

Hawks and Hawks

Being the Reminiscences of a Nature Fakir

By John Kendrick Bangs

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"I kind o' think," said Wotherspoon was saying as I joined the company at the post office the other night, "that all birds is highway robbers whether they be the human kind that we calls jail birds or jest plain crows like that feller Jim, the Captain, was tellin' us about a little while back. They'll all steal if ye give 'em a chance."

"That all depends on the way ye look at it, Si," said the Captain. "The way I measure a thief is whether he steals jest for the fun o' deprivin' somebody else what he's got, or does it because he needs what he takes in his business."

"Well, now, s'pose ye take 'em pigeons o' Joe's," said Si. "I sowed my back lot wuth oats three weeks ago, an' I hadn't more'n got 'em on the ground when them derned critters come flippin' acrost the road, an' set down there, an' eat up every blamed oat I'd put out. D'ye call that stealin' or jest natural enterprise?"

"It's enterprise," said the Captain. "Nature has provided them pigeons

information in regard to hawks is comin' to ye now."

"Go ahead," said Joe. "I'm willin' to learn. I hev a thirst for information."

"Anybody could tell that by the way ye read all the postal cards that passes through this here post office," retorted the Captain. "I callate there ain't none o' 'em escapes that eagle eye o' yours. I've had two different experiences with hawks in my day, an' they've taught me the truth o' what I says, that they's honest hawks an' dishonest hawks. The first one was a feller who used to ply his trade o' swipin' poultry up back o' Portland when I lived up there. Me an' mother was young then, an' we spent most of our time raisin' chickens. It was a profitable business in them days. The boardin' house keepers along the Maine coast hadn't discovered then that ye can make chicken salad out o' livin' out o' 'em. Well, of course, like everybody else, we suffered some from hawks, an' one big feller particular got away with a number o' nice juicy spring pullets I set a lot o' store on. He'd come along jest before night, once a week, most generally on Thursday afternoon, as I remember it; swoop down on the hen yard, seize the fattest-lookin' feller, he could find an' go soarin' off in the air with him. As I says I got pretty mad about it, an' bein' young I swore some, an' finally I made up my mind Mr. Wotherspoon had to do. So I got out my shotgun an' filled her good an' full with powder an' nails—I didn't happen to have no shot handy—an' set down an' waited. I waited a hull week an' then he come along, but, I gorry, jest 's I was drawin' a line on him, he drops a five-pound codfish right atop o' me, so that when I pulled the trigger my

really we was seven cents ahead of the game."

"Which of course ye held in trust for him agin another year," said the Postmaster.

"Not accordin' t' due process o' the law," replied the Captain. "I never drawed up a regular morgidge on my place in his favor for that amount, but I tell ye right now, if he ever comes back an' asks for that seven cents, I gorry, I'll give it to him. But that ain't the pint. The pint is that they is, or has been, one honest hawk in the world, an' I gess maybe that if they's one like that they's a lot more if ye only have the luck to find 'em."

"I never knew a chicken hawk to go near the water before," said Si Wotherspoon.

"Me neither," agreed the Captain. "I guess maybe this feller was a cross-bred o' chicken an' fish-hawk. While he paid his bills regular, an' always in advance, I never got close enough to him to ask him about his father and mother."

"It's a pity," said the Postmaster. "If you could only get an' afterday showin' that his father an' mother was o' different families the story'd have a better chance when the president hears about it."

"That experience got me interested in hawks," said the Captain, "an' explains how I come to find the crooked hawk in the business the next summer. Of course, after meetin' with the first feller I kind o' welcomed 'em when they come the year after. I didn't want to shoot 'em for fear o' killin' a good customer, so for a little while I gave them a free hand on my place, an' set around makin' notes o' their habits. Well one mornin' in June the followin' year up comes a tremendous big feller, an' begins to take the usual birdseye view o' the chicken yard, and then, I gorry, he swoops down an' grabs a settin' hen right off her nest, and flies away with her. I followed the cuss, an' discovered where he lived, up on a big rock back o' Pete Nichols' woods. I was so

was the dear, pale little face pressed against the window, but—Dolly almost stopped with surprise.

There above the child's face was another. A man's bearded face! Was Bess worse and had some one gone for the doctor? Dolly's heart stood still with fear. Now, that she could do so much for little Bess, was she—a sob choked Dolly, and she hurried on. Stumbling up the steps she made her way to the room that held her one treasure.

"Oh, Bessie, my darling, what is the matter?" she cried, kneeling beside her sister's chair.

"Nothing, Dolly, not the least thing.

"Captain," he said, "here is that medicine we had such a time about. I don't see," he added, turning to the woman, "why you didn't bring it back sooner."

"I didn't think of it," she explained.

"The maid took it in one day when we were all out. She thought it belonged to somebody in our house. It has lain around there in a cupboard all this time. It never occurred to me to return it until just this morning, and then it struck me you might be able to use it."

The man by the counter lifted his head out of his hands.

"Use it!" he said. "Of course we can. I had the grip last year when it was put up and I've got the grip now. I can take that medicine as well as a new bottle full."

"No, you can't," said the clerk.

"Some druggists might permit you to, but we won't. It might upset you for a month." Some medicines never lose their healing power, while others not only fail to produce the desired effect, but become positively harmful after standing a few months. The length of time a medicine retains its efficacy depends upon the ingredients.

Some combinations of drugs keep on good terms with each other indefinitely, while others get into a row after being mixed together for a while, and the man who swallows a dose of the stuff is apt to feel a good deal worse than before he took it. As a rule medicines that are quite sweet keep their curative virtues longer than those that are acid or bitter. Most any medicine can be taken in safety six months after compounding, and many will be all right six years hence. Those that are not good generally take on a curdled, milky appearance; but that is by no means an infallible test, and the person who wishes to save his system uncomfortable complications would do well to let old medicines strictly alone."

The man looked at the bottle regretfully.

"And that was an expensive prescription, too," he said. "It seems a shame to waste it."

"Never mind," said the clerk, "We are willing to stand the loss. We would rather do that than to take chances on losing a good customer like you."

"American Names.

If we have some growing sense of a desire to touch with poetry the terminology of our American towns we have succeeded so far only in securing a slightly picnic grove atmosphere such as is given off by Lakewood or Riverside.

The rich sentimentalism of the real estate dealer has done what it could considering the hurry he is in. If we have a new manufacturing suburb the chances are we shall be too lazily and flatly patriotic, call it Lincoln and be done with it, or too crudely romantic, in which case the secretary of the company will report to the directors that he has had the place incorporated as Ivanhoe.

On soil not depleted by injudicious

farming trees make a good growth of wood and produce fruit of good quality and color. I have one apple orchard on thin, "worn-out" land and by a liberal application of stable manure and the growing of cow-pea have a beautiful and very profitable

good orchard land.

For some reason, kohlrabi has been

slow to find a place in American gardens, though it is highly prized by the Germans, said the Orange Judd Farmer. It might be described as a turnip with a root above ground, or a cabbage with its head in the stem.

In flavor, it is a combination of both

turnip and cabbage, but more delicate

than either. If used before quite full

grown it is tender and delicious, but if left standing too long it quickly becomes woody and unfit for cooking. If a succession is desired, the seed should be sown from early spring till midsummer. The seed may be sown in drills 18 inches apart, then thinned so as to stand seven or eight inches apart in the row, or it may be started in a bed and transplanted.

There is nothing difficult about

growing andive, yet it is not as com-

monly grown as one might expect. For summer use it is sown in April or May, but for fall and winter use it is sown from June till the middle of August.

The plants should be thinned or transplanted so as to stand at least a foot apart. When they are about full grown they are blanched by gathering up the leaves and tying at the top. In about

two weeks, the hearts should be ready to use. Some gardeners prepare it in a week by putting celery blanchers over the plants. They should be blanched as wanted, as the hearts will soon decay after the process. Unless thoroughly blanched the leaves are tough and bitter.

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