

## The Farmer's Advocate AND HOME MAGAZINE.

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DOMINION.

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its own good, and that a little more caution should be exercised. This, of course, is a matter of opinion, but after listening to one particular speaker, who should not be allowed to go about publicly as a representative of the United Farmers of Ontario, we were convinced that the organization and the farmers' movement generally would accomplish more with less speed.

### Nature's Diary.

A. B. FLUGH, M.A.

An animal which is common in the wooded parts of Canada as far West as the Rockies is the Canada Porcupine, *Erethizon dorsatum*. West of the Rockies it is replaced by the Western Porcupine, *E. epixanthus*. The average length of the Canada Porcupine is 36 inches, and the average weight from 15 to 20 pounds.

In summer the Porcupine feeds on a good many species of herbaceous plants, and is very fond of the leaves of water-lilies and other aquatic plants which abound along the borders of muddy lakes and streams. In winter it feeds exclusively on the bark of trees, eating that of the poplar, jackpine, elm, basswood and other trees, but its favorite is that of the hemlock. A Porcupine will often spend several days, or even a week, in a single tree feeding on the bark.

The Porcupine's excessive fondness for salt is well known, and leads it to chew any woodwork which is in the least briny. I have seen the mangers of old stables eaten almost completely away by this animal. It is this peculiar taste which usually leads to Porky's death, as it is often shot on account of its destructiveness about camps.

Though the Porcupine is liable to be abroad at any time, it prefers the evening or early morning for its perambulations. It does not hibernate, for it does not need to, as its food is as abundant and as easily available in winter as in summer.

The home-range of an individual of this species is very small, and is probably not more than a few acres in extent.

The species has an extensive repertoire in the way of sounds, as it whines, squeaks, mews, grunts, chatters and sniffs, and upon occasions utters a loud shriek. Many of the mysterious noises of the mid-night woods may safely be laid to the door of the Quill-pig.

The nest of this species may be in a hollow tree or log, in a cave or hole in a rock, or in the ground under the roots of trees.

They mate in October and the young, which are usually one or two in number, but may be three or even

four, are born early in May. They are very large at birth, weighing about 1½ pounds, and are larger than the new-born cubs of the Black Bear.

The Porcupine is completely lacking in wariness, cunning, agility or speed, because it has no need for any of these characteristics so essential to most wild animals. Its coat of quills furnishes it with adequate protection, and no beast of prey, unless rendered desperate by hunger will attack a Porcupine, the only exception to this being the Pekan or Fisher, which in some manner manages to seize the spiny one by the throat, and turning it over to rip up its unprotected abdomen. It is a peculiar but well-attested fact that even when a Pekan gets quills in it they rarely cause it any great inconvenience. But with other animals it is very different, as the quills, with their sharp points and numerous fine barbs, work their way in until they strike the vital organs, or remain sticking in the lips and mouth, which become so swollen that the animal is unable to eat and starves to death. Thus the Quill-pig not infrequently avenges his death weeks after he has been eaten. Various animals, including Owls and Eagles, have been found dead or dying as the result of attacking Porky.

There are many myths in connection with the Porcupine's method of defence. It is often supposed that this species rolls itself into a ball, like the hedge-hog of Europe, but this it never does. It is also quite generally stated that it throws its quills—a feat it is entirely unable to perform. As a matter of fact, when a Porcupine takes up a position of defence it places its head under a log or in a crevice, if such are available, or between its front legs, elevates its quills, and when the enemy approaches lashes at it with its tail, this action usually resulting in the mouth and face of the assailant being filled with quills. Frequently when lashing its tail about some loose quills fly out, and it is undoubtedly this fact which has given rise to the story concerning its power of "shooting its quills."

In spite of its destructiveness to trees, and its habit of rendering itself a nuisance about camp, no true woodsman ever kills a porcupine in any wild part of the country, because it is the only animal which a man lost in the woods without a gun can kill and thus secure a meal which may save his life.

The quills were, and are still, used by the Indian women for their fancy-work, and Seton referring to this says: "They are ready-made laces with a ready-made needle at their end; dyed with roots, berries, barks and lichens to a brown, black, red, green or yellow, or left their natural color, they proved excellent material for the gorgeous embroidery of coats, moccasins, robes and canoes; that are famous now as the Redman's art—an art that we believe was far too true to die and yet will yield its influence in our modern world, even though it was the savage outcome of a savage's idea, expressed in the spines of a stupid beast, stained in the dyes of the plants it fed on."

### A Little Bit of Prophecy.

BY ALLAN MCDIARMID.

At the beginning of the war, a little over five years ago, I remember talking with a farmer friend who undertook to make some predictions as to what the future had in store for the world in general and for farmers in particular. Speaking of the latter he said: "our good times are over; this war is going to knock the whole business endways. Who's going to spend money now in improving their live-stock or their buildings? There will be nothing doing till things are settled some way."

Another young farmer of my acquaintance spoke of getting right out of business while it was still possible to realize something on one's property. His idea evidently was to turn everything into cash and keep it in an old stocking, or some similar hiding place, until the storm had blown over.

After the armistice was signed I was talking again to the first mentioned of these men. I reminded him of what he had said and of the fact that at that time the farmer's good times were just beginning, so far as high produce was concerned. "Yes", he admitted, "I guess I was a little off the track at that time. But now that the war is over prices must come down if there's any reason to anything. Look at all the soldiers and munition workers that will have to go back to other kinds of work, a good deal of it along the lines of food production on the farm."

"I think you're right", I replied. "The 'high cost of living' ought to be a thing of the past pretty soon now. 'Hard times' for the man on the land generally follow a war. I don't see how prices can continue at their present level."

All of which goes to prove, to those of us that didn't know it before, that it is not very safe to be "a prophet in one's own country." There are too many chances of missing the mark and only one chance of hitting it. As to the prices of farm produce, that we were talking about, they have continued to rise very steadily ever since we made our predictions.

However, there's nothing gained by becoming discouraged in the prophesying business any more than in any other, so why not have another look at the probabilities, if for nothing more than to see how far away from the truth the developments of the next few years will prove us to be.

Things can hardly go on as they are at present. The social unrest of to-day will bring about a change

to happier and more stable conditions, even if it has to come by way of a revolution taking the form of a conflict between labor and capital.

But such an outcome shouldn't be necessary at this stage of the game and in an age of National Leagues and the other by-products of a world-war. It's more likely that we will settle our social disputes by arbitration of some kind. Still, until the League of Nations gets its working clothes on there ought to be some way of relieving the situation and making life a little more tolerable for a large percentage of the world's population that find themselves so hard hit in the fight for a comfortable living. The wage-earner is not alone in this struggle. The producer on the farm may be, and often is, in just as tight a corner, so far as making ends meet is concerned. The farmer of to-day is, generally, something of a specialist and if, as a consequence, he has to buy nine-tenths of what he and his family need in the way of food and clothing he is as much a victim of the prevailing high prices as anyone. And more, if his line of production happens to be one of those picked out for what we are pretty familiar with by this time, and know as the "price-fixing" operation, he gets it going and coming. Two instances of this are still pretty fresh in the minds of some of us. The embargo on hides and the artificial lowering of the price of cheese both took place this summer.

Such attempts as these to relieve the situation are all wrong, it seems to me. They do very little good at the time and make matters worse in the long run. Lowering prices never did anything but decrease production. It would be far more sensible for the Government to boost the price of any commodity that they were particularly anxious to have a plentiful supply of. To-day the cheese importers of England are admitting that it would have been better to have let natural conditions prevail in the case of the price of cheese. They cannot supply the retailers with half the quantity they are calling for. And every day cheese-factory patrons in this country are turning to the condenseries and creameries with their milk.

It's a certain thing, if other methods of dealing with our food supply are not brought into operation things will get worse instead of better. Half-starved Germany is just getting into the market and if her seventy million people don't come pretty close to cleaning up the last of the wheat in our elevators and the last of the surplus live-stock of our farms there is no use attempting to judge by appearances. Germany is said to be ready to outbid any other nation in the effort to get a sufficient supply of food and if she does she won't be overlooked, boycott or no boycott. Since we don't like the color of her money she is willing to trade off her manufactured products for our wheat, meat and so on, and to give what practically amounts to two days labor in exchange for one. The nations who have an eye to business are not going to overlook any opportunities of that kind.

So, the case being what it is and the prospects what they are, the great question is, what is the remedy?

Like the cures found for all other unhealthy conditions the simplest are generally the most efficacious. And nothing can be simpler than the one we would like to prescribe in the present instance. One does not have to be extremely far-sighted to see the probable results of it, either.

It is just more work! That may sound unlikely to some of us, but it's true for the world at large. And it may be that there are those that are doing all they can with their muscle that are under-exercising their brain. The point is to increase production and if mental labor helps towards that end that is the kind to employ. We farmers sometimes come short on that score. We must take time to plan our business so that we may get the maximum from our farms with the least possible manual labor. There's nothing lazy about this.

But greater production is the cure. It will make for easier social conditions and a happier state of society all around. The home life of the country will be indirectly affected by the change and for the better. Nothing discourages family life like the "high cost of living."

So now, if greater production is the remedy for the present ills of mankind, the problem we will have to solve will be, how are we to get the world to take its medicine. Make it, I would say. Just as I can recall, when I was a youngster and in need of a dose of "pain-killer", how they would hold my nose until the necessity for breathing compelled me to open my mouth and give them their opportunity to send down the stuff that was to relieve my trouble.

Compulsion and conscription don't sound very good to us but it's what will have to come if we can't keep the people from running to the cities in any other way. A few years ago the majority of this continent's population was in the country producing food. Now the majority is in the city and every one is a consumer. Why can't the Government step in and say just where and how any particular individual shall be employed? It was done when we had to defeat Germany and who will say that we are not up against as serious an undertaking to-day? The idea is practical. It has been tried out. And if the mind of the "workers of the world" is to be turned from Bolshevism and other so-called remedies that are worse, even, than the disease they are intended to cure, then we should get the machinery of the law into motion right now. It may be easier to start it to-day than later on.

If the dream of the "back to the landers" is ever realized it will be when the individual is compelled to do what is for the benefit of the nation, as a whole.

Select flock headers early and get them in condition for the breeding season.