

THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE AND HOME MAGAZINE

THE LEADING AGRICULTURAL JOURNAL
IN THE DOMINION.

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JOHN WELD, MANAGER.

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men of the legal profession, by merchants, and by manufacturers. The motor of the political machine is usually "in town," and the man with the fluent tongue is usually entrusted with the duty of turning on the power. By force of circumstances, he instals himself. The art of conducting public affairs and of public speaking are qualifications that the growing manhood of Canadian farm homes should assiduously cultivate. In the next place, the conclusion may well be drawn that the farming electorate would do well in the choice of representatives for any public capacity to accord their confidence and recognition to solid worth and integrity, rather than to the glad-hand artist who annually, or every three or four years, makes his advent in a motor car along the concession lines.

Canada at the International.

The recent phenomenal success of Canadian exhibitors in capturing grand championships in both fat cattle and sheep as well as several breed championships at the International live-stock exposition at Chicago, recalls the fact that Canada has been exceedingly and increasingly well-represented at this greatest live-stock exhibition in America. A retrospect of Canadian premier winnings in the last seven years shows that notably in the classes for horses, fat cattle and sheep, Dominion exhibitors have been remarkably successful. The records of the firms of Graham Bros., and Graham-Renfrew in winning grand championship honors in the Clydesdale stallion classes have been phenomenal, they having won this distinction six out of seven years, and also the special prizes for groups of four or five animals, the get of one sire, or owned by the exhibitor.

The record of James Leask, of Greenbank, Ont., in being the first to win with a calf the grand championship for the best fat steer of any age, breed or cross, as he did in 1907 as well as the reserve for the same honor the following year

with a yearling steer stands unequalled. The record of the Southdown flock of the late Senator Drummond, of Beaconsfield, Que., under the management of our William H. Gibson in winning four years in succession the grand championship for the best fat wether of any breed or cross, remains to be nearly equalled. To record the numerous breed championships won by Canadian exhibitors, notably in the sheep classes for which the Dominion has long been famous, would occupy more space than is available, while in the college students' judging competitions the Canucks have also made creditable records. Our young Macdonald College, Quebec, team having last year won the grand championship, with Manitoba a close second, in a contest with representatives of seven others, as they did also on two or three former occasions, in equally strong competition.

Probably in no winning of a grand championship in the history of the exposition, has a more popular one figured than in that J. D. McGregor, of Brandon, Manitoba, with his Angus grade steer, Glencarnock Victor, bred and fed by the exhibitor in Western Canada.

Nature's Diary.

By A. B. Klugh, M. A.

The Weasel has now become an Ermine, which is equivalent to saying that it has changed its summer coat of brown for its winter one of white. It is when in its white coat that it is trapped and the skin marketed under the name of ermine. In summer our common weasel, which is known as Bonaparte's Weasel, from the name of the naturalist who first described it, is chocolate-brown above; white tinged with yellow beneath, and has the tip of the tail black. In winter it is pure white, except the tip of the tail, which remains black. This change of color, which is characteristic of many of our Northern animals, is an example of protective coloration. A white animal is very conspicuous among the greens and browns of summer, and a brown animal even more so on the snow. When protectively colored, an animal is less likely to be seen by those creatures it wishes to feed upon, also by those which wish to capture it for food. It is to be noted, however, that the tip of the weasel's tail remains black in the winter, and this black tip is then a conspicuous object. This retention of the black tip of the tail is supposed to be of value to the weasel by leading birds of prey, which are the weasels' chief enemies, to strike at it and not at the body of the animal.

The weasel is the most blood-thirsty of all our mammals. It is the only one which kills for the sake of killing. It is the tireless hunter, the dread assassin, of all our smaller wild creatures. Its main food consists of hares, mice, and ground hunting birds. Unless it is very hungry, it merely sucks the blood from the veins of the neck and eats the brain. If very hungry, it eats part of the body. Its slender form enables it to squeeze into small holes and crevices and capture the small animals contained therein. It climbs trees with ease, as I once saw demonstrated when one was in hot pursuit of a chipmunk. Near my summer cottage lived a chipmunk which had grown to be very tame, and often came on the verandah, where I used to feed it. One day I heard a great chattering and squealing going on just outside the door. I went out and at first could only make out a couple of streaks going up a tree trunk, up a branch, jumping to the ground and up the tree again. Round and round this circuit they went, until at last I made out that the front streak was my chipmunk and the second streak a weasel. I ran in, grabbed my gun, waited until my chipmunk had jumped and, as the weasel was about to jump, took great satisfaction in getting a charge of shot into it. The chase now over, the exhaustion of the chipmunk became apparent, and it had scarcely strength enough left to crawl off along the fence.

Weasels make their homes under stumps, in the hollow roots of old trees, and in old ground-hogs' burrows.

At this season of the year one often finds a little bird associating with the chickadees—a little bird smaller even than the chickadees—a little olive-gray sprite, with a golden stripe, bordered by black on its head. It is the Golden-crowned Kinglet. Very active are these diminutive birds, constantly fluttering and hopping round the branches, as if they were trying by constant activity to keep the cold from penetrating their little bodies; and as they flutter about, they keep up their shrill little call-note of "Scree-scree-scree." The Golden-crowned Kinglet breeds in the spruce woods of the North and of the Maritime provinces. Here, usually high up in a spruce, it builds its nest, which resembles a ball of moss open at the top, and lined with feathers and plant-down. The usual breeding range of the Golden-crown is as given above, but upon two occasions I have found them in Southern Ontario in June—once at Puskech Lake, near Guelph, and

once near Collin's Bay. On one occasion I saw only a single pair.

Very effective just now is the display made by the Climbing Bitter-sweet, with its branches loaded with orange-red fruit twisting over the dark-green foliage of the cedars. Early in the fall the fruits are enclosed in an orange pod. Now this has split, and the scarlet inner portion of the fruit shows with the reflexed parts of the orange pod at the sides. This plant, which is also known as the "Waxwork," is a woody climber, and its twisting stems attain a great length. The flowers, which blossom in June, are whitish and deliciously fragrant.

Winter is a good time to study tree forms. In summer they are clothed with the "flesh" of green leaves, and we see only their mass outline; in winter we can study their "skeletons." We can see the straight limbs of the Beech, the upward slope of the limbs of the Maple and Oak, and the sweeping curve of those of the Elm, with its drooping smaller branches and twigs. The differences in the bark of the various species also are accentuated.

The study of those promises of future foliage—the buds—is also interesting. There is a great difference in buds. In some all the leaves of next summer are present in miniature; in others but mere rudiments of leaves. Most of them are clothed in scales, many of the scales being hairy and "varnished" on the outside. What is the function of these scales? To keep out the cold? No; how much cold would a few scales keep out when the thermometer registers 20 degrees below zero? They have three functions—firstly, to keep out the moisture which, if it gained entrance to the baby leaves and then froze, would injure them; secondly, to render the changes in temperature to which the young leaves are exposed more gradual; and, thirdly, to prevent the embryo leaves from being injured by striking against the twigs and branches when blown about by the winter winds.

The School Meeting.

Farmers take far too little interest in their public schools. Only when some unusual feature presents itself, such as a gross excess of punishment or a flagrant act of immorality on the part of the teacher, do they manifest a becoming interest in school matters. The encouraging exceptions to this indifference only go to prove the rule. The children trudge away to school in the morning, and if they return in time for "chores" and supper with unbroken bones, and not over unsightly bruises or unreasonably large tears in their clothes, parents are accustomed to regard everything as being satisfactory. If to the foregoing is added the fact that the teacher is popular the average farmer and his wife are well satisfied, if a state of mind in which indifference is so large a factor merits the name of satisfaction. Little wonder, then, if in such a devitalizing atmosphere an enthusiastic teacher finds his earnestness on the wane, and still less is the wonder if under such circumstances the years a child spends in public school are largely wasted years. Let a child live to be fifteen years of age without some real natural discipline and without careful oversight as to the formation of habits of life and methods of study, and the chances are a thousand to one against his ever becoming a man who will do a man's work in a world of men. Farmers know that crops do not grow on uncultivated or unenriched fields. They know, too, what becomes of a neglected dairy herd. No one need tell them of the consequences attendant upon lack of good business practice. The pity of it is that they do not apply the same sagacity to the school where the fortunes of their boys and girls are every day in the making or marring.

This is a good time to begin the correcting of this state of affairs by heeding the notes posted announcing the annual school meeting. No ratepayer can afford to miss this meeting. By attending he may inform himself of the year's school work, and have some share in outlining the school work for the coming year. Last year the writer attended his own school meeting. The day was fairly cold, and to his surprise, though the school furnace had been burning for hours, he found it necessary to sit with his overcoat on till after twelve o'clock. He drew his shivering fellow ratepayers' attention to this state of affairs, and reminded them that this was the sort of thing that the school children had to put up with the whole winter through. The result was a change of affairs in regard to heating, other school abuses will be corrected when parents know by personal experience what is going on and what is not being done. J. M.

Canadian breeders used to be content with taking the grand championship in sheep at Chicago, but success breeds confidence, and now we have acquired the habit of landing the steer championship as well.

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