of insects, the work of the exhibitor (amateurs only)—1st prize \$15.00, 2nd \$10.00, 3rd \$5.00; and "The best collection of two hundred insects injurious to Canadian agriculture or horticulture, with specimens of injury done, not more than two of any one species to be included in exhibit; the work of the exhibitor (amateurs only)—1st prize \$10.00, 2nd \$7.00, 3rd \$5.00."

There is no difficulty in obtaining specimens for these exhibits, nor in naming them, for the Forest Ranger to the collector by sending them to Dr. Jas. Fletcher, at the Experimental Farm, Ottawa; to Dr. C. J. S. Bethune, at the Agricultural College, Guelph; or to the editor of this department, at the Toronto Women's office, they will be identified, and if requested, returned to the sender.

I hope this fall to see that some, if not all, of these good prizes go into the pockets of the clever young readers of "Nature About the Farm."