

The Free Press Short Story

The "Bell Turkey" of Gobbler Valley

DENNIS H. STOVALL

HERE is a green little valley, nestling among the higher hills of the Coast Range that long has been called "Gobbler Valley." This, for the reason that the folks who live there, have made their living, since early days, by raising turkeys. Before the days of the motor truck and paved highways, the hundreds and thousands of big red-wattled birds, raised in "Gobbler Valley" were driven to the nearest railway station, which was the quickest and easiest method, although the better part of two days was required to cover the fifteen, or twenty miles. These "turkey drives" started early in November, an ample time to get the birds to the city markets by Thanksgiving. If a turkey raiser had as many as one hundred birds ready for market, he would take them alone, or in a single drove. But where there were smaller flocks these were combined, the birds of each flock being marked with "leg bands" so as to be identified and separated at the loading station.

If you should visit the valley now, you would find conditions considerably changed from what they were a few years ago. As already hinted, the coming of the motor truck and hard-surfaced roads made a great difference. For now the turkeys are collected and crated a few days before Thanksgiving and whizzed over the highways to the market in a few short hours. One striking reminder of the old days is Red Head, a veritable patriarch of the turkey tribe—a great gobbler who struts proudly and with the air of an aristocrat in the yard of Conrad Davis. There are two distinguishing features about Red Head. One is his crooked right wing—not noticeable only when he struts. The other is a tinkling silver bell that he wears around his long neck. Whenever a stranger enters the Davis gate, he is greeted with a loud calling: "Gobble! Gobble! Gobble!" and the musical jingling of that little silver bell. A ruddy-cheeked, sparkling-eyed girl will meet you at the door, and inside the house you will be further welcomed by a sweep-faced, silver-haired mother. Both will smile at your fears when you hurriedly enter to escape the too familiar advances of Red Head. For there is something ferocious about the attitude and manner of this huge bird as he comes strutting toward you, jingling his bell.

"Don't be afraid of old Red Head," speaks the girl reassuringly. "He won't hurt you! He likes to meet folks—for he is very proud."

You at once feel more kindly disposed toward the barnyard aristocrat with the strutting ways. Then you ask the same question that every stranger asks when seeing, or meeting Red Head for the first time. "Why does he wear that bell?"

"When we first came to this place, Conrad, my son, was only a boy of fifteen. Irene was two years younger. We had a lot of hard work to do, that first spring and summer, getting a garden planted and a crop in. Though Conrad was a willing worker as ever lived, yet he was only a boy and he had a man's job on his hands. Irene and I helped him all we could. Everybody raised turkeys then as they do now, but to get a start with turkeys, even in those days low prices required a bit of capital. Fortunately we had good neighbors, and one of these, Uncle Ned Mason, who lives on the place just south of us, kept a big flock of turkeys. That spring, when the young ones came on there was the usual difficulty of rounding them up and in getting them in. Turkey hens take delight in wandering far afield, and in hiding their nests in the most out-of-the-way places. Irene learned of Uncle Ned's difficulty, so she set herself to finding those hidden nests and locating mother turkeys with broods. For her good work in recovering these, Uncle Ned rewarded her with an even dozen "baby turks," as our folks call them."

"Not all those little gray-feathered creatures were sound. In fact, some had very sore feet due to their attempts at following the mother bird over stony ground, some were infected with 'turkey croup,' which was nothing less than a severe cold, and one had a broken wing. But we made a warm, clean brooder, gave them the best of attention, and brought eleven of the dozen through to a mature age. One of the eleven was Red Head, he of the broken wing."

"Red Head, from the first was Irene's pet bird. She fairly lavished her attentions on him, in return for which the young gobbler proved devoted, as well as appreciative. He delighted in eating kernels of corn out of her hand, and whenever she appeared in the barn lot he would hop up on her shoulder. By late fall, because of his hearty appetite and the abundance of good things made his portion, Red Head was a considerable load for Irene to carry."

"When November arrived there was the usual sorting, selecting and marking for the drives to the railroad station. Conrad and I picked out six of our turkeys to sell, reserving three of the best hens. Yes, said Red Head. Irene would not hear of sending her pet to market! "Oh, no. That spotted gobbler of hers, however fat and prime should

not serve as the feast for some rich man's table." At this juncture, the silver-haired mother pauses in her story and laughs merrily, while Irene blushes to the roots of her lovely brown hair. From the barn lot comes the loud "Gobble, Gobble, Gobble!" of that proud-strutting aristocrat, and the musical jingling of the little bell.

"Of course we didn't blame her for not wanting to spare Red Head," the mother resumes. "And if the truth were told, Conrad and I were almost as much attached to him as was Irene herself. So, as Uncle Ned wanted Conrad to help him with his drive, we planned to take our five along with the Mason flock. Accordingly, on the night before, the five were fastened in a coop. At day-break the next morning the drive was to start from Uncle Ned's place."

"Conrad was up by four o'clock that November morning, doing the chores, and eating the early breakfast I prepared for him before six. We let Irene sleep. Conrad fed the five turkeys by the light of his lantern, then unlashed them, and started off down the road toward Uncle Ned's place while it was yet dark. I remember what a lot of trouble he had getting those birds started. Using a long willow stick, he urged and coaxed and prodded, but they would keep darting back or dodging round. They did not cherish the idea of leaving home, especially on such a cold, gray morning. To make matters worse, Red Head, from his perch on the fence, which was as high as he could get on account of his broken wing, set forth a series of protesting calls, as if he sternly objected to this breaking up of the little flock. When I had helped Conrad through the gate, and seen him safely started down the road, I returned through the lot and found Red Head strutting round in a great fluster."

"You may as well go back to roost, old fellow," I told him. Then I went into the house and thought no more about him. As I no longer heard his calls I concluded he had heeded my advice and returned to his roost. In which conclusion I was sadly wrong."

"As soon as Irene had her breakfast she collected a full plate of scraps and tidbits and went out to feed her pet. A little while later, she returned, very much excited. 'Mother! Red Head is gone! Red Head is gone!'

"Surely not, dear," I consoled. 'I saw him in the lot as I came in from helping Conrad get started. Are you sure you have looked—'

"I've looked everywhere—in and around the barn—under the sheds—out in the orchard—and I can't find him! He's gone, I tell you—gone!'

Here the mother paused again, and smiled toward her daughter. But it is a smile of loving sympathy—of gentle understanding."

"I went out and the two of us searched and hunted—all in vain. Red Head had disappeared. Of this there could be no doubt. We decided, of course, that the turkey had followed Conrad. We hurried down to Uncle Ned Mason's place, hoping we might find the stray. But he was not among the turkeys that remained on the place. There was no other conclusion for us than that the gobbler had joined the big flock that left that morning, getting away without being discovered by Conrad or the other drivers."

"They'll sell him! They'll send him to market! I will never see him again! Red Head!" Thus did Irene bewail her loss as the two of us returned home. "No, my dear, they won't sell him. They won't send him to market," I told her. "I'm sure Conrad would not do such a thing. He knows how much you love Red Head."

"But Conrad may never know that Red Head is with the big flock!" she answered fearfully. To tell the truth I held the same apprehension, but I let it pass unspoken and did my best to cheer the heartbroken Irene. Which was a difficult matter. Before we got back home it began to snow. Not often do we have snow in our valley as early as Thanksgiving, but that November proved an exception. By noontime there was a depth of four inches, and the feathery flakes kept falling. The wind veered to the north and turned colder. We knew what this would mean to Uncle Ned, Conrad and the others who were on their way to the station with the flock of turkeys. For it is a difficult and tedious task driving the big birds in an open highway. In the face of such a storm it had swooped down upon the valley, the big drove would no doubt scatter and get lost. As we were to learn later, Uncle Ned and Conrad, with the two hired men, did have all manner of trouble when the unexpected snowstorm loosed its cloud of feathery flakes. Frightened and terrified the turkeys huddled in a compact mass by the roadside, and would not be driven neither backward or forward. The tons gobbled and the hens quirked, and all set up a loud-calling chorus. Above the babel the drivers shouted and coaxed and urged, and provided the lagging ones with their willow sticks. But about all that could be done with the flock was to make it still, aimlessly round and roach.

"It was the hope of Uncle Ned and Conrad that the storm would soon spend itself. But when noontime came and the wind increased, bringing a denser flurry of the frozen flocks, this vanished. Ultimate disaster threatened the big flock. With the drive was a buckboard drawn by a horse, and which carried the bags of corn for the turkeys. Uncle Ned tried to lead the flock by tossing corn on the road. But the kernels were buried at once in the snow, and the distressed birds made no attempt to pick them up. All the while they gobbled and quirked, while the drivers, in desperation, urged them forward. Finally, when the weary town-out crew were on the verge of despair, there was heard, above the general babel, a clear, noble Gobble! Gobble! Gobble! which had in it a genuine tone of leadership. And Conrad, searching out this one that gave the call, uttered a wild, glad cry. 'Red Head! Red Head is here!'

"That about seemed at once to put a reviving thrill into the tired drivers. All of them had heard or seen the big gobbler with the broken wing. How he had come to join the flock was not then a matter of conjecture. The main thing was to get that stranded flock moving. And Red Head, the born leader, with Conrad's help and a bit of urging, accomplished the seemingly impossible. He started forward, calling at the top of his voice—the others followed and kept following."

"Gobble! Gobble! Gobble!" Thus did the big turkey cry his command above the gale. Straight into the blinding swirl he went, till the flock reached a roadside call shed. This proved a haven and a shelter for the drivers during the remainder of the day and for the night. The storm abated before another day came, and the road was opened so the stranded flock could proceed. But even now Red Head, having found his place, insisted on taking the lead, with his loud-calling "Gobble! Gobble! Gobble!"

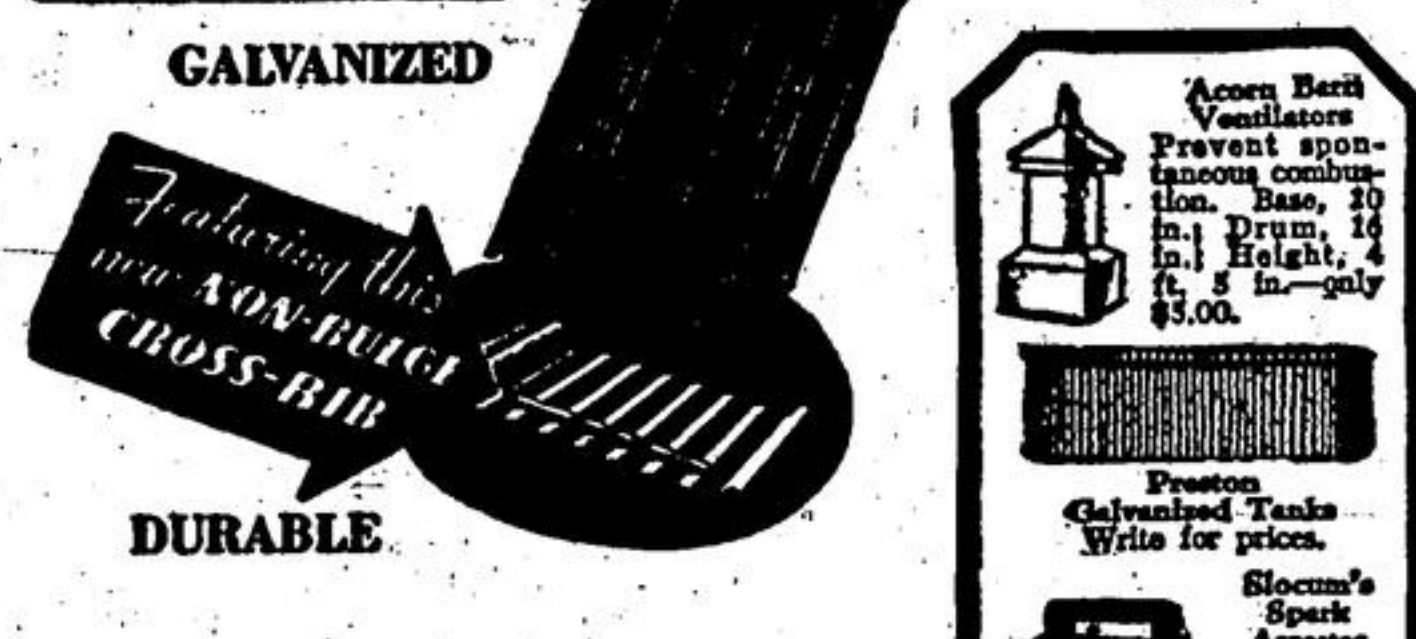
"Nor was there any to dispute him. 'We won't send him to market! Not much!' declared Uncle Ned declaimingly, long before the station was reached. 'We're going to take him back and let him come with us when we bring the next drive—to lead the others.' 'So, at the end of what had been for Irene and I a long period of anxious waiting, we looked out through the window and saw Uncle Ned's buckboard coming slowly up the snow-plowed road toward the gate. It was the afternoon before Thanksgiving and we had begun to fear that Conrad would not be home the next day. But here he was—and Uncle Ned—and Red Head! Red Head! They've brought dear old Red Head! shouted Irene joyously, as she dashed through the door and down the walk."

"Yes, here he is—take him!" cried Uncle Ned heartily, as he lifted the proud turkey aloft. 'He's the smartest gobbler in seven states! Being a born leader, we've put a bell on his neck. Take him, my dear young lady! He's too smart a bird to send to market.' 'Gobble! Gobble! Gobble!' called Red Head, as he felt Irene's glad embrace. 'Tinklet! tinklet! tinklet!' jingled the silver bell."

Persian Balm invests every woman with subtle charm. Delicately fragrant. Cooling and healing. Disperses all roughness or chafing. Makes skins delightfully soft-textured. Every woman should use this peerless toilet requisite. Daintiness—beauty—refinement—Persian Balm achieves these in every instance. Softens and whitens the hands. Promotes clear and youthful loveliness. All women who care for additional charm unhesitatingly choose Persian Balm.

NO SFEAKA ENGLESH  
Britisher to Canadian Northwest Indian  
White man glad to see red man. White man hopes big chief is feeling top-hole this morning.  
Indian (calling)—Hey, Jake! Come here and listen to this boss. He's good.

NOW is the time to roof  
TITE-LAP is the roof to use!



Prevent rain and decay from eating into the heart of beams, joists and rafters. Protect against rot, against fires. Re-roof with Tite-Lap. Prices may never be so low again.

Tite-Lap is permanent, leak-proof, fire-proof. Easily and quickly erected—comes in sheets 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 feet long. Saves sheathing lumber on new buildings. Lay it right over old shingle roofs. Made in Council Standard and Acorn Quality Brands.

Tite-Lap is Canada's greatest roofing value. Let us prove it. Send us ridge and rafter measurements and we will send free estimate.

Galvanneled Rib-Roll  
Beautiful, inexpensive, easy to lay. Another unequalled roofing value. Cannot warp, shrink, crack, curl or bulge. Fireproof. In attractive colors.



Eastern Steel Products Limited  
Factors also at Montreal & Toronto

Business Directory

MEDICAL  
DR. J. A. McNIVEN  
Physician and Surgeon  
Office and Residence—Corner Bowser Avenue and Elgin Street.  
DR. E. J. NELSON  
Physician and Surgeon  
Electro Therapy Phone 88  
LEGAL  
Phone No. 22 P. O. Box 22  
HAROLD NASH FARMER, M. A.  
Barrister, Solicitor, Notary Public, Conveyancer, Etc.  
FERRYMAN BLOCK - ACTON, ONE MONEY LENT ON MORTGAGES  
Hours—8.30 a. m. to 5.00 p. m. Saturdays—12.00 o'clock  
KENNETH M. LANGDON  
Barrister, Solicitor, Notary Public  
Office:  
Acton Georgetown  
Over T. Seynuck's Cafe Main Street E.  
For Appointments Phone Acton 55-02  
Office Hours—Acton, Tuesday and Thursday, 1.15 p. m. to 4.30 p. m. Evenings on request.

DENTAL  
A. J. BUCHANAN, D. D. S.  
Dental Surgeon  
Office: In Lelshman Block  
Hours: 9 a. m. until 6 p. m. Evenings by Appointment  
Gas for Extractions  
Closed All Day Wednesday Phone 148  
P. W. PEAREN, D. D. S., L. D. S.  
Dental Surgeon  
Successor to Late Dr. J. M. Bell  
Phone 29 Mill Street, Acton

MISCELLANEOUS  
FRANCIS NUNAN  
Bookbinder  
Account books of all kinds made to order. Periodicals of every description carefully bound. Ruling neatly and promptly done.  
Wyndham Street—Guelph, Ont.  
(Over Williams' Store)  
Watchmaker Jeweller  
J. H. JORDAN  
GEORGETOWN  
Expert Repairs Prompt Service  
We have for years been doing repairs for other jewelers across Canada, so are quite capable of doing yours.

Axlrod Auto Parts  
Used Parts for All Cars  
BATTERIES—TIRES  
ACCESSORIES  
29 Gordon Street—Phone 559  
GUELPH, ONTARIO

TAIT OPTICAL CO.  
Optometrists and Opticians  
110 Wyndham St. — GUELPH  
W. T. Patterson Optometrist (Regd.),  
Quality—Accuracy—Service

TO THOSE WHO REALLY CARE  
Memories are Sacred  
Whether Life has been rich with experience or confined within narrow limits, there are always memories held sacred beyond the reach of commonplace things.  
To those memories and to the finer things which they have inspired, one owes full reverence and respect.  
The beautiful custom of erecting a monument—dignified, lasting, beautiful—springs from this natural urge.  
Choosing such a memorial is often somewhat involved with doubt, and we respectfully offer our services in the capacity of counsel.  
Acton Monument Works  
J. NEOL & SON  
PHONE 128 - ACTON ONT.  
"MAKE EVERY CHANCE"

The Road to RECOVERY

A Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada

WITHIN a few days the Dominion of Canada will offer for public subscription the 1933 Refunding Loan, the purposes and terms of which will be announced in detail by the Minister of Finance on Tuesday, October 10. In this national undertaking an opportunity will be afforded both for sound investment and for public service, and I have no doubts as to the readiness with which Canadian investors will respond.

I feel, however, that the 1933 Loan marks a point in Canadian affairs to which it is only proper that public attention should be drawn as a means of extending justifiable encouragement to many thousands of men and women who have endured adversity with such admirable fortitude.

With due precaution against unwarranted optimism I think I may say that in Canada we are now on the road to recovery. The road may be long and progress may be slow, but the events of the past six months appear to demonstrate with increasing clarity that the downward trend has come to a definite stop and that an upward trend is now in progress.

The evidence of improvement is written in the statistical facts of our industry and trade. These records show that our general economic condition reached its lowest point during the month of February last and that today we are definitely above that level following a recovery which has been gradual but persistent and unmistakable.

The most significant of these figures are probably those dealing with the physical volume of business, wholesale prices and employment, and I give here briefly the record of recovery in each case as shown by the reports of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics.

The index of our physical volume of business, which represents virtually the economic pulse of the nation, stood last February at 67.1. For August, the most recent month for which the index is available, the figure was 89.9, an improvement of approximately 34%.



PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA

DOMINION OF CANADA  
1933 REFUNDING LOAN

Wholesale prices, in which even minor changes are highly significant, have risen over 9%, or from an index of 63.6 last February to one of 69.4 in August.

Employment, although still at a regrettably low level, has, nevertheless, been gaining steadily for the past five months. On the basis of partial reports from industrial employers some 116,000 persons have been added to pay-rolls since last April. An estimate by the Bureau on a more comprehensive basis places the total increase in employment at 246,000 during the same period.

Our external trade figures are equally encouraging. Both exports and imports have risen, with the former showing the more rapid increase. As a result, Canada had a favourable trade balance of over \$114,000,000 in the twelve months ended August 31st this year. For the corresponding period last year the favourable balance was only \$38,000,000, and in the two previous twelve months' periods instead of favourable figures we had unfavourable balances of \$45,000,000 and of \$103,000,000 respectively.

All these facts and figures I think we may quite safely take as sign-posts on the road to recovery. In our further progress, no single factor will have more significance than the success of our national loan operations. The recent 4% loan in London was a notable tribute to Canada's credit standing. It was immediately oversubscribed many times and now commands a substantial premium. I feel satisfied that our own people will be quick to perceive that the 1933 Refunding Loan in Canada is at once a challenge and an opportunity—a challenge to aid in the restoration of business recovery and an opportunity to serve thereby their own and their country's best interests.