Sure Sign Of Winter

A traveling man just in from a tour of the countryside reported to this corner the other day that the snow fences are up. Have been for some time, in fact. The snow fence is a seasonal barometer, of sorts; perhaps it might better be called a seasonal marker, since it does not forecast but merely confirms certain things about seasons two in particular—that everybody is pretty sure of already. When the snow fences go up it is a sign not that winter is on the way, just over the hill, but that winter is here, beating at the door. When they are pulled down one may be sure spring is not about to arrive in a few days or weeks, but that spring has come and already is turning handsprings across the meadows.

Oddity on the Avenue

Were someone to run a snow fence down, say the middle of Fifth venue, it is quite possible a large number of persons would not know what it was says the N. Y. Times. Many city folk might take the red painted fencing to be some newfangled traffic control device. But those who have lived in the open spaces where snow fences are important would suspect, pardonably, that the city fathers had gone daft and they might write letters to editors on the futility of putting snow fences at the bottom of Manhattan canons.

Fence Against Wind

A snow fence is not "horse high, bull strong and pig tight," as a good fence is supposed to be; but then its purpose is not to keep livestock from greener pastures. It exists to break the sweep of winds bearing snow, to cause the air to whirl after passing through its palings and in that whirl and momentary pause to deposit the tumbling flakes on its lee side instead of upon the roadway a few rods distant. A snow fence is not, therefore, a true fence at all, being simply a device to create snowdrifts to windward of highways, and is called a fence for the good reason that it looks like one.

The Forgotten Men

The motorist journeying over the countryside without difficulty after a heavy snow is inclined to give silent thanks for cleared roads to the men who drive the plows—and these often deserve thanks — but he is not likely to give thought to the men who before the snows came set out snow fences which may have diverted tons of snowflakes from his route before the plows went to work.

Putting out snow fences—several hundred thousand feet to a district—calls for a nice discretion. Before he places a snow fence, a man must know something of the prevailing winds; he must know where, along a stretch of road, the snow will drift if it is not checked by a fence; he must know also where it will not drift so that he will waste no fencing. If the field where the fence is to be has been planted in wheat and if it is wet when he wants to set out a length of fencing he must wait until the ground dries, for no farmer cares to see part of the crop planned for next summer being scraped from the soles of muddy boots—particularly if the boots are someone else's.

Fences of Yesterday

Good snow fences have nothing to do with the making of good neighbors, a function attributed by poets to other fences, such as the fast-disappearing snake fence, known also as the stake-and-rider, or Virginia, fence. The snake fence came to the end of its lazy crawl across the landscape with the introduction of the mechanical post-hole digger and particularly of fence-machines to shape and pierce posts, making easier erection of the neater but less picturesque plain rail fence of chestnut or locust. As rail fences rot away they are being replaced by wire fencing, which is tighter and less trouble to set out and to keep up than are wooden sections. But in the transition something is being lost. Many trees along old fence lines owe their existence there to rail fences which served as elevated runways for nut-carrying squirrels and as luncheon tables for birds; from seeds and nuts dropped along the rails have sprung countless cherry trees and oaks. The use of wire fences has reduced substantially fence-line weed and briar patches which the sprawling snake fence encouraged and made available as cover for birds and small game.

Farewell to the Stile

It seems too bad that no one these days takes the trouble to build stiles over fences. Perhaps the end of stile-building signalled the close of an era; when people began to think they were in too great a hurry to follow a fence line to a stile but took to clambering over anywhere, the age of the stile was dead. Today if a crooked man were to find a crooked stile at the end of a crooked mile, chances are that on the far side of the stile he would see stuck on a crooked post in the field a sign reading.

WARNING
POSTED—KEEP OUT
TRESPASSERS PROSECUTED

These crooked greetings have supplanted the friendly stile everywhere, and we are the poorer for it.

After All, Winter's a Good Skate

WINTER stalls traffic on snowy hills,
Winter can freeze the plumbing.
Winter raises a fellow's bills,
But it's nice to know it's coming!

WINTER brings the cough and sneeze,
Winter endangers a city.
Winter makes people fall with ease,
But when it comes, it's pretty!

Merry Menagerie—By Walt Disney

"Look, Mom—Puss in boots'!"

Really Sensitive

William P. Welch and Benjamin J. Cametti, two Westinghouse research engineers, have developed a machine which is so sensitive that with it the weight of a feather can be made to twist a steel bar. The twist amounts to less than one-millionth of an inch. The "twist detector"—technically known as an elastic-drift measuring machine—can detect changes in weight as small as one part in 100,000 and can measure a twist of less than one-millionth of an inch.

The development of jet engines and other powerful rotating machinery has brought a need for more accurate measuring equipment. Torque-meters or twist measures are accurate weighing devices in which a steel shaft takes the place of the spring mechanism of the standard scale. The twist in the shaft is a measure of the weight applied, and this can be detected electrically or magnetically and transmitted to meters for easy reading. Although the accuracy is very high—around 98.5 per cent—there are special applications where an even greater precision is required. Hence the new machine.

Radium Anniversary

Fifty years ago two obscure physicists, Pierre Curie and his Polish wife, Marie Sklodowska, startled the world with the announcement that after much chemical drudgery they had obtained from tons of pitchblende a few grams of a substance—"radium" they called it—which maintained temperature slightly higher than its surroundings and which emitted energy. Henri Becquerel had previously discovered that uranium, also contained in pitchblende, was radioactive. What distinguished radium was the intensity with which it emitted energy.

The discovery that the heaviest metals such as uranium, radium, polonium and actinium ejected particles which were much smaller than atoms brought about a revolution in physics. But it was not the only discovery that made it necessary to abandon the conception of the atom as the smallest material particle that could combine with another. The subatomic electron had been discovered and its mass determined.

There were other electric phenomena that conflicted with the classic atomic theory. When it was found that radium shot out the very electrons observed in X-ray tubes and also alpha particles it was necessary to invent a new kind of atom. Instead of the old, invisible atom, somewhat like a minute invisible billiard ball, we now have a complex structure that no physicist pretends to understand.

Physics was exciting in the Nineties and the early years of this century, when Becquerel, the Curies, Roentgen, Einsten, Rutherford, Planck and others to whom we owe the atomic theory of today were in their prime.

In this practical age science is thought of as the handmaiden of engineering, so that it implies motion pictures, electric communication, chemical processes and machines. The change in outlook caused by a great discovery like that of radium is as important as the invention of an atomic power plant. And the change in outlook has been profound since the Curies did their work. In the heyday of Victorian science a physicist rose before the British Association for the Advancement of Science to declare that since the universe was demonstrably an intricate, colossal machine everything would ultimately be found to obey mechanical laws, man included. That cocksureness has collapsed. The mechanical laws of nature prove to be man-made—mere statements of statistical averages. Cause and effect have disappeared in atomic physics.

Terrified Rats

When they are in a panic of fear, wild rats stand on their hind legs by the hour and grasp wires at the top of their cages. Even when their cages are left open, they make no attempt to escape, but stand motionless with noses thrust through the wire mesh, eyes fixed straight ahead. They keep this posture for months, except when they are disturbed or when they eat or drink. They may run around the cage a few times but go right back to their awkward pose. Fear of food-poisoning is the explanation, according to Dr. Curt P. Richter of John Hopkins Hospital. He is the scientist who, in the course of psychological experiments on the rat's ability to taste, discovered the potent rat poison ANTU. His terrified rats were some that had survived doses of ANTU or other poisons which had made them very ill. In later experiments, they were given a choice of eating from either of two food cups. One contained the poisoned food, the other the safe. The rats recognized the poisoned food, but suspected the unpoisoned food as well. This fear and suspicion caused their abnormal behavior.

THE FARM FRONT
by John Russell

For over a year now, from time to time this column has been pointing out the danger — to farmers especially—of not carrying enough fire insurance; or rather, I might better say, of thinking you have enough when, at present replacement costs, it is not nearly sufficient. Matter of fact I think that a lot of the insurance companies—and their individual agents—have been very lax in not bringing this matter more clearly to their customers' attention.

* * *

So I was glad to see, in the Farm Forum Guide of January 10th., that there was an article on the same subject, and that it would be discussed as well on the Farm Forum air show. The article deals with a farmer they call Jim Davidson who, after fifteen years of hard work, had almost paid off the mortgage on his place, and was thinking of taking life a bit easier.

* * *

Then, one night, lightning struck. Telephone lines were out of order because of the storm, and before help could arrive the barn was a complete loss.

* * *

It turned out that Davidson had never bothered to take out any insurance at all — trusting, like too many of us, to luck. Now he discovered that it would cost him around $4,000 to build a new barn—and the whole farm, including house and barn, had cost him only $8,000 to begin with. Maybe some of you think that I keep harping on this matter too often. But if doing so will induce only one reader to take stock on how he stands in this regard — well, I'm not making any apology.

* * *

Now here are a few tips, culled from here and there, which I hope some of you will find of value. Poultry raisers are reminded that after leaving a pen where there are sick birds, it is essential to change your rubbers. Neglecting to do so is taking the risk of carrying disease germs over to houses in which healthy birds are fed. This goes for visitors too. A trained veterinarian will never go from sick pens to other flocks without changing overshoes, or cleaning same carefully.

* * *

Also for poultry raisers is the reminder that hydrated lime makes deep litter much more absorbent, and less inclined to cake. An agricultural experiment station recommends stirring lime into the litter at the rate of 10 or 15 pounds per 100 square feet of floor space. You can also use a rate of one pound per littler.

* * *

Even if poultry feed supply and prices may be a bit more favorable than in the past, keep on culling. Low producing hens are expensive boarders, so get rid of them as poultry meat. If a hen won't pay for feed with eggs, get rid of her for what she'll bring.

* * *

It's the little things—the things so easy to overlook — that makes a farm, according to statistics, one of the most dangerous places there is to live on. For example, the farmer is probably the "climbingest" person on earth. Yet he takes less care of his climbing equipment than most anyone else, in spite of the fact that falls are the Number One type of farm accident.

And there's no real necessity that this should be the case—not if you'll do these things. Keep your ladders in good repair at all times; build barn ladders so that you can get a secure footing on each and every rung; extend permanent ladders at least four feet above the level of the loft floor; build ladders so that you can grasp the side rails instead of the rungs; keep ladders and stairways clear of hay and other materials; and build a guard rail around all ladder and stair openings.

* * *

I don't get around to tips for the ladies very often, but here's one which may save trouble for those of you who have washing machines. Cold weather calls for special care of this sort of household equipment. Bring the washing machine into a warm room for a few hours before starting it going—or else let the tub stand full of warm water for an hour before beginning to wash. This warms the grease of the motor. And don't forget that hot water poured on very cold porcelain may easily crack the enamel.

* * *

City folks are given to complaining about the high prices of things like bread and milk — and maybe they have reason for so doing, but they shouldn't put too much blame on the "grasping" farmer. If farmers gave to consumers all the wheat needed to make bread FREE OF CHARGE it is said that the saving would amount to something less than three cents a loaf.

* * *

And here are a couple of quotes which maybe you haven't seen before. "They're still looking for the perfect tax—the one that's paid exclusively by the other fellow."—and "Lots of people can hear a rattle in their cars far quicker than one in their heads". Which should be about enough for just now!

Queer Cases

Law courts, at times, have some queer cases to decide. In a recent issue of the New York Times, Harold Helper outlines a few that are really out of the ordinary.

A Boston Man for pelting his estranged wife with chocolate eclairs.

* * *

A Pittsburgh man for attempting to force a golf ball into his wife's mouth so she would not scream when he beat her.

* * *

A New Haven woman for calling a judge "a fat Republican."

* * *

A St. Petersburg invalid for refusing to yield the right-of-way and crashing his wheel chair into an automobile.

* * *

A Kenosha man for driving his truck into a tavern to get his wife who had been obstinate about leaving.

* * *

Two Spanish-American war veterans for fighting a duel with canes over a woman.

* * *

A Brooklyn man for throwing a bull fiddle at another during an argument.

* * *

A Chicago man for uncoupling the coaches from the engine when he couldn't find a seat on a train.

ARE YOU DISCOURAGED
because you suffer distress from
'periodic' FEMALE COMPLAINTS
which makes you NERVOUS HIGH-STRUNG on such days?

Are you troubled by distress of female functional monthly disturbances which makes you suffer, feel so *nervous*, cranky, restless, weak—at such times? Then do try Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound to relieve such symptoms!

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NOTE: Or you may prefer LYDIA E. PINKHAM'S TABLETS with added iron.

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IN OUR TIME — By Howie Hunt

"I've tried all sorts of things but I've had more success with THIS than anything else!"

JITTER — By Arthur Pointer