

NEWSY NOTES

BY AGRICOLA

The Ferns of P.E.I.

A series of articles recently appeared in these columns, having for its object the familiarizing of our ferns; and as the study calls for exactness of description many technical terms were necessarily used. Botanical classification is certainly rather dry entertainment until one gets well into the game! These notes will, I trust, be lighter in character, calling attention to the uses and life-history of this great Natural Order. Just at this point, may I suggest that a prize for the best mounted collection of Island ferns would lend novelty to the Prize List of our School Fairs.

(1) The Common Polypody (Polypodium vulgare) is found in Asia, Europe and America. Our Polypody is more triangular in shape of frond, and thinner in texture than the British form, which divergencies do not, to my mind, constitute a specific difference. Many writers, however, are now calling this plant P. virginianum L. because Linnaeus so named a plant which he received from the U.S.A. and which had much the same character as the Island species. Towards the Rocky Mountains and on the Pacific coast the Polypody cannot be distinguished from the Eurasian plant. The name Polypody means "many feet" from the much-branched, creeping, subterranean stem. This fern is apparently very rare in the Province; I have seen a specimen from Dunk River. It must be looked for on rocks and rocky banks, where it is able to endure drought that would kill out most other ferns.

(2) The Beech Fern (Phegopteris Polypodioides) is sadly overburdened with synonyms. As a matter of curiosity I looked up all the books on ferns that I possess (six in number) and I find four distinct scientific names for this unlucky plant! We can be sure what is meant because each writer gives the popular name "Beech Fern": but does not explain why it is so called. It does not seem to have any special preference for beech woods; in fact when I have come across this fern, it has always been in damp coniferous woods and especially if they are on hillsides. The upward and forward "spring" of the lowest pair of pinnae is very characteristic of the Beech Fern.

(3) The Oak Fern (Phegopteris Dryopteris) has almost as many Latin names as its relative the Beech Fern, but here again the popular name keeps us from error. This is a fern of the moist woods and swamps, and if it has any preference at all it is for coniferous woods. The stipes (leaf-stalk) divides into three at its summit and appears to carry three separate fronds, of a lovely green color. Before these fronds unfold, they are rolled up tightly into little balls, which, one imaginative writer says, resemble the old sign of the pawnbroker's three balls! (By the way, those three golden balls are three gilded pills—the coat-of-arms of the Medicinal family, who were physicians before they turned money-lenders).

Amid the Cumbrian Fells (3) My holiday was over too soon, and it was sixteen years before I got back to Garrigil. One looks forward to revisiting the scenes of youth and expects to find them in much the same shape as when last seen. Seldom is the dream realized. I found Beldy Mill in possession of a stranger, and learned that the good old miller of former days had been resting in Garrigil churchyard for ten years, whither his wife had followed him; and his daughter Isabella had married and gone to live in London. All the young folk had dispersed; only one person recollected the lad who had stayed in the village for his school holidays. I took up my quarters therefore at the inn, yeelpeth the "Green Dragon", (a rambling old structure, full of black oak paneling), which stood just outside the graveyard wall. In olden days the inn was always built close to the parish church, because people often came long distances to worship and to attend funerals, etc.; and it was important to have "shelter for man and beast" right at hand. The bedroom assigned to me was as big as two modern rooms, and was lined with black oak panels; a sombre room. In one corner next to a window was a door which opened on to an open-air stone stairway that led down to the road. Some very old farm-houses were built with the machine sheds and stables on the ground level, and the living quarters above, for econ-

omy's sake; and this explains the outside stairway. (When Mussolini drained the Campagne, and built three cities thereon (an effort which marks him as a man of genius), he built the farmhouses in this style). This door at the Green Dragon was made of some kind of pine, and when the sunshine fell on it the panels—from the inside—glowed like red-stained glass.

It was Saturday when I reached the village, and the month was August. Everybody was hard at work for now the only industry of the place was the farming; the lead-mining was about done. This meant that I'd have to depend largely on myself for company. I renewed my acquaintance with the fells, then covered with the purple bloom of ling and heather and the golden gorse.

That night, after "tea", which is our supper—for the English have a supper later on—hearing voices in the tap-room, I decided to investigate. The tap-room had a floor of large square flagstones, perhaps slate, which had been whitened with chalk for the week end. At one end of the room burnt a cheerful fire of coal and peat, and it was needed too, in that cool moist climate. At the other end was the "bar" with an assortment of bottles and kegs. The talking came from an over-dressed fellow who was giving three ancients the gist of his experience in Manchester whence he had come as travelling salesman for some firm. The old lads were not saying much, but "taking all of it in" in great style, and when the traveller showed signs of slowing down, one of them would come out with a question that started him off again. The scene was amusing because the story-teller imagined that he was gulling the rustics, while the old fellows were deep and kept him going. I, of course, covered myself with British reserve, and left it for these old inhabitants to make the first advance: that was the best plan for dealing with the Cumbrian country-folk. After a few days they began to warm to the stranger, and would discuss life as they found it.

I was not due back to Newcastle till September, and saw the fells at their best, clothed with purple and gold. The country-folk told me that provisions for the winter were even then being carried to outlying farms, for travelling in that season was almost impossible. Then the fells are mantled with snow, drenched with torrential rains, or sometimes shrouded in the mist of low-lying clouds. The limited visibility due to mist, is one of the greatest dangers the traveller can encounter. He misses the track, and wanders into a half-frozen swamp, or takes a header into a level drift which conceals a hollow, and at last begins to wonder if he will ever get to the path again.

I conclude this series with the hope that this slight sketch of Cumbrian life may interest my readers; but if they desire a narrative illumined with the glow of genius, let them procure the two Cumbrian tales written by Hall Caine, himself (I think) a native of the country. They are "The Shadows of a Crime" and "A Son of Hagar" and are well worth reading.

Odds and Ends The Law of Retaliation. The Bible, although the best seller in the world today, is probably not as much read as it used to be, say fifty years ago, and is certainly criticized much more, the Old Testament bearing the brunt. Most of the "popular" criticism that I have heard, is due to lack of understanding. We have the intelligentsia who object to the story of the Creation and the like, never reflecting that the Book of Books was not written as a Text Book of Science, but to teach the way of life. The Mosaic laws, and in particular the "lex talionis" as we call it, are stumbling-blocks to others. "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" taken literally, seems a hard and unsympathetic law, but as a matter of fact it limited the vengeance that these semi-savage Nomads might enact. It was a great advance when they were brought to see that "a life for an eye" was not justice. The Sermon on the Mount carries these laws still further, from mere justice to sympathy.

Small Things. Scientists tell us that the smallest vertebrate (back-boned animal) must be sought for in the streams of Luzon, one of the Philippine Islands. It is the tiny

TIMELY NOTES ON TOPICS

CONNECTED WITH

Silver Fox Farming



Michael Lubbock and James Donald, representing the Hudson's Bay Company of London, England, were visitors during Fox Show week leaving for Winnipeg of Thursday noon by plane. Mr. Lubbock came here a year ago last June on Governor Ashley's staff. He is a graduate of Oxford University and has also had several years experience in banking with the old firm of Baring Bros. He intends to spend another year or more in Canada getting first hand acquaintance with the various ramifications of the Company's many commercial projects so that on return to London he will be in a position to have a more realistic view of things Canadian than would otherwise be the case.

Everyone who met Mr. Lubbock—and there were many—were charmed with his personality and hope that he will visit us again next year. By the way, he had a short conversation with Premier Thane Campbell, who also is an Oxford man, the night of the banquet, and needless to say they were delighted to exchange reminiscences of the oldest fountain of learning in Great Britain.

James Donald came to Canada almost a decade ago and has been through several of the Company's posts in the far north where only one or two white men cater to a large number of Eskimos, trading the wares and products of civilization with the natives for the peltries of the white fox, blue fox, polar bear

"Luzon fish", Mistichthys Luzonensis, only one-quarter inch in length. Small as this is, it must give place to the one-celled free-living Pleuromonas jaculans, an animal belonging to the rather hazy kingdom of the Protozoans. It is not uncommon in ponds and ditches, but as it ranges from 2 to 8 microns in breadth, it is not a subject for easy study. (A micron is the thousandth part of a millimeter).

In a pond just across the Hillsboro Bridge, on the road to Mount Herbert, I once found a luxuriant growth of Duckweed, (Lemna). This is the smallest of our flowering plants, consisting apparently of a single leaf, from 1.5 to 5 millimeters in breadth, supporting a single stamen and a single pistil. The leaf is really a floating thallus, which reproduces itself by budding, and if left undisturbed will soon cover a pond with a mat of vegetation. There is a smaller plant, the Wolffia, with much the same structure, but I have not seen it here.

Tobacco Heart. I have often wondered if the cigarette habit, so extensively in vogue with young folk of both sexes, will not have a great part in the downfall of the race. Newcastle-on-Tyne is a garrison town, and on certain main thoroughfares "recruiting sergeants" were always to be seen. I used to pass one of these men every day and after a while we became acquainted. He was a very intelligent man I found, and profoundly religious—which was not by any means a common thing among soldiers—being a communicant at St. Mary's R. C. Church. He explained the procedure in enlisting a recruit, and laid great stress on the medical examination. It seemed that most of the recruits, when the doctor listened to the beating of their hearts, were not accepted because of irregularity in the beats. Tobacco heart, the sergeant called it, and said it was a kind of nicotine poisoning. "Show your thumbs", the doctor would say, and the prospective warrior would hold up nicotine stained digits. "Ah, a cigarette fiend!" the doctor would say. "You go home, give up cigarettes and come back in a fortnight, and I'll see if your heart is working right then." The recruit, once he passed, became a changed man. In those days the army was recruited from "street-corner men", weedy individuals from the slums. The plain good food at regular hours, and plenty of straightening-up exercise, soon made them look like regular heroes! And the military pay was not such as permitted too many cigarettes.

and other furs. Like all the men who have risen in the service of the Company in Canada he has had a thorough training and is now enjoying a more comfortable experience soliciting consignments for London, being a member of the Trade Commissioner's staff at Winnipeg.

The Provincial Silver Fox Show at Charlottetown was a great success in many ways but in one particular it was not up to former years, namely, there was a dearth of visitors from abroad. This was due to the change of date, of that there is no question. Dozens of buyers, including some from the Old Country, would have been here for foxes had it been held as always since its inception—the early part of November.

While it is a good thing to know to whom the awards for best foxes should go, yet it is equally important from an advertising point of view for the industry, that as much as possible outside interest be aroused, and the way to do that is to bring as many people as possible to the show. The whole thing reminded me of a magnificent banquet set for six hundred, but with only a few guests showing up to partake of the feast. This does not refer to our local attendance, which on Wednesday set a record for that day and would have been still greater on Thursday and Friday were it not for the vagaries of the elements.

A. E. Snowball of Chatham, N. B., a former Lieutenant Governor of that Province, spent three days at the Charlottetown Fox Show and was greatly impressed with what he saw. He is considerable of a fox breeder himself and intends showing animals at the New Brunswick fox show early in December.

Will MacLeod of the Maritime Farmer, Sussex, spent Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday at the Fox Show and would like to have waited until the end but on account of his necessary attendance at the Royal Winter Fair could not do so. Many will remember his father M. A. MacLeod, who passed away last year to the regret of thousands who knew him. Of the kindest personality and deep knowledge of agricultural matters, he is greatly missed, but his son is following in his father's footsteps, being a regular "chip off the old block" in regard to ability to write intelligently and with the facility for making friends.

H. Gordon, who has a fox ranch near Montreal, was another gentleman who took in every angle of the Fox Show. He has done very well in his venture and states that in his locality he has the only fox ranch. It is a rich dairy section, having an excellent milk trade with the metropolis. Feed is very cheap in that he can pick up offal from local butchers for the proverbial song. "Feed cost," said Mr. Gordon "are not more than one and a half cents per day for me. Last year I sold my pelts to quite good advantage and found that I had made good money. I would like to have some foxes like they are showing here today. I am sure if I had I could average much higher figures for pelts."

An article on increasing the fertility in Silver Foxes, by Prof. Karl Machacek, from far-away Czechoslovakia appears in the November issue of the Fur Trade Journal of Canada from which we have taken the following excerpts: The author has repeated his trials in giving vitamin E mixed with prolan to foxes at propagating time of this year. The results obtained are particularly interesting and much can be learned about them. In order to get results, the preparation has to be administered in small doses from the end of October onwards. Alterations inside the ovaries of the female takes place by the middle of November of the preceding year. The initiation of this change is caused by prolan. Vitamin E is considered by many research workers as identical with the hormone of the ovaries, at least that much can be said of the two that both are closely related with each other. At all events the prolan serves to stimulate

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CAPT. J. L. READ, President E. C. Bell Secy-Treas.

and start all activities allied and otherwise connected with propagation.

However, a sudden administration of hormones of any kind, even in small doses during an advanced state of propagation, leads to defusion and as a consequence definitely results in failure. The author particularly warns of injections at this time. The quantity of hormones working as a harmonious unit is not yet known. A surplus of one or the other is just as harmful as there is the lack of one or the other. The hormones should be given in a natural way by way of the mouth. The gastric juices do not destroy the hormones. All that possibly happens to them, is that they split up into their components, the latter of which are assimilated by the body in relation to requirements. The digestive tract of carnivorous animals is particularly suited for the absorption of hormones from the blood of victims these animals subsist on. Also of importance are the fat-soluble vitamins, which accumulated in the autumn of the preceding year are liberated into the blood stream as spring advances and the fat disappears.

was crowded into a relatively small space of time. None of the mothers had any difficulty in raising her litter. Strangers and visitors were taken around at mating time as well as prior, at and immediately after whelping. No ill effects were observed. The animals behaved perfectly normal. The kennels with litters in it could be looked into at any time. The microphone installed in the kennels proved to be superfluous. There were no carrying of pups.

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(Continued on page 13)

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