



A PLEA FOR THE SKUNK.

By Right of Its Good Works This Animal Claims the Farmers' Protection.
The skunk is in bad odor with the world at large, and yet every farmer's boy knows the commercial value of its soft fur; a value of sufficient consideration to have created special and remunerative industry known as "skunk farming." This industry consists in breeding these little animals for their pelts alone. But these furry pelts, according to observant farmers, are of small importance compared with the good work wrought on the farm by the five animals. Here is what a Michigan farmer had to say recently in The Rural New Yorker on the subject:

Were potatoes so badly grub eaten twenty-five years ago as they are at the present time? According to my memory they were not. Neither was a bounty offered on woodchucks in those days, nor was there one rabbit where there are ten now. In my opinion, if these were not killed off with shotguns, hounds and terriers, they would in five years become about as great a pest in Michigan as they are at present in Australia. Why? Because their natural enemies are so few. The skunk is nearly exterminated for his fur, while there are literally no hawks, owls, minks, weasels, etc. I remember counting twenty-two skunk tracks that crossed the road one night after a light fall of snow in going about half a mile to school. The skunk enters the holes of chucks and kills and eats the young, and in his nocturnal wanderings finds the nests of young rabbits, destroys them and also any amount of bumblebee nests for the honey.

The white grub is I think the worst of all pests at present, and is increasing in sandy and loamy soils, and works on nearly everything the farmer raises. Some wheat fields have been entirely destroyed by the pests, but their worst havoc is in potatoes, corn and all kinds of roots, strawberries, raspberries and the grasses. Out of 500 bushels of my own potatoes last season at least one-third have been rendered unmarketable on account of the grubworms, and about the same proportion of my corn, and in 1890 five acres of corn were destroyed by their eating off the roots, hundreds of hills not reaching a height of eighteen inches. By digging into these hills I could get from one to half a dozen grubs to the hill. Besides, I have lost hundreds of raspberry and blackberry plants by their eating the bark from the roots. The damage done by these pests every year amounts to millions of dollars in Michigan alone, and it has long been known that the skunk is the most common enemy of the nuisances by digging them out of the ground during its nocturnal wanderings. Now are we to allow this little animal—one of the best of our friends—to become exterminated just because he happens to have some soft fur that the ladies want to wear? Woodchucks are terrible pests in all sandy or hilly portions of the country. Even my hired men and almost every boy know that the skunk ought to live for the good he can do in the above ways, and that he ought to be protected by the imposition of a five or ten dollar fine for the killing of each one. The skunk goes into the woodchuck hole or stays there through the day, and goes forth in the night and destroys insect life. He works all night, and is entirely harmless, except that he will sometimes get a chicken or two from the shiftless farmer, but this loss can be avoided.

How Often Should Corn Be Cultivated?

Thirty plats were devoted last season to the answering of this question at the Kansas station. The experiment was divided into two series of fifteen plats each. Series A had five plats cultivated twice a week, five plats once a week and five plats once in two weeks. The three five plat groups in series B were cultivated, respectively, two, four and six times during the season. The implement used was a spring tooth cultivator that gave shallow culture and could be run close to the plants without disturbing the roots. The land was clay loam.

A uniformity in yield in the plats under similar treatment, in both series, is noted in the report of results. But what is still more interesting is that the highest yields attained in both series, when cultivated once in two weeks and when cultivated four times during the season, is the result of what is practically the same amount of cultivation. Though the culture did not occur on the same dates for both sets, the plats culti-

vated once in two weeks were also gone over four times. This experiment also seemed to prove that, in a wet season like the last, and on soil of the character here employed, it is possible to give corn both too much and too little culture. The latter case is readily conceded by everybody, but that the ground can be stirred too often will probably not meet with so universal assent. Nor is it probable that the mere stirring of the surface is in itself injurious, if the soil is not too wet when worked; but the greater the number of times the cultivator runs through the rows the greater are the number of chances that the roots on some plants will be injured, and also that now and then a leaning stalk will be broken by the team in spite of the care exercised by the plowman, and the director attributes the diminished yield of the plats subject to frequent cultivation to these causes rather than to the mere stirring of the soil.

Leaf Spot of Timothy.

This disease forms black smutty lines in the leaves of timothy and other grasses, which are finally reduced to shreds covered with dusty spores. Draining the soil well, transferring the crops to new land when they have begun to smut badly and exercising care with respect to manure are preventive measures.

To Rid Poultry of Lice.

Kerosene ointment is often recommended in the poultry journals as a remedy for lice. As many readers do not know just what kerosene ointment is, we give the following abstract from a report of the Michigan state board of agriculture:

Kerosene ointment may be made by simply mixing kerosene and lard or butter, kerosene and sulphur. This ointment is excellent to rid poultry of lice. It should be kept in a closed can in a poultry house, and in the summer the roost poles should often be rubbed with the ointment. An old rubber or leather glove makes this an easy and not unpleasant task. After the poultry are on the roosts some of this ointment should be placed under the wings, about the breast and legs, once in four or five weeks in the late summer. If, in addition to this, you frequently spray the house and yard when the fowls are out with diluted crude carbolic acid, and whitewash the house once a year, you will not only have a neat house but healthy birds, if the other requisites are provided. Chickens ought to be a very profitable adjunct to every farm and will be if the above suggestions are carried out and the birds well housed and fed.

Things Said and Done.

The general drift of opinion lately expressed appears to be that the practice of harrowing corn, both before and after it is up, is increasing in popularity.

Professor Roberts comments the plan of using land plaster in stables instead of spreading it directly on the clover. The plaster is just as effective in the clover field, and it has arrested much that would otherwise have been lost in the stable manure.

A company has been organized in New Jersey for making cranberries into jam and canning them.

"Society of the Friends of Trees" is the name of an organization in France, its object being the restoration of the forests.

The New England Homestead suggests that animals awarded first premiums at our agricultural fairs should be placed on a platform, and judges made to give their reasons for such action to the public. This is what ex-Governor Hoard, of Wisconsin, advocated at some of the Farmers' institutes last winter.

A hop picking machine has been invented in Australia.

The largest ranch devoted to blooded horses is said to be at Greeley, Colo., where there is a grass range of over 8,000 acres.

She Can Farm.

Connecticut farmers, who continually bemoan that the old state is used up for farming, may learn something to their advantage by consulting pretty Miss Bertha E. Weed, who makes money tilling a tough little farm in the town of North Canton. Miss Weed superintends all the operations on her place, is up with the sun every day, raises stock, sells milk and butter and has a big yard full of some of the best fowls in the state. What is still more wonderful, she has learned how to make money in the risky business of raising spring chickens for market. She makes a small fortune yearly selling eggs. Some of them are extraordinarily large. She presented a couple of them to the editor of the Hartford Courant this week. They weighed half a pound apiece, and are the biggest hens' eggs reported in the state this season.—New York Sun.

Matters Religious.

GOD'S RAYS OF COMFORT.

No Sorrow Comes Without Its Attendant Solace.

Let us look out for God's rays of comfort. There is never a sorrow without its attendant comfort. Only we are so often so deeply engrossed and exercised with the sorrow that we miss the solace. We are so downcast that we do not see the angel form waiting by our side. We are too monopolized by grief to be aware of aught beside, and so the light fades from the landscape unobserved, and the sweet singer who had come to cheer us steals unnoticed out of our homestead for want of a word of recognition and a look of grateful acknowledgment.

It is sometimes a mystery why we should be troubled as we are. Why is every chord of sorrow struck within us? Why do we suffer on so many sides of our nature? Why are we touched in the property, which melts before our gaze; and in the home, which becomes darkened by death; and in the person, the body suffering, the heart lacerated and torn? Some go through life without all this. But they are not the noblest characters. No master composer in music or poetry can touch the heart of humanity without having suffered first. But there is a yet deeper reason. Some of us are permitted to pass through all kinds of tribulation, that God may have the chance of comforting us, and that we may learn the divine art of comfort, so as to "be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, with the comfort wherewith we ourselves have been comforted of God."

Shall not this thought comfort us when we next pass through any sorrow? The one thing in sorrow which makes it sometimes almost unbearable is its apparent aimlessness. Why am I made to suffer thus? What have I done? Hush, impatient spirit! thou art in God's school of sorrow for a special purpose. Be careful to notice how he comforts thee. Watch his methods. See how he wraps up the broken spirit with touch so tender and bandage so accurately adjusted. Remember each text which he suggests; put them down so as not to be forgotten; there will come a time in your life when you will be called upon to comfort another afflicted just as you are.—F. B. Myer in "Present Tenses of Blessed Life."

The Dear Old Hymns.

The choirs they have in churches now can sing in wondrous style; they read the music all by note, the organ sounds the while. The hymns are somewhat new to me, but I'm behind the times, and sort of love the ancient hymns, the good old fashioned rhymes, with simple music folks could learn without a week of drill, the kind that doesn't strain your voice with quiver, slide and trill; I like the hymn we used to sing for pure religion's sake, when all the congregation joined and made the building shake:

Lord, a little band and lowly,
We have come to sing to thee,
Thou art great and high and holy,
O how solemn we should be.

And when I hear the modern choir sing words I do not know, the dear old hymns I used to sing come back from long ago; the words go trooping through my mind, the tunes are just as plain as though the folks who sang them once were singing them again; and I forget about the choir, with hymns all strange and new, and seem to stand, a boy again, in Elder Johnson's pew; and hear the voices rise and fall, and join in, with my own, the song that rolls along the church and echoes at the throne:

Fill our hearts with thoughts of Jesus,
And of heaven where he's gone,
And let nothing ever please us
He would grieve to look upon.

The choir does all the singing now, with music strange and queer; the folks have nothing else to do but hold their books and hear; and if the spirit moves to sing the spirit is suppressed, because the only tunes we know won't mingle with the rest; and while I like to hear the choir I'd like it better still if all should sing "Just as I Am" or "Cool Sioam's Rill;" if all the people in the pews, who come to pray and praise, should upward turn their eyes and sing the hymn of other days:

For we know the Lord of glory
Always sees what children do,
And is writing now the story
Of our thoughts and actions too.
—Walt Mason in Fremont Tribune.

Christ's Promises.

If we cannot rest ourselves on divine promises we may perhaps find the reason in the defective character of our obedience. Christ's promises are made to the obedient. "If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you." It is as we strive to follow Christ's will that we shall find the "peace which passeth all understanding."—Christian Inquirer.

Much in Little.
The nurse of full grown souls is Solitude.—Lowell.

He that will often place this world and the next before him and look steadfastly at both will find the latter constantly growing greater and the former less to his view.

Adam began ruin by eating; Christ redemption by fasting.—St. Jerome.

Thousands come to me for help. How foolish! Why not go to God. It was he who said, "Fear not, I will help thee," and behind the promise was the strength of omnipotence.—Christian Herald.

I have lived to see every one of my most cherished hopes one after another disappointed, and to see that it was better so.—Alexander Mackay, of Uganda.

Unbelief is departure from the living God. How simple is this! So long as you trust God you are near him. The moment you doubt him your soul has departed into a strange country. Faith is the link between God's fullness and strength and our emptiness and weakness.—Dr. Saphir.

Though the persons who approached our Lord manifested a variety of different virtues, yet faith is the only grace which he is wont to commend.—Bengel.

We must soar beyond the clouds if we would see the silver linings or live beyond life's storms.

Thoughts.

Maybe the kiss of the world has left blisters of sorrow on your lip and life; well, let me give the cure, the same as others have tried with success. The balm of Gilead, the love of Jesus and grace of God. I've been watching of late the effects of God's remedy on broken hearts and lives, and so sweet has been the outcome that I want you to try it.—Christian Herald.

Why should I start at the plow of my Lord, that maketh deep furrows on my soul? I know he is no idle husbandman; he purposeth a crop.—S. Rutherford.

We have renounced reason as our instructor in the knowledge of religious truth. We have done it the highest honor, when we sought, as it commands us, a more authoritative and surer guide.—Rev. A. L. Gordon.

We often hear Christian persons complain that they cannot love the Saviour. That is a common complaint, but there is one easy cure for it. The more you live with Christ the better you love him.—C. H. Spurgeon.

How great is God, who can understand even the most bittered and soured disposition, to which no human being can find the key, and although it is no longer in relations of love to any one, can yet bring it into relations of love and confidence to himself.—Rothe.

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