

The Sayings and Doings of "Donald Ban."

By Peter McArthur.

"When I was doing the chores to-night," said Donald Ban, laying aside his paper and pushing up his spectacles on his forehead, "I got thinking about the change that has come over the cattle since the days when I was a boy. You would be calling it the evolution of the cattle, John. I wish I knew how to use those college words. They give such a fine sound to a man's talk."

John squirmed uneasily. His father grinned, and then went on.

"Whatever caused the change, whether it was evolution, or just the plain buying and breeding of better stock, the change has been a big one. The fancy cattle we have now couldn't pick a living with the old-fashioned kinds. They haven't the brains. They couldn't live by eating snow and licking the moss off the fence rails. They would starve even on elm and soft-maple browse. I own that the old cattle did not get fat on it, but they got through the winter, if they didn't get on the lift. I'll bet they didn't teach you how to treat a cow that was on the lift when you were at college."

"I never heard of such a thing," said John, defensively.

"It is just as well you didn't. We used to moist the poor brutes with ropes and give them hot drinks of herb tea, when all they really needed was some good food to eat. But, speaking of brains, those old cattle were away ahead of the kind we have now. Do you remember the red cow I got from the blacksmith, mother?"

"I do," said his wife, grimly. "You had her before you joined the church."

"Yes, and I don't know as I would ever have been fit to join if I hadn't sold her to the butcher. My, but that cow was a caution. Before I got her, she had pastured for years on the long pasture field, as people called the public road, and there wasn't a trick for getting into trouble that she didn't know. She could work the pins out of gates, and any fence that wasn't too high for her to jump she could throw down with her horns. I tried every kind of poke on her, but it was no use. She could always beat me. Many's the time she led the whole drove into the corn field or wheat by throwing down the fence. There was a poem in the paper once that hit her off exactly, and I wish I had kept it. You see, John, the cows we had then inspired poetry, but the kind we have now inspire nothing but market reports."

"That suits me just as well," said his son.

"Maybe it does, but you don't know how much you are missing. I wish I could get a copy of the poem now. I think I'll write to one of the papers and ask if anyone has a copy of it in a scrap-book. It was not exactly the kind that would find its way into a collection of poems, but it was true to life. I can only remember one stanza of it:

"The hue of her hide was dusky brown,

Her body was lean and her neck was slim;
One horn turned up and the other turned down;
She was keen of vision and long of limb."

"There was a lot more of it telling about her tricks, and all of it was good. There was something about the deacon coming home from church and finding her in his cabbage patch. I tell you it was funny. Then there was another little poem something like it, but all I can remember of it is two lines, and they fit her, too:

"She had a long Roman nose

And a short stump tail,

And ribs like the hoops

Of a homemade pail.

"She had a stump tail, because there wasn't a dog in the township but had a taste of it at one time or another. Now that I come to think of it, we called her the highway cow, because the poem I spoke of was called that. Many's the run she gave me, but I couldn't help but laugh at her tricks—she always looked so innocent when caught. When she took the drove into mischief, and I went after them, she would always be the first to get out of the field.

"You remember Buck and Bright, don't you, mother? They were the first yoke of oxen we had after we were married. They had brains. I tell you, though they were as different in their ways as a couple of men could be. Buck knew how to throw down a rail fence with his horns, just as the highway cow did, but he didn't always care to do it. The liberal use of a fence-stake on the back and ribs of an ox tends to educate him, and Buck had brains enough to know that the drillings with the fence-stake came after his trick of throwing down the fence. Bright couldn't throw down the fences, but he knew that Buck could, and, besides, he could lick him. When he wanted to get into the clover or the corn, he would drive Buck up to the fence and make him throw it down. It was as good as a circus to see him do it. On Sunday afternoons I used to

watch him do it, and I could almost imagine I could hear him talking to Buck.

"M-m-mm-mm!" he would seem to say. "I just would like a good feed of that clover in the next field. Mm-m-m-mm-mm. I say, Buck, let's go over and have a fill-up."

"Poor Buck would pay no attention, but would go on pasturing. 'Mm-mm-m-m-mm-mm!' Bright would say. 'That clover surely does smell sweet. I say, Buck, wake up,' and he would give him a prod with his horn. 'How on earth can you keep on nibbling that short, dry, punky grass when there is a fine field of clover right along side of us, and you know how to get into it. Mm-m-m-mm-mm!'"

"Then he would give poor Buck another poke with his horns, and all the time he would be working him closer to the fence. 'Come, be a good fellow and let us go in. Stolen sweets are best, you know. What are you afraid of, anyway? Mm-mm-m-m-mm-mm! but it smells good. The boss is sleeping under an apple tree. I saw him when we were over on the orchard side of the field. He won't waken up till it is time for him to go and milk the cows. We have loads of time to get a good bellyful before he notices, and we can get out before he sees us, anyway. Mm-mm-m-m-mm-mm!'"

"After a while he would get poor Buck edged over into a fence-corner, and then he would stop coaxing. He would give the poor brute a vicious dig in the ribs, as if he were saying, 'See here, you old fool, I am not going to stand any more of your nonsense. You just get busy and throw down that fence, or I'll poke a horn through you. If you are so all-fired conscientious about going into the clover, you needn't go in. I'll go in myself, but unless you have that fence down in two shakes of a dead lamb's tail, I'll tear the hide off you. Then poor Buck, with tears in his eyes, would begin to throw down the fence. He knew that was about the time I usually started to pull a stake out of the cordwood rack so as to get after him. But when the fence was down, he couldn't resist, and he would go into the clover, too. At first I used to pound Buck, but when I saw who was really to blame, I laid it onto Bright, but it did no good. He never seemed to learn. Every time they were turned out into the pasture together, he would make poor Buck throw down the fence."

"Father," said John, solemnly, "that sounds to me very like the nature-faking that Roosevelt scolds so much about."

"Nature-faking, nothing. If I saw Bright make Buck throw down the fence once, I saw him do it a dozen times."

"But the talking. How do you know that he could talk, or what he was saying?"

"Put, that was only thrown in to make you understand. When you were a little boy, you used to like me to tell you just what the animals were saying, but since you have gone in for purebred stock that haven't brains enough to live without being fed in a stall, I never try to tell you, for they are all so stupid they don't seem to have anything to say. You may make more beef and get more milk from your cattle, but I have had more fun. I could spend a whole day telling you about things that those old cattle did and seemed to be saying, but I am afraid it would be wasted on you. You are so hard-headed and businesslike that you don't see the things that are going on around you that are worth enjoying."

"Did you ever tell John about the pig that used to get into the cornfield through the hollow basswood log?"

"Good for you, Mother," said Donald Ban. "I am glad there is someone who believes in my stories about the cattle, and doesn't call them nature-faking."

"O, I don't believe them, but I like to hear them, just the same." She had stopped knitting, and there was a smile on her face that showed that her memory was busy with the old days, when Donald Ban used to chase away the cares of their hard, struggling life with the droll stories he would be telling all the time about the stock.

"Go on," she urged. "Tell him about the pig."

"All right," he said, "I'll tell it for your sake. One summer we had a pig that got into the corn every day, and it was weeks before I found how on earth he managed it. I hunted the fences all around the field, and never could find a hole, but he always got in, just the same. I began to think he was bewitched, when one day I stumbled by accident on a hollow block of basswood log that had been used for a corner block in one of the cradle holes that the fence went over. One end of it opened into the slashing where we kept the pigs, and the other into the cornfield, and the hole was big enough for the pig to go through. When I found it, I was too mad just to plug it up. I wanted to get even with the brute, so I shifted it so that it crossed the corner in a way that put both ends in the

slashing. But, better than that, when the log was shifted, one end was out over the creek. After I changed it, I went and hid, to see what would happen. In a little while Mr. Pig came along as bold as brass, and started to get his usual feed of corn. He dived into the end of the log, and a few seconds later he tumbled squealing into the creek. I never saw a pig so surprised in my life. 'Suffering cats!' he seemed to be saying. 'What has happened? Has there been an earthquake or a landslide?' Then he got up out of the mud and went back to the log, and grunted and sniffed at it, and seemed to be saying, just as plain as could be, in hog language, 'Why, yes, that's my old log, all right, but what has happened to my cornfield? I guess I'll go through and see.' Through he went again, and again he sprawled in the creek. Then he seemed to get mad, and he just ran up the bank and dived through the log, as if he were going to get into that cornfield or die in the attempt. Head over heels he went again, and back he went at it. By this time I was rolling on the grass, and yelling like an Indian as I clawed the grass and laughed. But he didn't seem to see me. He kept right on going through the log and tumbling into the creek, and I think he would have kept it up until he had worn himself to a thread if I hadn't taken pity on him and stuffed the hole with an armful of brush."

"Father," said John, "I believe you just make up those stories of yours."

"What if I do?" asked Donald Ban, good-naturedly. "When you are as old as I am, you will realize that a little nonsense now and then is relished by the wisest men."

South Ontario Farmers Prosperous

Editor "The Farmer's Advocate":

Another season has closed, another winter has set in, and who better than the farmer can enjoy the few slack months? His barns well filled, he never knows want; the high cost of living does not prey on his mind; well, I guess not! This has been a good season, and, though prices generally are not so high, they are by no means poverty prices.

Hogs are not as scarce as usual, but there is still room for more. Perhaps not quite as many feeders as usual were put in; the limited supply and the consequential high prices were hardly encouraging, and some thought the spring market too uncertain to invest; but the supply increasing toward the end of the season, with easier prices, nearly as many as usual went in. By a rough estimate, we would say, within a radius of five miles from the writer's home, some five hundred cattle are up. Some of these are for Easter, some May and June, and the remainder will be finished on grass.

The demand for horses in the late fall was exceptionally strong, especially for young drafters. It has been shown beyond doubt here many times recently that it does not pay to breed undersized or light horses, as the market does not demand them, except to a limited extent. Those who will breed them, must take what they can get, which in many cases is not more than one-half what their more far-seeing neighbors are getting.

Quite a large acreage is devoted to red and al-sike clover seed in this locality. The red clover yield this year is scarcely encouraging, yielding from three to six pecks per acre, while the market seems uncertain. Some have sold to local dealers, who take the seed as it comes from the huller, and clean it at their (dealer's) expense. We understand the price paid has been from \$7 to \$7.25 per bushel for nice seed. The weevil is very noticeable in nearly all the seed, the early cutting being almost as bad as the late. Weeds are bothering somewhat, the ribgrass or buckhorn and ragweed being the worst; few farmers are acquainted with the former, and permit it to seed, and then seem surprised that the seed merchant objects.

South Ontario is fast coming into prominence as a fruit-growing district. Much of the fruit is handled by the Oshawa Fruit-growers' Association, and they do not need to canvass for members, but have all the fruit they care to handle. The county made a good display and exhibit at the Horticultural Exhibition held in the St. Lawrence Arena, Toronto, in November, winning a very liberal share of the prizes.

Land has increased rapidly in value in this county of late, partly due to the C. N. R. coming through, and the talk of another C. P. R. line; also an electric road to the southern part of the county.

This township (Pickering) has been "dry" for a number of years now, and no one seems much the worse. It certainly has not affected land value, as many predicted.

F. H.

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