THE SONG OF THE BIRD

AN IDYL OF SCOW-DWELLERS ON THE WILLAMETTE

BY ALMA A. ROGERS

I.

THE news had been celebrated in Scowtown with all the ceremonial befitting its importance. Lighte had burned late in the long gray-painted houseboat of the Flinnegans. The noise of the revels, dipping across the watery dooryards, had checkered the slumbers of that portion of the community not included in the rejoicings.

When Turilla Dale stood before her ironing-board at the usual hour, two or three solitary twists of smoke were rising sleepily from as many chimneys.

"Guess they must 'a' spread theirselves last night," said Turilla as she put her finger to her lips and tested the sizzling iron by its moist surface. "I s'pose Crypty Mullet'll be makin' her weddin' clothes in a hurry, an' as for Nora Flinnegan, Scowtown won't be big enough to hold her. The piazzy and the lace curtains 'most turned her head before Tim went away, an' now I s'pose she'll be out in her sealskin. Well, I don't want to be repining' at Providence, but it do seem's if you can't see any reason for them as has luck an' them as has none."

Turilla pushed her iron in swift silence. Soon her feelings stirred beyond repression.

"My old gran'pop used to say that them as has gits," she burst forth, "An' I guess it's so.

"Now, there's 'Liphalet Harkins. Didn't he work like a slave at the fishin', an' scrimp hisself so's he sca'cely had enough to eat, tryin' to git money to buy him a outfit? An' when he'd jugged it all the way what does he do but lose it in them White Horse Rapids, an' the rest of the crowd never loses as much as a tin pail. An' there's Tim Flinnegan ownin' the biggest house in the place, an' they do say with money snug in the bank, an' along comes a man an' offers to grubstake him for half an' pay all expenses, an' no resk to him! An' the first lick he strikes it rich, but 'Liphalet comes back poorer an' older by ten years than when he started."

As Turilla turned to change irons she almost jumped at the face which looked back at her from the tiny mirror on the wall.

"Why," she said apologetically, "I guess I must be cross this mornin'. I ain't envyin' any of 'em, but I jest can't understand how 'tis sometimes. Now, if I had a mite o' Tim's luck I'd git them gold teeth I've wanted so many year." She laughed plaintively at the reflection of three spaces in her upper jaw, which, alternating with the remaining teeth, gave a curious resemblance to a checkerboard.

The fog wreaths lying low above the river misted out before the winking rays of the sun. A group of women, slatternly as to hair and gown, gathered on the sandy shore which rimmed the water limit. Fringes of tousled children wavered upon its edge, briskly shying pebbles at the white-winged gulls, or performing feats of skill on the narrow planks which connected the floating houses with the solid earth. Occasionally a child, more prying than the rest, would hang open-mouthed at its mother's skirts, while Nora Flinnegan recounted the story of her husband's luck in the Klondike.

Laden with her basket of fresh-smelling linen, Turilla Dale approached the shore. The quick eyes of Mrs. Flinnegan sighted her.

"An' why wasn't ye over last night, I'd like to know, Mis' Dale?" hailed Nora. "Sure, 'twas a joyful wake we made of it!"

"Indeed, Mis' Flinnegan, I was that beat out at the tubs that I couldn't do no more than roll into bed an' lay there. But I'm glad your man got through safe an' come back with a fortin." With which excuse Turilla carefully picked her way among the stones and pieces of driftwood which covered the bank.

The Mullet scow might properly be termed suburban in the proportions of this watery settlement. It was painted a vivid yellow, with marvelous blue trimmings, a combination so vigorously suggestive of sun and sky that it made the eyes ache. Through the open window as she passed Turilla could see Crypty at work at the sewing machine. Closely opposite, leaning an arm on the leaf, sat young Ned Guscom, watching the white breadths under the whizzing needle take the shape of the wedding gown.

Ned had been Flinnegan's partner. Though grubstaked on less favorable terms, he had returned with enough to set up housekeeping in good style. At the moment, he was telling Crypty of a certain fish-wheel which he had his eye on, and in which he meant to invest the bulk of his capital.

"I declare, Crypty, I used to see that fish-wheel in my dreams when I lay swathed up in my sleeping-bag on the Pelly River, and the cold so bad that my breath froze in big icicles on the fur. It was turning faster than you'll ever see on the Columbia, and, by ginger, if every one of them troughs wasn't full of chinooks—none of your steelheads or silversides, like I'd seen sometimes, but 60 and 70-pounders, and every one of them a-plunging like six!"

"Did that bring you luck?" Crypty was basting now.

"No; I ain't one to believe in dreams, and I'd hankered after that thing so long no wonder I'd got wheels in my head. It was more than three months after that when the diggings on Klootsch Creek was struck, and you bet we didn't let no grass grow under our feet getting there. I put by the first nugget I found for a ring and ear-bobs for you." The young man took from his vest pocket an irregular yellow mass and laid it in the girl's hand.

"Say, Crypty," he continued, "I don't believe I ever rightly knew your full name, and I must be looking after the license soon."

Crypty was in the act of biting off her thread, but she stopped and laughed.

"Ma, Ned wants to know about my name," she called through the open doorway.

A stout woman with a lump of dough in her hands came to the threshold.

"Why," she began, molding the loaf as she spoke, "I never was any hand for old-fashioned names. My name's Jemima Ann, an' I always hated it like pi'son. So when my baby come along I made up my mind they wasn't goin' to fasten any old wore-out tags on her. One day I was passin' a second-hand bookstore, an' I stopped to look in. I ain't any hand for readin' books, but I do love to see the covers of 'em, an' that's why you see them yonder." She pointed to a long row of imitation volumes in red and black pasteboard, and ornamented with spreading gilt titles, which hung on a swinging shelf against the wall. "So I picked up one with queer marks all over it, gemmetric figgers, the man called 'em, an' it spelt out C-r-y-p-t-o-g-r-a-m. Somehow them figgers just 'minded me of Crypty, for she was the squarest baby I ever see, though she's spun out considerable since. Now, thinks I, here's a name that none o' the neighbors or relations can ever dream of matchin', an' so I just up an' named her on the spot."

Mrs. Mullet joined good-naturedly in the young man's laughter, while Crypty's dimples chased her blushes in a way as difficult to match as her name.

Meanwhile Turilla had delivered her parcel. On her way back she took a cross-path which cut the numerous vacant blocks in the suburb of Irvington. Wild ferns brushed her knees, the Oregon grape thrust up stiff clusters of its glossy spikes, the salal and brake and huckleberry made a dense carpet for the fertile earth. At intervals the coral sprays of the wild currant glowed like a June sunrise. Patches of pussy-willow and the graceful tasselwood were vibrant with whirring wings. Occasionally a majestic fir rose straight as an arrow for a hundred or two hundred feet, a solitary reminder of the dense forest which clothed this tract before the city's invasion.

Clouds soft as thistledown floated tranquilly in the deep blue zenith. Beaded grasses nodded to waxen trillium and flaunting dandelion. Tiny blooms of white and pink and yellow starred Turilla's feet on either side. As if to add the full perfection of scent and color, great clumps of sweetbrier spiced the air with the aroma of leaf and flower.

The path led near a small church, where the sweetbrier grew in profusion to the very doors. Turilla threw herself down in the shade of the largest clump. She was little and sallow and wizened, and the toil that had seamed her face and streaked her hair had not tended to keep her heartbeats in rhythm with nature. But even a clod would have wakened on such a morning, and Turilla was no clod.

A liquid note rose blithely into the clear heavens. Again it bubbled forth, pure, fresh and sparkling as sunlit dew, a sound so riotous with the mere joy of existence that it fell like a benediction on Turilla's tired soul. She turned eagerly to the sound; the lines of care loosened and her face took on the peaceful look of a satisfied child.

The bird stood upon the topmost bough of a young fir tree. His color was a speckled brown, and his shape was not beautiful. His beak was long, and he was lacking in tail. But the song! He sang it over and over again, not one whit afraid that he should fail in his vocalizing. Always he seemed to say: "Oh, hear me! Life is joy—life is joy!" Sometimes he sang it in common meter as a hymn and again he trilled the last notes like a high soprano.

At last Turilla became conscious of another sound. This time it was a human voice, and it proceeded from the little, old, plaster-covered church. She caught the words as they floated out on simple melody through the open window:

"If I were a voice, a persuasive voice,
I would travel the whole world through,
I would rise on the beam of the morning gleam,
And tell men to be true."

Long before the singer had ended tears were trickling down Turilla's sallow cheeks; not sad tears, but cleansing, washing clear the disappointments and pains of her hard life, and softening her soul to the subtle touch of hope.

The strains floated on. Then, by some strange subjective alchemy, the song of the singer and the carol of the bird became transfused in her half-conscious mind, never after to be separated. "O, be true," sang the voice—"For life is joy!" caroled the bird. "Life is joy!"

The singer had gone, the bird preened his wing and soared aloft, but still Turilla's thoughts beat in rhythmic dreaming to the message, and still she sat within her bower.

II.

Turilla took great sprays of sweetbrier from her basket and disposed them about her tiny house. As she stepped to the back porch to renew her supply of water from the cask, she saw Eliphalet Harkins sitting at his door, looking aimlessly over the river. The sleeves of his worn flannel shirt were rolled up to the elbows of his muscular arms. The buttons were missing from the neckband, exposing a brawny chest. His trousers were hitched up by a broken suspender knotted together, and a nail took the place of a button. He looked inexpressibly forlorn and desolate.

Turilla's heart was still thrilling with the song of the bird. She grasped a bunch of sweetbrier and held it out to him over the rail of the porch.

"Seems to me I never smelt wild roses as sweet as this. I thought you might like to have some, Mr. Harkins; you seem kind o' lonely like," she said as he waded across the intervening space in his high fisherman's boots.

"That's mighty purty, Miss Dale, 'an' I'm much obleeged," he responded.

"I s'pose you come near bein' homesick up in that freezin' country sometimes," said Turilla, by way of conversation.

"Wall, neow, ye're about right, Miss Dale. I reckon I ben't jest over it yit. I s'pose you've heerd as how I didn't hev no luck, an' it makes a feller feel kind o' down in the mouth to set an' think on't."

The first exchange of courtesies over, it was easier for Eliphalet to forego his fear of womankind. Often in the warm twilights he and his neighbor talked across the waterway, but he never ventured to approach nearer.

A week after the return of the argonauts, Ned Guscom and Crypty Mullet were married. Ned fitted up a brand-new houseboat, which he anchored beneath a beetling cliff of the mighty Columbia; and here, beside the fishwheel, the young couple set up their family altars.

The Flinnegans shook the drippings of Scowtown from their feet, and became domiciled in a two-story house with an attic, which, as Mrs. Flinnegan said, was "fine for dryin' clothes in the rainy season."

The house was decorated from peak to foundation with gewgaws which were the delight of the owners. Rising from the hall was a tower or observatory which looked like nothing so much as an inverted turnip. Whether the original builder affected Byzantine architecture or was possessed, so to speak, of a vegetable fancy, would be impossible to say. At any rate, the place was slyly styled "The Turnip House" by less fortunate friends.

As Mrs. Timothy Flinnegan, arrayed in an electric seal jacket ornamented with voluminous heads and tails swept her tailored skirts over the filthy pavement after the manner of certain fashionable folk, her capacious bosom swelled with pride and satisfaction. But when she alighted from the trolley car at her own gate and surveyed the gewgaws, the fresh paint and the shrubbery of the tiny lawn cut into marvelous shapes of bird and beast, her cup of joy knew no dregs.

Eliphalet Harkins turned back to his old trade, and for some months his scow was vacant. At the beginning of the close season he brought his fishing-gear into Winter quarters, and employed himself cruising in his stout rowboat for driftlogs, which supplied the Winter fuel of Scowtown.

"Seems like ye're lookin' peart as a gal, Turilly," he said one Sunday shortly after his return, as the two started out for a stroll. "I didn't sense it at fust, for I never see sech a change."

It was quite true. Turilla's faded brown eyes shone with a look of peace. Her wiry little body seemed to have rounded out its angles. Somehow, since that morning under the sweetbrier, it had all been different.

"La, 'Liphalet, I guess it's because I've got my new teeth!"

Turilla laughed happily. The little mirror on her wall reflected many beaming glances cast upon those three beautiful gold teeth. A dentist had broken the law of his cult, and begun to advertise. She had heard of it, and had taken advantage of a special offer at almost nominal rates.

Now her checkerboard smile was no more; or, if the fancy still held, it was a checkerboard in white and gold.

Turilla guided Eliphalet's steps to the path of happy memory. Many times her feet had trodden it alone, even stopping for service in the little church, where the young minister had given her cordial greeting. The rose petals had long since fallen, and in their places were great clusters of scarlet hips. The ferns and grasses were brown and dusty, and on its green stem the goldenrod was preparing a requiem to Summer. The larks, too, were busy with their broods and no note was heard. But in Turilla's heart the bird sang on as ever.

III.

Eliphalet and Turilla sat hand in hand on the stoop of the little scow.

It was all settled now. They had decided that it was not too late.

"Ye see, Turilly," he was saying, "I done fust-rate with the fishin' this season, though I was late gittin' started. An' now Ned Guscom's gone an' offered me a job steady helpin' him with his fishwheel, I'll jest build a new boat this Winter, an' next Spring we'll move her up to the fishin' grounds. An' I vum, Turilly," he added, suddenly bringing his free hand down upon his knee, "sence you're so set on them birds, we'll name her the Lark's Nest, an' I'll paint it on in big letters." He rubbed his shaggy head in gleeful astonishment at the brilliance of his idea. "There's no end o' medder larks an' all kinds o' birds an' bresh up thar, an' I guess ye kin take it easy fer a spell, little woman!"

Turilla's toil-marked fingers rested in Eliphalet's horny palm for a long time. Then she broke the silence.

"It's a real Thanksgiving day, 'Liphalet."

The period with which Eliphalet closed this sentence could be heard over the quiet water to the fourth scow.—The Munsey for June.

UNCLE SAM WILL GIVE AWAY SILKWORMS

ANY ONE WHO WISHES TO EXPERIMENT WITH THEM HAS THE OPPORTUNITY NOW

WASHINGTON, June 1.—(Special Correspondence.)—The genial Secretary of Agriculture, or "Farmer" Wilson, as he is familiarly known to his large constituency, has determined that every "rustic" in the United States who cares to do so can indulge in silk culture at the expense of Uncle Samuel, who each year furnishes to his nephews and nieces throughout this broad land seeds a-plenty and in great variety for planting their gardens with flowers and vegetables.

Through Dr. L. O. Howard, chief of the division of entomology of the Agricultural Department, Secretary Wilson has conducted a thorough investigation of the silk industry of the world, and the result has proved very clearly to him that silk can be raised to advantage on the farms of the United States, and he is determined to try the experiment on a large scale.

To this end the breeding of silk worms for distribution to those who cared to ask for them and who promised to engage in the industry, on a small or even a large scale, was begun sometime ago under Dr. Howard's direction, in a special building, at the Agricultural Department in this city. The breeding experiment has been found to be a great success, and there are now thousands of the wriggling worms almost in condition for propagating purposes. No worms will be sent out until the first of September, when it is expected that at the rate of increase now shown there will be millions for distribution to such as care to ask for them and who demonstrate satisfactorily to the department that the worms will receive proper care and attention.

Secretary Wilson in speaking of his proposed plan said that "silk culture requires a smaller outlay of capital than almost any other industry. The net gain the first year may pay for an outfit which will last for many years. The following articles are indispensable in going into the industry properly:

Some very light movable shelves, open to air, for the first ages; and for the following ages, latticed shelves about 3½ feet wide, and stands to support them.

Unsized ordinary wrapping paper, or newspaper to cover the shelves.

A small ladder, if necessary, to reach high shelves.

Small trays to remove worms.

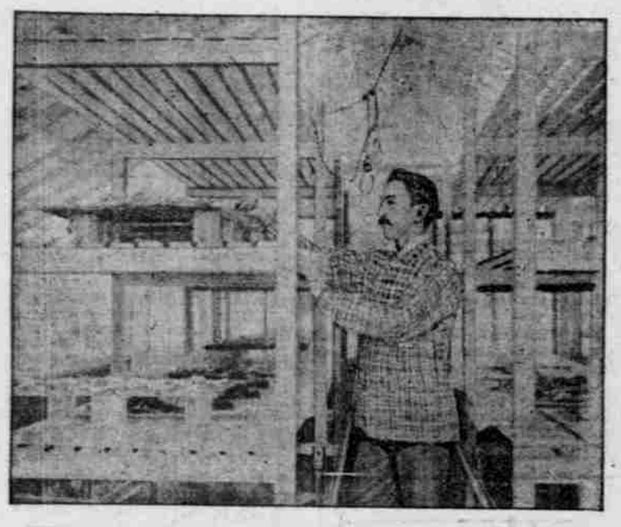
Knives to cut leaves and baskets to distribute them.

Coarse tulle and nets or perforated paper for changing beds and equalizing the worms.

A supply of brush, straw, or shavings to construct the spinning place.

A thermometer.

Wire, twine, laths, or canes are suitable for the lattice work of the shelves. Make the space between the shelves about 14 inches. If possible, do not arrange the shelves along the wall and allow a good passage between the tiers of shelves."



HOUSE AND APPARATUS FOR THE CULTURE OF SILKWORMS.

Secretary Wilson wishes the farmers who desire to take advantage of the offer of the department to supply the basis for silk culture to become familiar with the work of propagating before the receipt of the worms. For this purpose he says:

"The place chosen for a rearing should be relatively high, and not exposed to malaria or bad odors, and mulberry trees should grow around it. Any room that can be properly heated and ventilated will answer the purpose. An open fireplace is the best means of heating, but is expensive, as much of the heat is lost. Hot-water pipes, such as are used to heat a greenhouse, are good for a building specially built for silkworm rearing. Iron stoves should not be used, unless placed in an adjoining room with communicating pipes. Never employ charcoal as fuel.

"The domesticated worm should be surrounded continually by pure air. Hence, it is evident that the quantity of vitiated air which should be expelled from the room requires the introduction of a large quantity of fresh air. For this, a double system of ventilation is necessary, which may be obtained by double openings in the windows, to allow the heated bad air to pass out above and the cool, fresh air to come in below. To renew the air in every part of the room, and to avoid a single and often violent current, there should be more than one window. An open fireplace is the best means of ventilation.

"Eight or ten days before introducing the worms into their quarters all the shelves and implements should be washed in a solution of chloride of lime, or in a solution of sulphate of copper. When everything is in order—tools, perforated paper, material for the worms to spin their cocoons on, etc., each in its own room—close the doors and windows as tightly as possible and fumigate the rooms with sulphur. Twenty-four hours after the fumigation the floors should be washed with a solution of chloride of lime or sulphate of copper, and the walls should be whitewashed with lime.

"The worms from one ounce of eggs should cover at birth one square yard. Doubling this space on the fourth day, they would require two yards square, and at their change of beds after molting, four square yards. The more space that is accorded to the worms in their first stages the more robust they will be, and if the space can be tripled instead of doubled, so much the better.

"Having adopted hours for feeding, these should be adhered to throughout the rearing. When four meals are given, the best hours are 5 to 6 A. M., 10 to noon, 3 to 6 P. M. and 9 to 11 P. M.

"A considerable loss may occur in the spinning place, even when the rearing has been most successful. To avoid such loss observe the following precautions: Prepare the spinning place in time; arrange it so that the worms may regularly mount and have abundant room; have it well made, yet economical; and regulate the heat and ventilate the room.

"Any convenient dry, bushy brush, odorless and free from gum, will serve to construct the spinning place; or if such is not available, bundles of straw, or shavings, or finely-split-up wood may be substituted. The best and most economical arrangement is small bundles of brush or straw placed upright between the feeding shelves, in rows, about 16 inches apart. If the worms are equally developed, in 30 or 40 hours they will be shut up in their cocoons. The few that remain behind should be placed elsewhere; fed with fresh leaf on clean beds, they will soon catch up with the others.

"The department will send out full and complete directions, before the shipment of the worms, in order that those who will handle them may make the best of the proposition and the department may get the benefit of the experiments."

Crane Town in Indiana.

Indianapolis News.

In a large grove of elm and sycamore trees, at the head of English Lake, in Starke County, thousands of blue cranes have for years made their nests and reared their young. There is much clamor and contention among the birds in choosing nesting places, and they give little attention to people who come into the woods. They build their nests after the manner of a stork, sitting astride of them with their legs hanging down.

The cranes seem to have a rule of action and a code of signals. Only about one-fourth of the birds are away from the woods at a time, those remaining in the trees keeping close watch for hawks, crows and eagles. The approach of any of these enemies is announced by a "hawk" which causes the entire flock of cranes to sally forth in an attack. Although awkward and slow to fight, if they once surround an enemy they make short work of him.

MIRAGES OF THE OREGON DESERT

Deceptive and Beautiful Effects Observed in Crossing Inland Empire Plains.

MANY people are under the impression that mirages are only seen on the great Desert of Sahara. People of Oregon do not generally know these phenomena are seen on the Oregon "desert," says a correspondent of the Lakeview Examiner. It is a fact, however, and some of the most deceptive and most beautiful effects are seen while crossing the plains of the great Inland Empire. They may be seen on many points on the desert, but they are only known to be mirages in many instances by those who are acquainted with the particular locality. The most common form of mirage on the Oregon desert is the change in the appearance of landmarks, both as to shape and distance. The stranger mistakes them for actual conditions, while the citizen has long known the landmarks, and when the atmospheric conditions change them he is quick to detect it and call attention to it. There are also cases in which extraordinary mirages have appeared, and in which the old-time trapper and stockman have been deceived, but they are rare.

In Harney Valley.

Some of the most beautiful effects are seen in Harney Valley, in Harney County. Harney Lake, one of the prettiest bodies of water in the state, will appear one day to be only a few miles distant, when in fact it is 20 or more miles away. Mountains change their appearance, and while one day they look to be only a few miles away, on another they appear to be many miles distant. Then they change their appearance in shape. A range of mountains lying off to the east of Burns furnishes a diversion in the way of sight-seeing to the citizens. Although the range stretches across the entire eastern portion of the valley, yet on some occasions it does not seem to be half so long as usual, and at times they appear to be cut in two in the middle or at some other point in the range.

Distant Mountains.

"Do you see that wide opening through that range of mountains?" inquired William Handley, a prominent stockman, near Burns, one morning.

"Yea, what of it?" was the answer, for a breach at least a quarter of a mile wide appears in the range. The mountains are several hundred feet in altitude at this point, and the breach appears to be as distinct as if it had been chiseled out. The walls at either end of the breach were as straight as a die, and they appeared to be one of Nature's prettiest demonstrations of her work.

"There is no opening at all through the mountains there," said Mr. Handley. "They are just as solid there as they are to the right and left of the place where there appears to be a breach."

"You are not serious, Mr. Handley?" was suggested.

"Sure!" was the reply.

"Well, how do you account for it?"

"It's a mirage," replied the stockman.

It was early in the morning, and the stranger was requested to look over that way in the afternoon and he would be convinced.

Sure enough, by the middle of the day the breach had disappeared, and the range was once more solid clear across the eastern border of the valley. At another time the breach will appear at another point in the range, but the effects are so real that none except those who are familiar with the country would know that it was only a mirage.

The most beautiful effects are visible at sunrise. At this time one may see many effects which, if one will watch, will be seen to disappear in regular order as the sun rises and throws on a different light. Then they appear again often with a different effect at sunset and some most remarkable spectacles have been seen on a clear night. Animals on the desert have appeared to those familiar with them to be of more than ten times their size and the most experienced have been dumbfounded by this phenomenon.

Winter on the Desert.

In company with a Lake County trapper I experienced a most remarkable case of the latter kind. We were traveling in a buckboard on the Winter range in the mid-desert. The surrounding mountains were all covered with snow and this as a background gave a peculiar brightness to the light both by day and night. The section we were in was void of inhabitants. Coyotes, sage hens and antelope were plentiful, and I kept up a constant warfare on the sage hens and antelope—that is, when we came close enough to the latter to get a shot.

In making a roundabout trip on the desert in mid-Winter we often had to make long drives to reach sheep camps or supply points. On the Oregon desert, where the sheepmen spend the Winter, they have established supply houses—mere cabins or shacks, at a day's travel apart—which are for common use. The trapper and I had spent several days at the foot of Mount Juniper, nearly 100 miles from the nearest human habitation, in company with two men who had a vast herd of sheep. The trapper had been busy in the canyons and gulches and had a number of coyote, wildcat and marten hides as a result, while I had been busy supplying the camp with sage hens, and had brought down one antelope.

From Camp Juniper we started early one morning for Windy Hollow, a distance of 50 miles. The roads were rough. At one point the trail lay through a wide stretch of lava beds and we were several hours making the distance of five miles. It was known that we were in a great antelope country, but luck had been against us during the day, and we had not seen one of those much coveted animals, though "sign" was abundant. Night came on while we were still several miles from our destination but we were compelled to drive on in order to obtain water for ourselves and the horses.

It must have been at least 10 o'clock. The stars were shining brightly and the clear, crispy, cold evening gave everything an exaggerated appearance and made the slightest noise much louder than under ordinary circumstances. The myriad of coyotes that were following and howling in the distance sounded like a thousand demons.

Antelope.

We had driven some distance in silence, each buttoning his coat to keep out the chill night air, and each carrying a repeating rifle across his lap from force of habit, while in that country. Suddenly the horses shied, and the trapper, who was driving, threw the brake and drew the reins. At the same time he nudged me in the side and said in a low breath:

"Antelope!"

We had been watching for them all day and I immediately scanned the country about us. But I was kept searching for them but an instant. To the left, and on my side of the vehicle, a great band of animals stood, not over 40 yards away, and they were moving restlessly about and nodding their heads up or down, just as antelopes do. I raised my rifle, a Marlin, loaded with powder and steel-jacketed cartridges, and took aim at the nearest one. Just as I was about to pull the trigger the trapper stopped me.

"Don't shoot yet!" he said in a whisper, "there may be a mistake. It might be sheep. Step down to the ground and walk toward them until you get closer—they won't run at night."

I eased down out of the seat greatly disappointed, for I was positive that they were antelope, and walked a few steps toward them and again raised my gun to my shoulder. Just as I was ready to pull the trigger, again came the warning from the trapper:

"Don't shoot unless you are certain!"

"I am sure," I replied.

"Then let 'em have it," he consented in a louder tone than before.

I raised my gun to my shoulder again, and as I did so the long line of animals disappeared as suddenly as though the earth had swallowed them up. I looked at the trapper and I saw from his silence and steadfast gaze in the direction where the animals had first appeared, that he, too, was surprised.

But in a minute the animals appeared again, though a little farther away this time, just as large and numerous as ever.

"Now, shoot!" hissed the trapper.

I again raised my gun to my shoulder and the objects disappeared as completely as before. Two or three times they did this in succession.

"Go nearer to them," said the trapper.

Holding the gun ready for action I started in a cautious walk toward the point where the animals were last seen. I walked for 100 yards and there was nothing in view except the level plain which lay out in front of me for miles. I was about to turn back when I stumbled into a large bunch of sage grass. As I did this a sage hen rose and sailed away, and another and another followed until a great flock had taken its flight.

Trapper Solves It.

It was a puzzler to the trapper, who had spent his life on the plains, but we were compelled to admit that our antelope were no more nor no less than a flock of the plains birds. And the horses had been as badly fooled as we, for we had driven through large flocks of the sage hens during the day they had never noticed them until they appeared in the specter-like form of an antelope that night.

"It was only a mir-ir-age," said the trapper after we had driven some distance in silence.

THE GREAT REFORMER.

UNSEEN HELPERS OF THE DAIRYMAN

Bacteria That Spoil Milk and Others That Help to Make Butter and Cheese.

BOSTON, June 1.—(Special Correspondence.)—How to keep milk sweet for the longest possible period is a problem that has interested housewives on a small and dairymen on a large scale ever since milk became a household necessity. Only within very recent years, however, has there been any visible hope that a way may yet be found to postpone souring for an indefinite period, without even the necessity of cold-storage. During these recent years the modern science of bacteriology has discovered the secret of this inconvenient phenomenon; the dairyman no longer blames the cow for producing a substance that will inevitably curdle, but curses a goodly number of bacteria that get into the milk afterward and sour it by the production of certain chemical changes.

These bacteria are so numerous that they have not yet been completely investigated, although the subject has been under careful investigation in many continental laboratories, and, on this side of the water, much has been already accomplished in the laboratories of Wesleyan University, the University of Wisconsin, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The bacteriologist and the dairyman really work hand in hand in the improvement of modern dairy products, for the bacteriologist is gradually finding the scientific why and wherefore of various methods that the dairyman have evolved through centuries of practical experience. But practical experience in the dairy has always given uneven results and the direct value of the new partnership lies in the gradual elimination of everything except the particular bacteria that are most kindly disposed toward the milk producer. A series of investigations of milk bacteria, for example, is to be carried on this Summer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology that may or may not enable the dairyman to offset the unfriendly efforts of the little micro-organisms that sour his milk, but will unquestionably add much to his knowledge of these same micro-organisms and therefore considerably advance the dairy business toward this much desired achievement.

Even with the general knowledge nowadays of the universal presence of these bacteria, many of them injurious to mankind but a greater number doing their work for his direct or indirect benefit, probably few persons outside the ranks of dairymen and bacteriologists realize how important they are in the marketing of milk and especially in its evolution into butter or cheese. There are, indeed, comparatively few bacteria in the milk until it reaches the air on its way from the cow to the milk pan. This little journey is long enough to admit a large number of micro-organisms and the milk itself is so excellent a place for their growth that they increase with marvelous rapidity. The dairyman finds in them a two-fold character; roughly speaking, they are a curse to the milk-seller and a blessing to the makers of cheese and butter. If no bacteria got into the milk it would probably remain sweet indefinitely, while, on the other hand, except for some of these same bacteria humanity would probably never have acquired its taste for bread and butter or its fondness for cheese sandwiches.

The relation, therefore, between the bacteriological laboratory and the modern dairyman has been of increasing importance ever since science discovered these wonderful little organisms and began to devise means of separating one kind from another and so studying their individual operations. And in no other industry has this partnership of scientific study and practical experience been of more importance than in the big modern dairies. Souring of milk, which had been long considered a normal property of the milk itself, has been proved to result from the action of many different kinds of bacteria, all of which convert the milk sugar in a pan of milk into lactic acid, which in turn imparts a sour taste to the milk and eventually makes it curdle. It was found that the more bacteria removed from milk by the careful processes of laboratory experiment the less likely was the milk to curdle. Other bacteria have been discovered that spoil the milk in various ways which had always been attributed by the dairyman to circumstances beyond their personal control. And the net result of the discoveries so far made have been practically to eliminate many of these bacteria by greater carefulness in the conditions under which the milk is produced.

It is a curious fact that whereas modern bacteriology is constantly busied with the problem of keeping the "bad" bacteria out of the milk that is intended to fill the world's milk pitchers, it is equally busy in studying and supplying the "good" bacteria that are absolutely necessary to perfect our butter and produce our after-dinner cheeses. Although butter can be made from cream without bacterial assistance, cheese would be an impossibility; and the butter that is not partly made by their action is very much like cream in taste and not at all like butter to the average palate.

Anybody who has had any acquaintance with a butter churn knows that cream, in order to produce the best tasting butter, must be "ripened"—in other words, long before bacteria had been discovered, the butter-maker used to set his cream aside and allow his unsuspected helpers to produce certain chemical changes in the cream before it was churned. These changes if carried too far spoil the cream but if stopped at the right hour vastly improve it for butter-making.

Scientific examination of this phenomenon discovered that it was bacterial action that produced these changes and discovered also a reason for the perplexing fact that the changes were not uniform. There are bacteria and bacteria and by a further examination of them the bacteriologists have found the best bacteria for the butter-maker, have found means to cultivate these particular dairyman's assistants in what are called "pure cultures," and these "pure cultures" are now used in butter-making in much the same fashion as prepared yeast, which is another result of bacterial assistance, is used in the bakery. Their use has developed during the last six years to such an extent that June butter, formerly obtained only in Spring and early Summer, is now produced by many dairymen straight through the season. The June butter of a decade ago, that is, was due to the presence of particular bacteria, not present earlier in the year, which have been captured and are now widely cultivated by expert bacteriologists.

What has been accomplished in the way of furnishing the proper bacteria for butter-making points naturally to the hope that the same thing may be accomplished in the processes of cheese manufacture. So far, however, although some advance has been made in the right direction this ideal condition has not been established, although the fact has been proven that the cheesemakers' bacterial allies are of even greater importance than those that assist the butter-makers. Just as different kinds of bacteria are the important factors in producing butter of various degrees of excellence, so are different bacteria undoubtedly responsible for the wide variety of cheeses. If it were possible to select and cultivate these different bacteria, it would follow that the production of each kind of cheese could be reduced to an almost mathematical science.

"The Dago."

Fred Emerson Brooks.

I am-a one Ital-i-an
People call-a me Da-go-man;
I lik-a liv U-ni-ted State,
Mak-a heap o' mon-a any rate;
Smok-a vera cheap-a ciga-ret,
Eat-a macaroni an' spaget';
I am-a descended from
Christoph' Colomb'!

I bring-a dis-a leetal monk
Ovair in dis-a leetal trunk;
Though-a vera homely one,
He help-a me mak-a da mon.
Irish man he call-a me,
Da leetal monkey pedigree;
Call-a da monk ancestor from
Christoph' Colomb'!

I drag piano through de town;
People throw me da nickel down;
I mak-a vera sweet-a bow
To servant gal, she mak-a row;
Call-a me da piano horse!
Say pian' so old, o'course
It was-a descended from
Christoph' Colomb'!

Beeg-a fool come avair day,
Ask-a where I learn to play;
Tell-a me I must-a be
Great-a lik-a Pad-a-ru-si-kee!
Small boy mak-a bad-a face;
Call-a me dat-a stumpy race—
Mis-fit-a descended from
Christoph' Colomb'!

Cable car he bump-a me,
Police-a-man he thump-a-me,
Truck-a-man upset-a me,
Sprinkle-a-man he wet-a me,
Fire-a-engine come-a dash,
Break da organ all-a smash!
Kill da monk descended from
Christoph' Colomb'!

"So you are a reformer, said the man who thinks before he votes. "I am." "Would you continue to be a reformer after you got office?"—Washington Star.

"Railroad took off his leg." "Yes, and so providential!" "Providential?" "That's what. It was the leg with the rheumatism in it!"—Atlanta Constitution.