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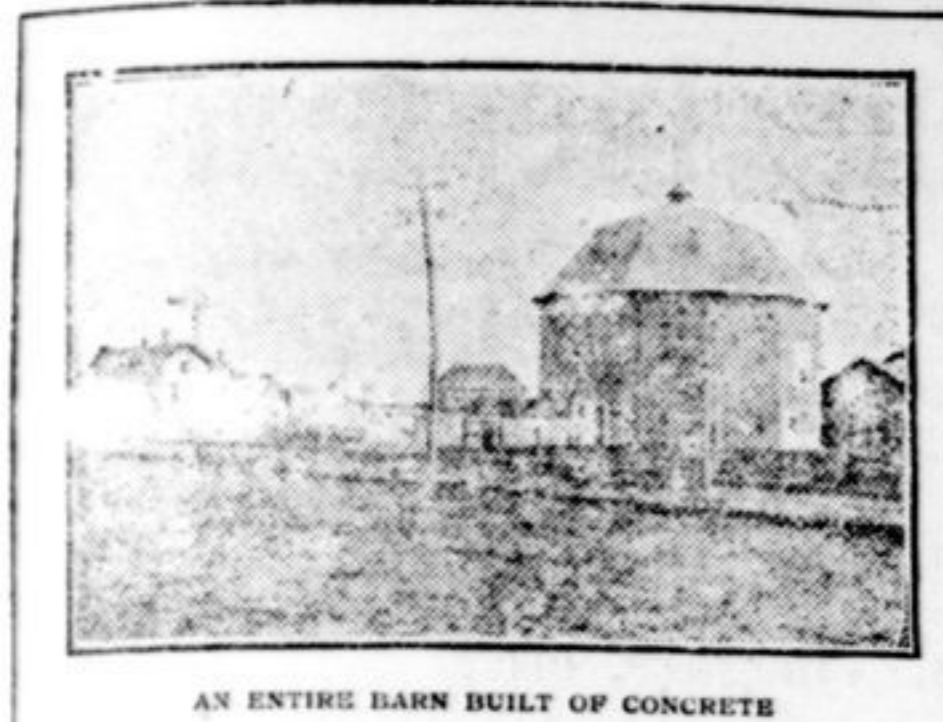
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Ridding the Farm of Rats

It comes as a surprise that any one should ask where the "rat" came from.

To most of us the rat has been familiar from our boyhood. The destructive little brute caused us no small excitement in our early days on the farm. He was always nosing around among the wheat bins, and eating holes in the bags of grain. In fact, nothing was sacred to him.

We early learned that he was an exceedingly intelligent animal. After we had caught a certain number of his family in the trap, we could catch no more, although from the damage caused by his tribe we well knew that he was just about as numerous as before those erring sons of his wandered into our trap after the enticing piece of cheese.

That he was a voracious animal and a great fighter, was demonstrated every time we emptied the trap in front of the dog. Towser made a jump for him, but unless the old dog was pretty smart the rat would send him sprawling down the field. Also, when we cornered a few of the rat family in a bin and went after them with the pitchfork, we, our relatives, sometimes were made to beat a hasty retreat.

If the rat were as big in stature as we are, it is doubtful if we would have the snap we have in controlling the animal kingdom. Mr. Rat would dispute the position of our own homes with us. Small as he is, he disputes it with us now. We have been trying to squelch him for many years past, and he has been defeating us at every turn. He is more numerous than ever before, and is doing more damage than we ever supposed.

A recent estimate of the damage he does in Canada each year is placed at a fabulous amount. It was more millions per year than most farmers have dollars in their pockets when they go to market.

It has now come to this, that the scientists all over the world are discussing means to get rid of the rat. In Paris a campaign has begun, but has not met with much success. In London something of the same nature is being done.

The rat is said to have come over in a ship from China. All we can say is that we heartily wish he had taken the next ship back. Unfortunately, he obtained a foothold in England, and multiplied at such a rate that he is now found all over the world. It is a strange explanation of the coming of the rat, but that is how we are told he came to be here.

Fortunately for the farmer, the rat seems to be originally a town animal. Apparently he is not a suburbanite, save by education. He prefers to inhabit underground passages and sewers and pick up a living wherever he can find it. Yet he is now spreading out into the country more and more, and unless the farmers do something to combat his advance he will be a serious menace to their prosperity, before many years have passed.

Around farm buildings is constantly to be had a surplus supply of food. The rat can find more to eat in a well-stocked barn than he could possibly know what to do with. There are rats in the country more and more, and unless the farmers do something to combat his advance he will be a serious menace to their prosperity, before many years have passed.

One has only to let his mind rest a short time on the subject and use a little ingenuity to be convinced that there is absolutely no excuse any longer for many of the disadvantages attending life on the farm, now that they can be so easily and cheaply remedied.

The rat appreciates this, and takes up his quarters on the farms, bringing with him, very often, the germs of disease from his dirty city haunts.

The question is, What is the farmer going to do to combat the advance of the rat? What is mankind, as a whole, going to do about it? It is a serious question, and we know of but one answer. It is this: Make buildings that he cannot enter. Construct buildings of concrete, a material which will not rot and through which it is absolutely impossible for the rat to eat his way.

In a cold country like Canada, it ought to be possible to starve the rat to death during the winter. Certainly it is possible to starve him on the farm. In summer he may forage in the fields, and it is complained that he is now numerous enough to be a serious menace to the crops. But if the farmers will employ concrete in the construction of their buildings they ought to be able to make it exceedingly difficult for the rat to take shelter in their barns. Keep the rat out of the house. Keep him out of the house and he will be decimated by starvation during the winter, when there is nothing for him to eat outside.

Fortunately, a liberal use of concrete in the construction of buildings will not cost the farmer anything. In fact, after he has found out the advantages of using concrete, he will feel rather grateful than otherwise to the rat for having been the cause of his education in the matter. When it is remembered that barn floors or feeding floors constructed of concrete will never wear out, that they will keep out mud and dirt, that they may be washed down and clean, that by a proper juncture between floors and walls, all apertures through which rats may enter may be done away with, one begins to appreciate some of the advantages of the use of concrete.

Form, by any reasonably intelligent person, is available. In this one matter of defence against rats, there is not a progressive farmer in the country who could not surround with an indestructible covering his granaries and root houses and other places where he stores his flour or other articles of which rats are fond, and of which they may eat such havoc. Just figure up what that would mean, not only in the matter of appearance, but in an actual saving of money, and see if you do not think it is worth trying. Don't go in too heavily at first. Make a test case on some of your grain bins, or on some of the smaller places where grain or flour is stored. Don't make it an expensive operation. No doubt you will go further as soon as you have found out the advantages.

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CHAPTER XXVII THE PURSUIT.

DEPPINGHAM sprang to his feet with a fierce oath on his lips. His usually lusterless eyes were gleaming with something more than despair. There was the wild light of unmistakable relief in them. It was as if a horrid doubt had been scaled from the soul of Lady Deppingham's husband.

"We must follow!" shouted his lordship, preparing to lower himself into the jagged opening. "We may be in time!"

"Stop, Deppingham!" cried Chase, leaping to his side. "Don't rush blindly into a trap like that. They've got an hour or more start of us. Nothing will be accomplished by rushing into an ambush. They'd kill us like rats. Rasula is a sagacious scoundrel. He'll not take the entire responsibility. There will be a council of all the heads. It will be of no advantage to them to kill the heirs unless they are sure that we won't live to tell the tale. They will go slow now that they have the chief obstacles to victory in their hands."

"If they will give her up to me I will guarantee that Lady Agnes shall relinquish all claim to the estate," announced the harassed husband.

"They won't do that, old man. Promises won't tempt them," protested Chase. "We've got to do what we can to rescue them. I'm with you, gentlemen, in the undertaking—first, for humanity's sake; second, because I am your friend; last, because I don't want my clients to lose all chance of winning out in this controversy by acting like confounded asses. It isn't what Sir John expects of me."

In the meantime the anxious coterie in the chateau were waiting eagerly for the return of the searchers. Drusilla made one remark, half unconsciously, no doubt, that rasped in the ears of the princess for days. It was the cold, bitter, resigned epitome of the young wife's thoughts:

"Robert has loved her for months." That was all.

Mr. and Mrs. Saunders, thankful that something had happened to divert attention from their own conspicuous plight, were discoursing freely in the center of a group composed of the four Englishmen from the bank.

"It's a plain out and out elopement," said Mrs. Saunders, fanning herself vigorously.

"But, my dear," expostulated her husband, blushing vividly over the first public use of the appellation, "where the devil could they elope to?"

"I don't know, Tommy, but elopers never take that into consideration. Do they, Mr. Bowles?"

At last the four men appeared in the mouth of the cavern. The watchers below fell into chilled silence when they discovered that the missing ones were not with them. Stupefied with apprehension, they watched the men descend the ladder and cross the bridge.

"They are dead," fell from Drusilla Browne's lips. She swayed for an instant and then sank to the ground unconscious.

In the conference which followed the return of the searchers it was settled that three of the original party should undertake the further prosecution of the hunt for the two heirs. Lord Deppingham found ready volunteers in Chase and the faithful Selim. They prepared to go out in the hills before the night was an hour older. Selim convinced Chase that the wily Rasula would carry his captives to the mines, where he was in full power.

"You're right, Selim. If he's tried that game we'll beat him at it. Ten to one if he hasn't already chucked them into the sea they're now confined in one of the mills over there."

They were ready to start in a very short time. Selim carried a quantity of food and a small supply of brandy. Each was heavily armed and prepared for a stiff battle with the abductors.

"We seem constantly to be saying goodby to each other." Thus spoke the princess to Chase as he stood at the top of the steps waiting for Selim. The darkness hid the wan, despairing smile that gave the lie to her sprightly words.

"And I'm always doing the unexpected thing—coming back. This time I may vary the monotony by failing to return."

"I should think you could vary it more pleasantly by not going away," she said. "You will be careful?"

"The danger is here, not out there," he said meaningly.

"You mean me? But, like all danger, I soon shall pass. In a few days I shall say goodby forever and sail away."

"How much better it would be for you if this were the last goodby and I should not come back!"

"For me?"

"Yes. You could marry the prince."

without giving me on your conscience forevermore."
 "Mr. Chase!"
 "It's easier to forget the dead than the living, they say."
 "Don't be too sure of that."
 "Ah, there's Selim! Goodby! We'll have good news for you all, I hope, before long. Keep your eyes on Neenah. She and Selim have arranged a set of signals. Don't lie awake all night, and don't pray for me," he scoffed, in reckless mood.

The three men stole out through the small gate in the upper end of the park. Selim at once took the lead. They crept off into the black forest, keeping clear of the mountain path until they were far from the walls.

The starlight filtered down through the leafy canopy above the road, increasing rather than decreasing the density of the shadows through which they sped. None but strong, determined, inspired men could have followed the pace set by the lithe, sure-footed Selim.

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Mile after mile fell behind them with no relaxation of energy or purpose. They were coming to the ridge road, and Selim fell back to explain the need for caution. This was the road, in all likelihood, he explained, that the abductors would have used in their flight from the cavern. Two miles farther south it joined the wide highway that ran from Ararat to the mines.

Selim crept on ahead to reconnoiter. He was back in ten minutes with the information that a party of men had but lately passed along the road toward the south. Their footprints in the soft, untraveled road were fresh. The stub of a cigarette had scarcely burned itself out.

They broke away from the road and took a less exposed course through the forest to their right, keeping well within earshot of the ridge, but moving so carefully that there was slight danger of alarming the party ahead.

At last the sound of voices came to the ears of the pursuers. As they crept closer and closer they became aware of the fact that the party had halted in the roadway at the point where a sharp defile through the rocks opened a way down into the valley. Like snakes the pursuers wriggled their way to a point just above the small basin in which the party was congregated.

A great throb of exultation leaped up from their hearts. In plain view, at the side of the road, were the two persons for whom they were searching. "Good luck is with us," whispered Chase unconsciously.

Lady Agnes, disheveled, her dress half stripped from her person, was seated upon a great boulder, staring hopelessly, lifelessly, at the crowd of men in the roadway. Beside her stood a tall islander, watching her and at the same time listening eagerly to the dispute that went on between his fellows. She was not bound. Her hands and feet and lips were free.

Bobby Browne was standing near by. His hands were tightly bound behind his back. His face was blood covered, and the upper part of his body was almost bare, evidence of the struggle he had made against overwhelming odds. He was staring at the ground, his head and shoulders drooping in utter dejection.

Three of the treasure chests were standing beside the road, affording seats for as many weary carriers. It was all quite plain to Chase. Rasula and his men had chanced upon the two white people during one of their trips to the cave for the purpose of removing the chests.

Rasula was haranguing the crowd of men in the road.

"It is the only way!" he was shouting angrily. "We cannot put them to death until we are sure that the others have no chance to escape to England. I am a lawyer. I know what it would mean if the story got to the ears of the government. We have them safely in our hands. The others will soon die. Then—then there can be no mistake! They must be taken to the mines and kept there until I have explained everything to the people. Part of us shall conduct them to the lower mill and the rest of us go on to the bank with these chests of gold."

Rasula and six of the sturdiest men prepared to continue the journey to Ararat, transporting the chests. Five sullen, resentful fellows moved over beside the captives and threw themselves down upon the grassy sward.

"We will wait here till day comes," growled one of them defiantly. "Why should we risk our necks going down the pass tonight? It is 1 o'clock. The sun will be here in three hours. Go on!"

"As you like, Abou Dal," said Rasula, shrugging his pinched shoulders. "I shall come to the mill at 6 o'clock." Turning to the prisoners, he bowed low and said, with a soft laugh: "Adios, my lady, and you, most noble sir. May your dreams be pleasant ones. Dream that you are wedded and have come into the wealth of Japan, but spare none of your dream to the husband and wife who are lying awake and weeping for the foolish ones who would go searching for the forbidden fruit. Folly is a hard road to travel, and it leads to the graveyard of fools. Adios!"

Lady Agnes bent over and dropped her face into her hands. She was trembling convulsively. Browne did not show the slightest sign that he had heard the galling words.

At a single sharp command the six men picked up the three chests and moved off rapidly down the road, Rasula striding ahead with the flaring torch.

They were barely out of sight when Deppingham moved as though impulsive.

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Continued on page 7.