

TIMELY NOTES ON TOPICS CONNECTED WITH Silver Fox and Mink Farming



Robert Mutch, Mount Herbert, has a freak pup—a pure white—sired by a white faced male and from a white faced female. This scientific appellation we understand, is Albino, as they are very rare. Some years ago, one was born in the ranch of Lowell W. Hancock, Summerside, but we are not sure whether it survived or not. While Albinos are so rare among foxes yet there is a pure or almost pure white type of mink that is being produced in quantities now and are meeting with a favorable reception at auctions.

The announcement of the Budget last Tuesday evening in the House of Commons by Finance Minister Abbott, will leave an aching void in the hearts of fox ranchers from one end of the Dominion to the other. It has been brought to Mr. Abbott's attention that the industry is in a serious condition and that only the most heroic remedial measures can restore it to prosperity. Naturally one of these would be the removal of the processing and sales taxes, then manufacturers and retailers would be encouraged to feature silver fox and its mutations which are without doubt the most beautiful of all furs and have been so regarded for half a century. In fact it is only 37 years since the late Charles Dalton sold 45 pelts at auction in London through C.M. Lampton & Co. and they averaged over \$1,300. per pelt with the top price \$540, which in that day amounted to over \$2,500.

In January, 1928, W. Chester S. Melrose and the writer were salaried purchasers of silver fox pelts for the Hudson's Bay Company of London, England, and during the months of November and December, 1927, had bought over \$200,000 worth. We were cabled early in January, 1928, to come over to London and price the pelts. We also took on consignment 60 pelts from Edgar Milligan and these with our own purchases made up the bulk of the company's offering. One of Edgar's pelts brought £250 (equal to over \$1,200.) and the entire lot averaged £65. One of our fur pelts brought £100 and three of them over £100. That was just 19 years ago and yet today we would be lucky to get an average of \$25.00 for silver fox pelts either in Canada or the United States.

It is not that the public have tired of them because only a small percentage of the women of Am-

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erica have ever bought silver fox although a great many have desired to own a scarf or cape. The fact of the matter is that both the governments of Canada and the United States allowed enormous quantities of outside furs to come in. In the United States it was \$238,000,000 worth last year and this does not include silver fox and mutation fox. \$97,000,000 worth of these imports came from Soviet Russia. In Canada it was also many millions of dollars worth.

The importers of these furs have used every means at their disposal to have them dressed, manufactured and sold, while nobody has concerned themselves particularly with featuring silver fox. The result was inevitable—a decline in popularity. The remedy for the situation would be to take off processing and sales tax on silver fox and mutations and possibly ranch mink as well—although ranch mink is allowed free entry into the United States where there is a good market for it—and to send out trade ambassadors to the manufacturers and retailers asking them for patriotic purposes to feature silver fox and to show how its possession was possible for a much smaller price than ever before. At the same time the bars should be put up against foreign furs, for after all the strongest trait in the human race is protection of its own family.

We have been looking forward to the Norwegian auctions as an indication of the trend of silver fox and mutation pelts in Europe. The big Spring auctions opened at Oslo on April 20th and 41 per cent of the mink offered sold, the average price being the Norwegian kroner equal to \$19.40, 45 per cent of the blue fox sold at an average of 152 kroner—equal to \$30.40. The highest price paid for platinum was \$88, but the quantities sold were small. Prices ranged from 140 kroner to 440 kroner, the latter equal to \$88. Silver fox was 52 per cent sold and brought an average price of 125 kroner (\$25.) top price for first quality skins was \$60. The dark skins of good character were firm and no decline in interest was noticed. French and Dutch agents showed keenest buying interest but Norwegian commissioners also acted for American and particularly South American interests. Buyers were present from France, the Netherlands and Belgium. The manager, A.M. Vick, said prospects for the forthcoming May auctions were good, particularly because France expected to cover most of her imports then. Mr. Vick said he hoped American buyers would visit Norway when the May sale began and added that Sweden has considerable stores of mink which should interest Americans. He stated that Switzerland and Italy were countries not in the market at present, Italy having purchased her requirements and arrangements for imports to Switzerland not yet completed.

Mink and fox ranchers in Michigan are concerned over the lack of horse meat. Recently they had a conference at which this was discussed and they have asked Michigan State College research

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workers to endeavor to find substitute foods.

A cable from the London Fur Trade Association states that United States and Canadian fur farming associations are asked to request members to take more care in drying all paws on fox skins when pelted. The association has had complaints of damage sustained by fox fur skins on the fur side due to the paws not being properly dried. Paws, it is maintained, are left turned inside the pelt and being wet cause damage where the paws touch the pelt. This damage was found to depreciate considerably the value of the skins and American and Canadian fur farmers should take this into consideration and exercise more care.

At the Seattle, Washington, sale April 21st, ranch mink was 42 per cent sold with fine skins bringing \$20. to \$26., ordinary, \$11. to \$16.

The American Co-operative Fur Auction in Milwaukee sold 2,100 platinum with a reported average price from \$33. to \$65., the top price being \$93. for a pale silver medium.

For some time it has been rumored that Holt Renfrew & Co., Ltd., Montreal and Quebec, had taken a heavy loss through the recent decline in Mouton (processed lamb skins). Now we learn that the over-all loss on operations for last year was \$416,646 against a profit the previous year of \$144,282. Holt Renfrew & Co. were among our best customers for silver fox and mutations and last fall we missed them very much indeed. We all regret the poor judgment exercised by the parties responsible for featuring an imitation fur and incurring a loss of over half a million dollars. We hope this grand old firm will make a strong comeback and that in December we will see announcements that Dick O'Bryan is here purchasing for them.

Some weeks ago we quoted from notes on mink farming by Dr. E.R. Bowness criticizing some aspects of the quality of ranch mink pelts, particularly the thinner leather. Dr. L.D. McClintock, noted mink rancher replies to this criticism by stating that he has been carrying on experiments that have pretty well convinced him that the big factor for producing a wide-life ranch mink is the very simple ex-

NEWSY NOTES

By Agricola

NOTES ON THE LADY'S SLIPPER

It seems that the writer of these notes is getting all the credit of selecting the wild flower now adopted as our Floral Emblem. This misconception arises from the fact that the Emblem was first advocated in this column; but the flowers suggested at that time were the Iris, the Marsh Cinquefoil, and the Corydalis. There was some criticism in the little list, but that was to be expected. The Wild Iris, however, was the emblem of the French Kings of long ago, when it was known as the Fleur-de-lis. (Quebec might well adopt that!) The Marsh Cinquefoil is found in our National Park at Tracadie, and at Cavendish. The calyx and petals of this plant are purplish and together form a flower about 1.5 inches wide. The objection to these two was, that they grow in swampy land. The Corydalis has finely cut glaucous leaves and pink and yellow flowers. I grew this plant as a garden flower for some years, it was so ornamental.

There is no question as to the superiority of the Lady's Slipper as our Emblem, since it is much more picturesque than any of the plants mentioned above. For a plant of record I should be glad to have the name of the person who chose it. Besides, "Palmarum qui meruit, ferat."

There is a number of plants having the word "Lady" as part of their popular names. Saunderson's Encyclopaedia gives a list of twenty-two, and it is supposed that our poet, for others intended a reference to "Our Lady," that is the Mother of Christ. Not so our Lady's Slipper; its botanical name Cypripedium was bestowed by the famous Linnaeus, and simply means "Venus's Slipper." The "Lady" in this case turns out to be a not too reputable ancient Roman goddess.

There is a full-page colored plate of our C. hirsutum in "Canadian Nature" magazine for May 1940. Here is my description of the plant:

Cypripedium hirsutum Miller. Showy Lady's Slipper. Stem stout, hirsute, leafy to the top, 3 to 6 dm. high. Leaves ovate, many-nerved, pointed, 7 to 18 cm. long. Flowers 1 to 3; sepals rounded-ovate, white, not twisted, not longer than the lip, the lateral ones united for their whole length; petals white, rather narrower than the sepals; lip, pouch-like, much inflated, not fissured, white with purple markings in front, about 2.5 cm. long, orifice circular; stamens cordate-ovate. Habitat, woods and swamps, rare. Also

pendent of depriving mink of all nest material or indeed any cubby-hole or nest-box during the summer and early fall. The Doctor believes that this weather conditioning, as we may call it, or lack of cooing, develops stronger organization in the mink and that it sets itself for and towards producing a much heavier coat, especially as regards underfur furnishing than would be the case under nest-box environment.

Another important factor towards producing a more wild-like ranch mink pelt is the way pelts are handled at pelting time. He states that where there is no box, there is no nest-box smell, and also by manipulating the leather of a pelt slightly at final stages of drying a much nicer looking job is easily accomplished, as opposed to letting the leather dry stiff and boardy. He believes that if present day mink men will pay due heed to sound feeding practices plus good ranch management plus good pelt handling that they will not be too badly off.

Interest in white faces quickened at the American National Fox sale in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, April 24th. Of the 3,500 skins offered 90 per cent, were sold. Prices ranged from \$22. to \$38. with a high of \$39. Pearl platinum averages between \$16. and \$26.; bronze platinum between \$12. and \$18.; reddish platinum silvers sold best at \$15. — it doesn't look like good business to develop any more new mutations, does it?



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known as C. spectabile, and C. reginae. The Cypripediums, according to Nickell's "Botanical Ready Reference," are tonic, styptic, nervous, diaphoretic, narcotic, and antispasmodic in their roots. The term "Moccasin Flower" is more correctly applied to the Stemless Lady's Slipper, a native species, C. acule, which has the pink, (rarely white) lip fissured in front.

In conclusion may I ask my readers to refrain from plucking these rare plants, and to induce their friends to do the same. When I was a lad there was a yellow C. calceolus which grew amidst the limestone boulders in Castle Eden Dene, County Durham, England. This became known and considered a delicacy and others raided the Dene so effectually that when I visited the spot there was not a single specimen left. Let us take warning and go easy on our wild flowers.

THE ARCTIC AND THE BLACK TERNS

These two, the last of our Terns, may well be considered in one Note, because they are very rare, and no really definite appearances have been recorded.

The Arctic Tern, as its name implies, spends its nesting season in what is known as the Polar Regions, and winters as far south as Antarctica. Its journey takes it down the eastern coast of the continent and some of the migrants may at times call here. Dr. Taverner states that there is no reliable "field-mark" of this species, not even the red coloration of the bill. Here are a few notes on its plumage:

Arctic Tern, A.O.U. 71. Closely similar to the Common Tern (already described). Bill wholly red to the tip. Legs and feet small and weak. Tail longer, fork 4.5 inches deep. In winter the bill and feet are darker. Length of adult bird 15.5 inches.

The Black Tern is the smallest and most graceful of our terns. Its breeding grounds are westward of the Great Lakes, and the interior of the U. S. A., while it winters from Panama to Chili. It occurs as a rare accidental visitor here.

Black Tern, A.O.U. 77. Summer plumage: Head, neck and underparts dull black, under tail-coverts white; back, wings and tail slaty to dark gray. Eyes brown. Winter plumage: Forehead, neck and underparts white, nape and auricular patch blackish; otherwise like summer plumage. Immature birds resemble winter adults with head and underparts more or less white, often quite mixed. Length of adult bird, 10 inches.

This tern, though it feeds on small freshwater fishes, crustaceans and other forms of aquatic life, has learned to capture many insects on the wing.

A PROPHECY FOR 1965

I enjoy reading a good satire, though it is seldom that I indulge in that form of wit myself. It is a practice with a heavy recoil, and no ultimate gain. In England, during the war, it was the national dry humor that buoyed up the nation against all the assaults of its mighty adversary. Those six black years produced but two real satirists, one of whom was "agin the Government," while the other, none too subtly, took pot-shots at the man of the Kremlin. The first satire was "Homo Sap," and the other "Animal Farm."

Under the caption at the head of this Note a post-war writer, A. Emil Davies, professes to read the coming years, and favors his prophecy with a little delicate satire. In the Spring of 1965, he says, the British Government will give one year's notice that it will no longer play at being a Great Power, and will not be bound by any commitments except those arising out of its membership in the U. N. O. (This, one suspects, will come to pass long before 1965.)

By 1965 the birthrate had been falling for a century and the results were forcing themselves on the Government's attention. Statisticians pointed out that thirty years previously (1935), the percentage of children was 23 and of old people only 12; now the corresponding figures were 9 and 28 respectively. In 1945 each British child inherited, as his share of the National Debt, a liability of £500; now (1965) it was nearer £800. It had become evident even to the man in the street, that, with one and a half million of her world wide population everywhere except at home, his country was slowly bleeding to death both in manpower and wealth. Governments, too, that did not play power politics—Denmark, Switzerland, Sweden, for instance—provided their people with a higher standard of living. Even Germany and Italy, released from the burden of huge standing armies and the

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like, were sensibly producing an increasing volume of food, goods, and services, and were able to dispense with reparations from their conquerors.

The British decision naturally caused a sensation. The main Indian parties denounced it as a dirty trick to force them to take over the government of their country. The Greek dictator wanted to know how after 20 years of civil war, he could be expected to rule without the help of British troops. The conflicting forces in Palestine were so taken aback that they called a truce and agreed to put their case before the Archbishop of Canterbury and to abide by his decision.

The Dominions heartily approved the British decision for (they said) it rendered less likely the possibility of their being dragged into Europe's future wars. (Possibly there were some in the Dominions who did feel that way, but the Dominions have always fought because, basically, it was a question of their own survival.) The colonies and dependences (says the prophet) were told they might become independent or piece themselves under U. N. O.; but he adds pathetically "They showed little enthusiasm."

The British Government had for a considerable time realized its precarious position in world politics. The "Balance of Power" had become a fact. Russia and America were roughly equal in man-power and productive capacity. Britain's weight, still considerable, thrown to one side or the other, would destroy the balance; and however doubtful the final result of an atomic and bacterial war, there could be none regarding the fate of the disturbing element. The Government had wisely declined with thanks, the American suggestion that N. England, S. England, Scotland, Wales, and

(Continued on Page 14)

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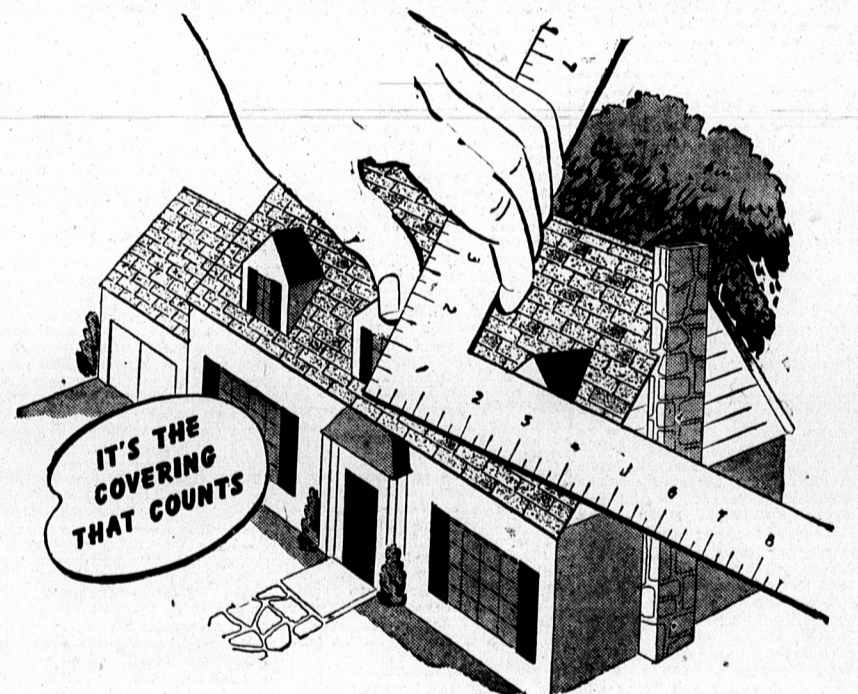
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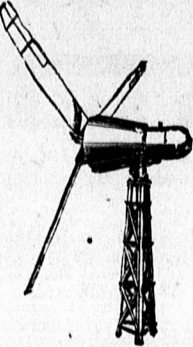
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