

*belle
of
cedar
and
island
chieftain*

Pap pioneered in livestock breeding in our community too. Up to this time people in general thought of a cow as just a cow and let it go at that. But it wasn't hard to notice that some cows gave twice as much milk as others, and that the milk of some was richer. When it came to fattening steers for market, some fattened easily to twelve or thirteen hundred

pounds while others weighed no more than half that when we sold them. Farmers talked about breeding up the stock, but for quite a spell it never amounted to anything but talk.

One day an advertisement came out in the *Burlington Gazette* about a herd of pure-bred Durham cattle somewhere over in Illinois, and offering heifer calves as low as a hundred dollars. Pap ran his finger along the lines of that piece and spelled out every word, clean to the end. Then he laid the paper down and picked up the almanac, to see what the weather was to be. After that he took up the paper again and read that piece once more, slowly and carefully. Then he got up and went to bed.

Next morning his mind was all made up. He had been the first to buy a lot of other things, so he decided to go to Illinois and buy a full bred Durham heifer. He had over two hundred dollars cash in his pocket book, and could afford to do it. Before ten o'clock he was off in the big wagon, with all the sideboards on, bound for Illinois and a heifer calf.

Several days later he came driving in with his prize calf. It was a beauty, and no mistake about it. Just weaned, and broke to lead. It had a halter on, made little so as to fit it, and when the men lifted her down to the ground, she led right off to the barn just like a horse. We had never seen anything like it.

Pap was awfully careful with that calf. She had oats, and bran, and middlings, and clover hay to eat. She was never allowed to run out in bad weather, and

sometimes Pap curried her just like we did the horses. She grew up fast and by the time she was three years old she was bigger than any cow on the place, had broad level hips, hind legs about as straight as her front ones. Pap had figured that when the first calf came it would be a heifer, and then he would have two full bloods. But it wasn't, and Pap was kind of down about it.

Next day great plans were made for milking Belle Cedar, for that is what we called her. Her registered name was Belle of Cedar, but we never called her all of that, what was the use? The girls were always in the majority at our house, and as far back as I can remember, they always did the milking. So my sister Belle, being partly the same name as the new cow, claimed the right to milk her first.

But Belle Cedar had some other ideas. The first thing she did was to kick the milk bucket, stool, and sister Belle clean over backward, and give a big lunge and land with her front feet in the manger. Her eyes looked kind of walley, and she acted like she was most scared to death.

Then my brother Joe allowed he would have to milk her 'til she got broke to it, and he gathered up the tools and squatted down to commence. But he didn't even get started. Belle Cedar just snorted, and cavorted, and acted up so ugly that Joe had to back off and give it up. So the men got a rope and fastened her hind legs together so she couldn't kick, and then Joe tried his hand again. But it was worse than before.

That crazy cow reared and pitched something awful, and finally fell right over on her back with her neck bent away around sideways like it was likely to break in two. Pap ran in and cut the halter rope and eased her up, and pretty soon she rolled over on her side and got up. Her eyes were nearly all white now, her nostrils were bigger, and she shook her head like she wanted to horn somebody.

But a cow has got to be milked some way so after a while the men rigged another kind of harness that took in her front legs as well as the hind ones, and they stretched a rope from her halter up to a beam, lifted her head high so she couldn't break her neck, and went at it again. But it was no use. That purebred shorthorn cow wasn't going to be milked by anybody, and she never was. Several times afterwards we tried it again, and it always turned out just the same way, but we never carried the thing as far as the first time. So the young calf was allowed to run with its mother and get all the milk it could manage, and it was the same way with every calf she ever had.

Belle of Cedar never did come up to Pap's expectations. She had eleven calves in the ten years we had her, and two of them were twins, but there never was a heifer calf in the whole bunch. Of course, Pap was able to sell these calves to the neighbors at a good round price, and everybody around soon had herds of high grade cattle, but as far as a purebred herd was concerned, we never got it. There have to be purebred mothers to breed purebred stock.

Belle Cedar was not only an outlaw when it came to milking, but in several other ways. She was as breachy as all get out, and could jump any fence on the farm. More than a hundred times we had to round her up out of the corn fields, and two or three time she got foundered and came mighty near dying. Once she got such a dose of green corn that she was sick for months. Some of her hoofs came off, and she got to be as thin as a rail. We tried yokes, and pokes, and tying a board over her eyes, but she got them off, somehow, and over the fences she would go. It had a bad effect on the other cattle too, and a good many of them got to be pretty breachy too. But none of them ever equalled Belle Cedar.

Finally Pap ran onto a contraption at a hardware store that was guaranteed to stop cattle from jumping fences. It was a yoke with a bow fastening around the neck, a long handle of a thing running down toward the ground, and a set of four sharp prongs held in place by a spring. These would gouge right into the animal's neck if it pushed against anything with that handle. So he bought one and put it on Belle Cedar.

It worked fine. Several times I saw her go up to the rail fence around the corn field and make ready to jump over. But when that handle caught under the rails she would get a rousing jab in the neck, then would back off and shake her head, and look pretty foolish. She wore that new fangled yoke several weeks and never jumped a fence once.

But one day, when I was prowling around down

in the pasture, I ran onto Belle Cedar lying on her side down by the creek bank, and breathing like a person that snores. I went up close to see what was the matter and discovered that the yoke bow which went around her neck was imbedded in the flesh as much as three or four inches. I went for help as fast as I could. Pap and the other boys hurried down there and tried with all their mights to get that yoke off. But it was too tight, so Pap sent for a handsaw to saw it off. But before the saw got there Belle Cedar was dead. That yoke always was pretty small for a cow with as heavy a neck as hers, and it had chafed her neck, Pap said, and started a swelling, and had just kept on until the flesh on her neck had fairly covered the yoke. She had just naturally choked to death.

All in all, Belle Cedar was pretty much of a failure, and that hindered Pap's efforts at building up a pure-bred herd of Durham cattle. But he wasn't discouraged. In fact you couldn't tell that he even felt sorry about anything like this and I reckon that was the reason he lived to be ninety-four.

It wasn't long 'til Pap had a new idea — the raising of fine horses. Again he went to Illinois, this time to John Greenwood's farm at Alexis, and brought home a fine two year old Clydesdale stallion named Island Chieftain. This time, however, he invested a cool thousand dollars.

Island Chieftain was light bay in color, had a mane that came half way down to his knees and had feet that were nearly as big as half bushel measures. When he

was full grown he weighed two thousand pounds. Chief was a great success in every way so that Pap got a lot of satisfaction caring for him. Chief was as gentle as a dog and anybody could ride him, if they were in no hurry.

We never went in for fast horses, but we did have a young horse that was hard to beat in a race. We called him "Taller," which was our word for tallow. I don't know to this day why we ever came to call him that. Frank was fifteen or sixteen years old about that time, and he named a good many things around the place. Some of the names he thought up were curious ones, too. He had a pony named *Loafer* which, in spite of his name, was the spryest, handiest little horse you ever saw.

Frank also named the unfortunate Shug and conferred such names as *Knickerbocker* and *Grindstaff* on the other horses. Edith, my youngest sister, once named a calf *Pete Beat Easter*, since the calf was born the day before Easter.

I ran a good many races with Taller and mighty seldom found a common plug which could outrun him. We never raced for money, just for sport. But we put as much enthusiasm into it as if there was big money at stake.

Down in the Pleasant Grove neighborhood an old man named Jack Smith owned a big farm of several hundred acres. He and his three sons raised racing horses and always went to all the fairs to run their horses. We heard that Old Jack, as he was called, made

pots of money at it. Our neighborhood didn't reach that far as to school districts, swapping work at thrashing time or anything like that, so we seldom saw the Smith boys. But once in a while they would ride some of their colts up to Yarmouth, looking for a race with our work horses.

One Saturday afternoon during a baseball game between Yarmouth and Tamytown, the Smith boys came riding in. They stood around making fun of our horses during the game and challenged any of us to a race as soon as it was finished.

None of us ever raced horses for money so the Smith boys got ready to ride off. But Dave Michaels agreed at the last minute to bet a dollar that they didn't have a horse which could run a quarter of a mile while my Taller ran sixty rods. The Smith boys tried to get the distance Taller must run boosted to sixty-five rods, but Dave wouldn't bet that way. Finally after a lot of arguing and cussing the brothers agreed to the terms, so the men measured off the distances. At the crack of the pistol we were off with Taller running better than he had ever run before.

But I was hardly started when the Smith boy shot past me. Honestly, it seemed like I was almost standing still. I never realized before what a fast animal a thoroughbred racing horse is. I never finished the course, for the Smith horse was a hundred yards ahead of me and kicking up a fog of dust. Dave handed over his dollar and the Smith boys rode off feeling mighty cocky. After that I never pitted my horse against any-

thing but work horses, and I generally could beat them as handily as that thoroughbred had whipped us.

Our community also had some fine hunting dogs. Henry Rawhert brought a blooded setter with him that was a surprise to the neighborhood with its smart setting and retrieving. Several of the men couldn't rest until they had scraped up money somehow to buy themselves good hunting dogs, too. Soon half of the farmers owned good dogs that would work prairie chicken, quail, and other wild game. Then people felt they had to buy better guns and hunting equipment, so they were pretty well outfitted.

We had a neighbor living about three miles west of us who always wore a white paper collar and drove a spanking team of high stepping trotters hitched to a light buggy. His name was Milt Wise and he bought cattle and hogs for market.

Milt always carried a wad of paper money big enough to choke a cow and he put on the dog generally. He operated a good-sized farm and had his house fixed up with all the latest conveniences. All of us believed Wise was rich and probably was planning to buy out all his smaller neighbors someday.

He smoked expensive cigars all the time, had ivory rings all over his harness and carried a buggy whip that must have cost at least a dollar. He took a particular pleasure in driving up and down the roads as fast as his team could trot — passing every other buggy and wagon.

There was a new bridge across a big creek east of

us which had a sign on it reading: "Five Dollars Fine for Driving Over This Bridge Faster Than a Walk."

At the opening of this new bridge the supervisors, the town clerk, the justice of the peace and many others were gathered for the occasion. Then Wise came driving past and raced right out on that bridge in a full trot.

One of the supervisors stopped Wise and told him that he was breaking the law, and that he owed the county a five dollar fine for doing it. Wise said that was all right and was a good rule. Then he flicked the ashes off his cigar, hauled out his wad of greenbacks, peeled off a ten dollar bill and handed it to the supervisor with the remark that he wanted no change since he was coming back that way in an hour and wanted to trot his horses over the bridge again. That was his way. He seemed to be made of money and didn't care a hoot about expenses.

A year or two later the sheriff closed down on Wise and levied on some of his property to satisfy a claim against him. That set off a whole chain of events, and the upshot of it was that he lost everything he had in the world. It came out at last that Wise never did have anything, but was just one of these high flyers who can make a go of living on borrowed money and get away with it for a considerable spell. But everybody liked Wise, and a lot of folks thought he was the finest man in the school district.

Pap was about as far from a fourflusher as anybody could be. He was absolutely on the up and up, and no-

body ever lost anything dealing with him. He never went into debt a dollar in his life. If he didn't have the cash to pay in full he just didn't buy, that was all. It was his way and nobody was ever able to change him. He nearly always carried quite a wad of money in his pockets, and never stood back for anybody when it came to buying something new and being the first one to have it.

I will never forget how proud we all were when he came home from Burlington with a John Glazeby top buggy that cost a hundred and seventy-five dollars. It was a one horse buggy and our big rangy sorrel mare, Fox, could make the wheels fairly hum along the road. But nobody but Pap ever got to drive that buggy. Once in a while he and Mother would take it to drive over to New London — ten miles away — to church, but mostly that blessed buggy sat in a barn stall covered up with a canvas for a month or two before he took a notion to go some place else.

Once he took me along twenty-five miles to Burlington to pay our taxes. We started right after dinner and drove to Flint Creek, about five miles from Burlington, where we stayed all night.

Pap took along feed for Fox so he unhitched her and tied her to a tree while we ate the lunch Mother had fixed for us. Then we slept in the buggy. But it was such a wonderful place among the big trees beside a dashing creek and so close to the big town that I didn't fall asleep until nearly morning. We were wakened by roosters crowing. Not two rods away was

Yankee Jack and his huckster wagon, all cluttered up with chicken coops. He was stopping there too and aiming to get to town for the early market.

It was my first trip to our county seat town. What a wonderful sight it was to ride down Sunny Side Avenue in that great city and see the fine houses and barns. Pap told me some of the houses even had electric lights, running water to wash and swim in, and handles in the middle of doors which Pap said were to ring a bell when we wanted in. The front yards were as big as good sized barn lots, all mowed smooth as could be. Gee, but it was thrilling!

We didn't drive down the main streets, for they had street cars which frightened the horses, and Pap refused to take any chance of smashing up the buggy. When we finally got to the main part of town where the stores were we found hundreds of people hurrying about, with about as many going one way as another. Nearly everybody was dressed up, a lot of them wore white collars, and some of them carried canes.

For the life of me I could not figure out how anybody could find his way around, or even find his way home. There were hundreds of streets and alleys and they all looked alike to me. Down at the foot of Jefferson street lay the great Mississippi River, half a mile wide and, I supposed, hundreds of feet deep. Two or three big steam boats were tied at the bank while a lot of Negroes loaded and unloaded the cargoes as fast as they could. Nearly half the river was covered with timber rafts, some nearly half a mile long. One was

tied to the bank with big ropes while men were fishing out lumber and logs to load them on wagons. Some of these men stood waist deep in the water to work. But they didn't seem to mind it at all.

Farther down the river were three or four great sawmills, whizzing and whirring and making the sawdust fly. Great log rafts which had been floated down from the northern pine forests were tied to the banks. From these rafts the logs were jerked out of the water and onto the sawmill carriers by some kind of machinery. Then the carrier would go rolling up against the great saw with much whining and grumbling but soon another pine board would flop down. Pap said they just kept that up day and night, but what they ever did with all that lumber I couldn't cipher out.

I never expect to spend another day as full of wonders as that one was. We ate dinner at Runge's restaurant with its looking glass reaching across the whole side of the room, its silver knives, forks and spoons and its tumblers as thin as paper. Paper napkins to fix under our chins and a big overhead fan to keep us cool while we ate seemed to me to make Runge's the finest place in the world.

After dinner Pap went to Carpenter's Jewelry Store to get the correct time and set his watch. Then after looking into the windows of some of the big stores we got Fox and the precious buggy to head for home. By four o'clock we were out to Flint Creek, in another hour we reached Dodgeville and were well on the way home.

By this time the excitement was over and the first

thing I knew I bumped over against Pap, sleepy as a puppy. He fixed me in the corner of the seat with my head against the bows. There I slept like a log for a long time. When finally I woke up deep in the night Pap was fast asleep also. Fox was trotting along the way home like she knew where she was going so I dropped off again and did not wake up until the buggy was stopped and Fox was standing with her head over our barn lot gate. I woke Pap up, we unhitched the horse and slept in some hay until the men came out to do the morning chores.

For days I could talk or think of nothing but that wonderful trip. There may have been places that beat that county seat, but the boy never lived whose heart was more nearly filled with delights than mine was after that first trip to Burlington, city of marvelous sights and sounds.