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Chronicles of ..
Ginger Farm

Written Specially for
 The Acton Free Press
GWENDOLINE P. CLARKE

Well, did you think over what I asked you last week, and have you come to a decision? I mean in regard to cats and birds living on the same farm. Can we keep both—that was the question? I still say yes, but only if we love both. I think that because we have plenty of birds around here and yet we have always had at least one cat as a house-cat and anywhere from one to six at the barn.
 Take Joseph-Mark for instance. I have never yet seen our Joe with a bird—his meat diet is mostly mice. Joe has very regular and definite habits. First thing in the morning he is waiting at the back door to come in. So, when the men go to the barn, in comes Joe. He then has all the milk he will drink, but it has to have the chill off milk straight from the refrigerator is not his dish. Then he has about two slices of brown bread, broken into small pieces and eaten dry. That is the way he likes it. When he is satisfied he walks off to the living-room, curls up in a stuffed chair, and sleeps—often until well on into the afternoon. When he wakes he has another feed and goes outside. If we are working in the garden he plays around with Honey; if not he goes to the barn and hunts mice. After supper he comes back to the house and stays wherever we happen to be until he is put out for the night.
 So all day long, around the house and in the garden, the birds mate, sing and build their nests unmolested. The only time they are worried is when Joe walks down the little path to the barn. Then the robins start up a chorus of protest

to which Joe pays absolutely no attention at all. Why should he—mice are much easier to catch anyway?
 Of course I must admit there are cats and cats—and the only way to have a cat that you can really feel any affection for is to train it from a kitten. You can't teach an old cat new tricks any more than you can a dog. So, if an adopted cat develops undesirable habits the only way is to have it disposed of unfeelingly and then start off with a nice, wee kitten. Look after it, make a pet of it, and give it house-room. If a cat grows up with a sense of security, with the knowledge that he can come to the house for rest and relaxation, then you can have birds and cats too. Cats love comfort the comfort of a soft chair or a box behind the kitchen stove, where they will sleep the greater part of the day if you let them. But a hunted cat soon becomes a hunting cat, so treat your cat according to the type you want him to be.
 And now to house cleaning. Last week I started work on a big bed room. It has a chimney in it, the top of which is just below the chimney hole in this same room. However, the chimney, as such, has not been used for several years so the hole in the wall was papered over and was used only as the headquarters for all the chimney swifts in the neighbourhood. When we stopped using the chimney we should have had it capped, but we didn't—so with every heavy rain diluted creosote ran down the wall. When I stripped off the brown streaked paper that was over the chimney hole I was simply amazed and horrified. What did I find? Hay, straw, feathers, dust and dirt, to a depth of about eighteen inches! It was plugged absolutely tight. We scooped out enough nesting material to fill a big pail three times. Naturally, this porous conglomeration acted like a sponge every time it rained and made the wall far worse than it need have been. So friends, if you have an unused chimney that is giving trouble, better do a little investigating.

Andrew Klemi would like to come out for the day on Sunday. The quick, cold lunch I had planned for Sunday had to be forgotten. When people who are used to restaurant meals come to visit I like to give them an appetizing home cooked meal. So they came—and while they enjoyed the quietness of a country Sunday, we enjoyed the treat of hearing my nephew play his violin which he had brought with him. One thing he played was particularly lovely a selection from Mozart, specially arranged for the violin by Fritz Kreisler. The professional touch does something to intricate notes that makes a violin almost talk. But how those musicians must work! Klemi practices six hours a day and yet to hear him play you wouldn't think he needed to practice at all. Music and living are synonymous to him.

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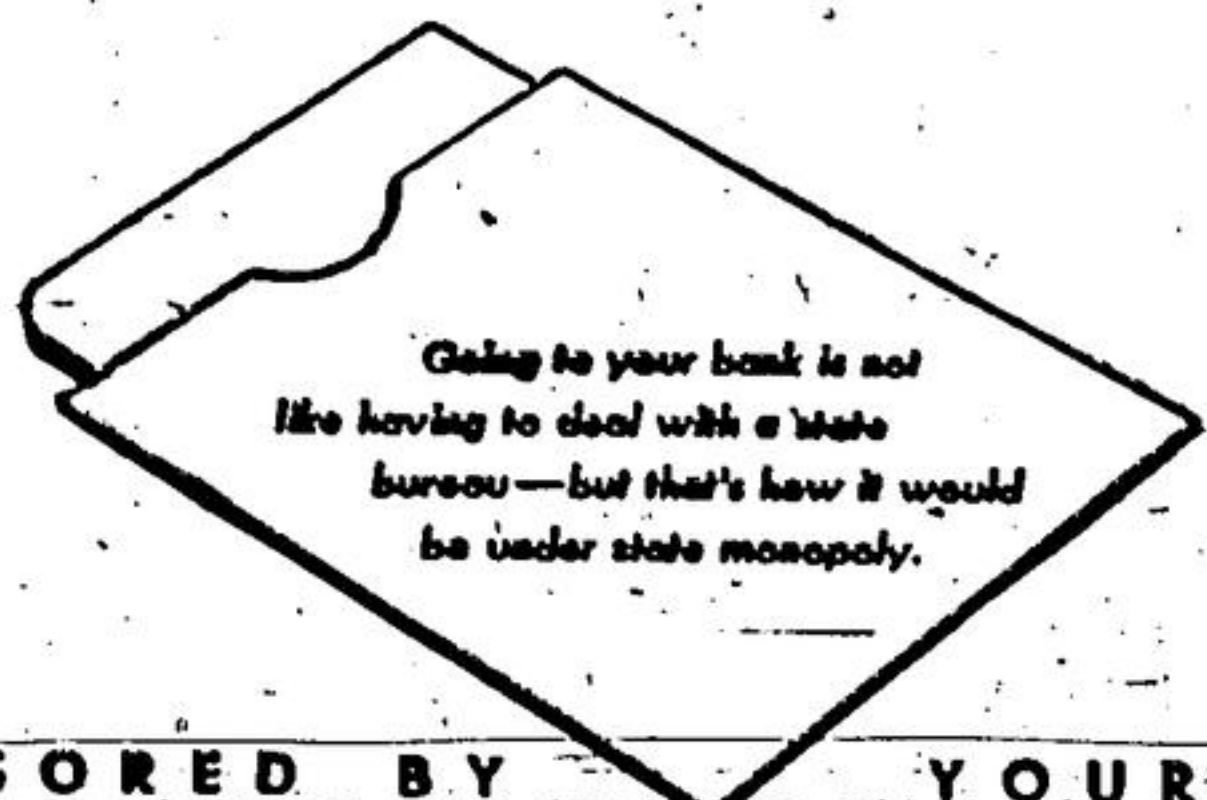
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