

THE COST OF A SKIN

OCTOBER is here again, urging us with its cooler weather to make preparations for the winter season, and, among other articles for the colder weather, furs are being displayed in the various store windows to catch the eyes of intending shoppers and make them want to buy. Reader, did you ever stop to think of the cost of a skin? We do not mean in dollars and cents, but in agony and suffering of the animals, and in degradation of those who hunt them to the state of unfeeling savagery. Has it ever occurred to you that when you purchase a piece of clothing made from furs, you are responsible for the atrocities which are committed in pandering to this unnecessary desire for such finery? It is worthy of note that when man kills cattle in slaughterhouses or similar places, he at least takes care to do it quickly and with as little suffering as possible to the animal, but when hunting the fur-bearing animals, man shows an absolute indifference to the feelings and the sufferings of his victims. Nay, he seems even to glory in them. A story is told, for instance, of a number of men and boys who pursued an otter for four hours, when she gave birth to two little ones, and she was then pursued two hours after, before she was finally killed. Most of the skins tanned for use as furs are obtained by catching the animals in traps, and death does not then usually occur for many hours or perhaps several days of the most excruciating suffering and pain.

The steel trap is the favorite device used by professional trappers and the power of this dreadful instrument is so great that often it amputates the leg of the captive at one single stroke. It is, in fact complained of by trappers that a great many animals escape thus, for a time at least, and it is said that on an average every fifth animal caught has only three legs. Sometimes they have only two or one leg, and a case is on record where a muskrat with only one leg was caught by the tail. Just think of what an intense amount of suffering was caused that poor animal before its fur finally fell into the hands of the savage human hunter. Modern inventors have turned their ingenuity to the task of preventing the animals from escaping captivity by amputation or by gnawing a leg off or twisting it off, as some animals do in their agony, and the latest traps are therefore furnished with a device so that the limb of the captive coming directly in the center of the trap will be clutched close up to the body. When that happens, no amount of twisting or gnawing will free the captive.

The springpole is another device that the trappers use to prevent the escape of their prey, once it has been caught in the steel trap. It consists of a flexible pole set in the ground close to the trap, with the upper end bent down and fastened in such a way that it will be released by any slight wrench. The chain of the steel trap is fastened to the pole, and when the poor animal is caught and struggles to escape it breaks the cord which releases the pole and the trap with its victim are jerked into the air where the poor victim hangs and starves to death, or freezes, struggling and suffering until death releases it, or the cruel hunter comes along and gives it the last blow which puts an end to its misery.

But of all the atrocious methods used by trappers for catching their prey, the one employed in the hunt for ermine is perhaps the superlative. It consists in taking a piece of iron too heavy for the ermine to drag away and coating it with grease and placing it where the ermine will find it. The ermine then licks at the grease, and the intense cold of the iron causes the tongue to instantly freeze fast to the iron, as if it had been put into a vice. There is no possibility of escape then except by pulling the tongue out by the roots, and the frantic struggles of the poor animal cause a larger and larger area of the tongue to adhere to the iron so that the whole inside of the mouth may become solidified and frozen by prolonged exposure to the bitter Arctic cold. This

method is used in preference to the steel trap or the bullet in order not to injure the skin, which is to adorn some high and noble personage. Ermine is costly indeed, not only in money but particularly in the superlative atrocity which is used in order to secure that poor little animal's fur.

No tongue can tell or pen portray, nor can we ever realize, what the poor victims of human vanity must endure during the long hours and days of awful sufferings up there among the silences of the great white North. Just think of it, it is estimated that thirty million animals are being put to death annually for the sake of their furs alone. If all these millions could be gathered together with their broken and mangled bodies, what a mountain of death, what an evidence of our brutality and cruelty they would make! And remember, everyone who wears this furry finery is partly responsible for the cruelty and the suffering inflicted upon these poor victims of human greed, for if people refused to wear such things, the demand would cease and the poor animals would be left in peace to live their lives in their appointed ways.

It is sometimes, or frequently, objected by people that if we did not kill these animals or even our own cattle and eat them, the earth would be overrun by them. But such is not the case! We do not eat dogs or cats, coyotes or skunks, neither are they extensively hunted for their fur or flesh. The horses are in the same category, yet these animals do not multiply beyond bound, and occultism offers the explanation that each species of animals is the expression in the physical world of a Group Spirit which is itself in the invisible world and guides its charges from thence. Hence, the remarkable instinct with which they are endowed. When these animals are prematurely killed, the seed atom which forms the Group Spirit's nucleus is released from the dying animal and used by the Group Spirit to quickly fertilize another of its tribe. Thus, the more we kill, within certain bounds of course, the quicker the tribe multiplies, but if we refrain from killing, it will not be necessary for the Group Spirit to fertilize the animals so often. Birth will decrease in the same proportion as death.

But returning to the question of furs used for clothing, we maintain that furs are luxuries, and it cannot be said in extenuation of the crime involved in getting them that they are essential to human life, which is the claim concerning flesh as food. Those in particular who aspire to live the higher life and attain to the higher powers cannot afford to wear these costly things. Some time ago a lady came to Mt Ecclesia professing to be bored by society and desirous of nothing save spiritual advancement; but when it was pointed out to her that no one would follow Christ in a fur coat, she admitted that she had a thousand dollar fur coat which she would not give up under any consideration, and she left the following day, angered at the idea that such a great sacrifice should be demanded of her, and placed herself under a teacher who was more complacent in his views of life and luxuries. Besides, as a matter of fact, clothing fully as warm as furs can be obtained, and the writer knows whereof he is speaking, having traveled far and lived in high latitudes, north and south, even in Siberia and the Land of the Midnight Sun.

What has been said about furs applies also to feathers, both as regards their cost in cruelty and the lack of necessity for their use. Beautiful, artistic, and warm clothing can be made without the use of either furs or feathers, to the economical and spiritual welfare of whoever abstains from the use thereof. Unfortunately, we are forced to use leather shoes and other articles of leather because we cannot obtain a satisfactory substitute in the market of today. But sometime when the world has awakened to the Gospel of Compassion and it is considered a crime to take the life of an animal, just as it is now considered in the case of a human being, then also these articles of clothing will be substituted for other products of industry which will serve the purpose fully as well or better. This is where the readers of our magazine may assist

in molding the world's thoughts, both by their actions in refraining from the use of furs and feathers and by advocating the idea that they are unnecessary, also by calling the attention of others to the atrocities committed in order to obtain these things. Thus the reader may help to hasten the day of peace on earth and good will among men—and animals too.