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RANT THOUGHTS ON A VARIETY OF THINGS

A few weeks ago the moulder of this department gave space to a medly of musings under the above title. He is impelled to do so again by the receipt of several letters in varying veins, two of which are published in part that the reader may fully understand the comments made. The first one is from Pueblo, Colorado, and reads in part:

"Dear Sir: Your 'Some Vagrant Thoughts on a Variety of Things' in The Commoner of September 23, suits my taste O. K. Come with some more."

The letter is signed by a leading attorney of Pueblo, and further conveys the information that the writer thereof has sent to the writer of this department a volume entitled "Home-spun Odds and Ends," written by the attorney himself.

The other letter is considerably longer and comes from the opposite side of the country—Philadelphia. It reads in part as follows:

"Dear Sir: I regret to see in your article entitled 'Some Vagrant Thoughts etc.,' a disposition to condemn the man who does not possess, nor desire to possess, the love of killing for sport. * * * Can a man not love nature without desiring to kill what is beautiful in nature? Can he not go out, as you must have often done, without 'gun over shoulder,' and glorify the Creator by beholding His handiwork, not from behind a blind with murderous thoughts in his heart—for I for one fail to see where killing one of God's creatures for sport is different from killing another—but standing erect with his eyes towards the sky, delight in the fleetness of the beautiful birds and thank the Creator for having sent us such charming friends. As to being 'watched,' tell me, my friend, who will bear watching best, Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson, who loved nature, whose veins ran rich, red blood, whose hearts pulsed for all creation, who never lay in ambush like the cruel Indian lying in wait for innocent prey, or Grover Cleveland and Theodore Roosevelt who delight in killing for sport's sake?"

"The earth was made for man, and the fullness thereof." He was given dominion over beasts and birds, over fields and woods.

The man who delights in killing for "sport's sake" is never a true sportsman. But as man, like other animals, lives upon animals lower in the scale, may he not inject the element of sport into the task of finding the food he requires?

The good Philadelphia friend doubtless eats beef. Which gives him the most pain, the brutal, unfeeling, bloody shambles of the stock yards or the true sportsman's quick shot in the open fields where the bird is given a chance for its life, and if brought down is used for food the same as the beef from the packing house?

The "pot hunter" is the meanest man on earth, with the one exception of the man who kills merely to see the birds fall or the little animals sink into lifeless heaps when hit by the shot. There are such men. They kill for the mere love of killing. By nature they are cruel and blood-thirsty, and derive pleasure in the thought of inflicting pain and death upon inferior animals. But to call such men

"sportsmen" is an insult to every true-hearted lover of dog and gun and rod and reel.

Your true sportsman kills only for food for himself and his friends. He is too big of heart and broad of mind to kill wantonly. When the moulder of this department was on the line between boyhood and manhood he went hunting with another fellow of about the same age. The other fellow was not, never was, and never could be a genuine sportsman. He fired into a covey of sitting quail and killed fourteen or fifteen of them. The moulder reprimanded him, hot words followed, there was a "scrap" that lasted about ten minutes, and then two boys took two separate ways through the woods. Which came off victor deponent sayeth not, but he never went gunning with that fellow again, shunned him at school and upon the streets, and was not surprised when the fellow finally went to Jefferson City by request of the state and spent eight years in the penitentiary, where he was taught lessons of honor and honesty—said lessons consisting of making contract shoes with paper scales.

The Philadelphia friend's letter reminds me of the little story of the fashionable woman who saw some street Arabs playing with some young birds yet unable to fly.

"O, you cruel boys," she exclaimed. "How can you be so cruel as to give anguish to the heart of the mother bird?"

"Dat's all right, mum," said one of the boys. "De mudder o' dese boids ain't worryin'. She's dead, stuffed an' perched on your hat."


The big bass darts from beneath a lily pad and pounces upon the little fish swimming idly by. The big bass swallows the little fish and retires to await another victim. That's nature.

A man, tired of the city's monotonous roar, tired of the almost endless tasks, weary of the everlastingly same variety of food dished up before him in a boardinghouse—tired of all these things the man hastens to the lake with rod and reel. He rows out upon the water, ties on his fly or frog, casts towards the lily pad, and the big bass strikes. Then comes the fight. Here, there, up, down and across! The flying leap into the air when the bass shakes the silver drops from his gleaming sides. Now he lurks at the bottom, resting for the next round. A dash, an angry shake at the hook, a final despairing struggle, and the fish is reeled in. A little latter the man sits down with an appetite like a shark and eats that big bass, even as the big bass ate the little one.

Is it any worse for the man to get his fish that way than it is for him to buy worse at the fish market? The Master once gave some directions to a lot of fishermen, and by following His directions they made the record catch for Gallilee.

Peter, the lion-hearted, impetuous, impulsive Peter, one of the greatest of the Apostles, was a fisherman, as were several others who left all and followed the Master. Peter was our kind of a fisherman. He was truthful. He wouldn't tell a falsehood about his catch. And when the Master asked him what success he had, Peter ad-

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mitted that he had been fishing all night without catching a thing.

No wonder Peter became such a power in the Christian world. A fisherman with grit enough to admit that he hadn't caught a thing after a night's fishing has grit enough to overcome almost any obstacle.

The less of a sportsman a man is the more he will brag about the size of his catch. That's axiomatic. The real sportsman never tries to make a big catch merely for the fun of it.

The moulder of this department fears that his Philadelphia friend has taken the wrong view of the vagrant thoughts hereinbefore mentioned. The idea of killing for sport's sake is as

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