

MY FRIENDS THE ANIMALS

Maybe I was around ten years old when we got our first dog. A yellow, golden mongrel the size of a cocker spaniel, long haired. He was well house-trained, more than our cat. He would occasionally sleep on our bed, especially in winter when it was cold enough in the house to freeze the water in the pail on the sink. I remember one winter evening that he had been visiting, he was caught on the railroad track by a train and runned over. Killed? No ... but just about. He managed to reach our door and we let him in. He had lost one eye, a piece of his ears, a bit of his tail and a piece of his skin the size of my hand had been torn from his chest. I was horrified, He went straight for my mother's bed and crawled under it without a whimper. The next day he did not show up but the evening of the second day he crawled out. We were glad he was still alive and not lame. We gave him some water and he went back under the bed. A few days before, a man from up-river had been to a party in town. During the party his horse got free and started for home. About $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile above our place he came to a railway crossing and a big freight train was coming downhill full speed. The horse did not stop, he jumped in front of the train and ran

as fast as he could but the train caught up with him and tore him to pieces. I imagine our dog had been feeding on frozen horse meat when the train caught him, too. He was lucky that he was not as big as the horse.

When I was out west I was in charge of a little mission church. That is a church with a group of faithful not big enough to support a resident priest. I was given a little mare, a beauty and good on the road as very few horses are. But occasionally she would buck, stop and refuse to move. How long would it take for her to change her mind, I never knew because the man who had trained her had told me that a little whipping was the medicine. I had to use it even if I hated it, but only once. Later on, I was resident at a little place and was given another horse to visit another church 35 miles away. The horse was strong and fast but I could not keep him running those 35 miles. I would have killed him. So I would have him run for a mile or two and walk for awhile then run a bit more and walk some more. In the winter it was not very warm, even if I was well dressed. After he had run a stretch, I would get out and walk beside him for awhile to warm up. He tried to run away from me a couple of times but I managed to jump into the cutter and regain control. The good farmer who had brought up that animal told me what I could expect him to do and that made the difference. Thank you.

When I came back to Maine in 1950, as I said I was in Rockwood for four years visiting the lumber camps in the winter and helping my pastor in the summer. When I built my home I had a few dogs, one after the

other. I was too restless to keep them. I had fun with them and also with the wild animals. At Brassua Lake where I had my home there was a garbage dump close by and bears came. I saw one a couple of times. Once in the fall, one came into my wood shed to get some meat I had left there but went away without touching it when I made a little noise in the house and scared it without knowing it was there. Bears and moose have not the reputation of being too friendly to humans but I saw quite a few and they always were cool but polite to me. I know it could have been otherwise and it can always be next time. So I am careful and do not push my luck too far.

When I had my home at Brassua Lake, a weasel visited my wood shed regularly and to encourage it I would put table scraps, food leftovers. It would always eat those but it took care of the rats and mice around the place. Once in summer it came into the house, got scared and instead of running back out it went into my clothes cabinet and hid in a box. I found it by the smell. They spray like skunks but the smell is not so bad and it does not last. I took the box outdoors. My dog could smell it and was wild but I had somebody hold him and when I gave it a chance my weasel ran into a woodpile and was safe.

In Stratton I got a kitten not much more than six inches long. She was shy and would not eat when I was there. But we became good friends and six years later I took her with me when I moved to St. John. A good hunter, she was bitten by a snake and developed an infection but recovered. She disappeared a short time after I moved to St. John. There were a few mother cats there and a couple of male tomcats would fight for them. They were quite big, at least ten pounds and when they would fight, they did not use their claws but tried to choke each other. I did not want to hurt them nor that they would hurt each other. So to break a fight I would just throw a cupful of cold water on them and that would stop them better than anything I could think of.

