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THE SWISS COW

Elgin Daily News, August 4, 1877

[Found by Sean Harris, Chicago]

Among the Swiss mountains there lives a race of simple pastoral people, whose tastes are primitive and pleasures few, but whose hearts are large enough to take in not only their kindred and friends but their gentle domestic animals. There is much to admire in their conduct toward the pretty little cattle that graze on the scanty herbage of these mountain sides. We can learn from them that gentleness and consideration, rewards and caresses are much more potent in the profitable management of their dumb animals than kicks and curses, punishment and revenge.

It is customary among the mountains to hang bells around the necks of cattle, because, as they are allowed to roam among the steep and windings of the hills, the sound of the bells tends to keep them together and also to inform the herdsmen of their whereabouts. The bells are not the hideous-toned instruments of torture to the ear, so common in the back pastures of America, but really musical bells, varying in size and form from tinkling bits of metal to large deep-toned bells, the latter worn by leaders of the herd.

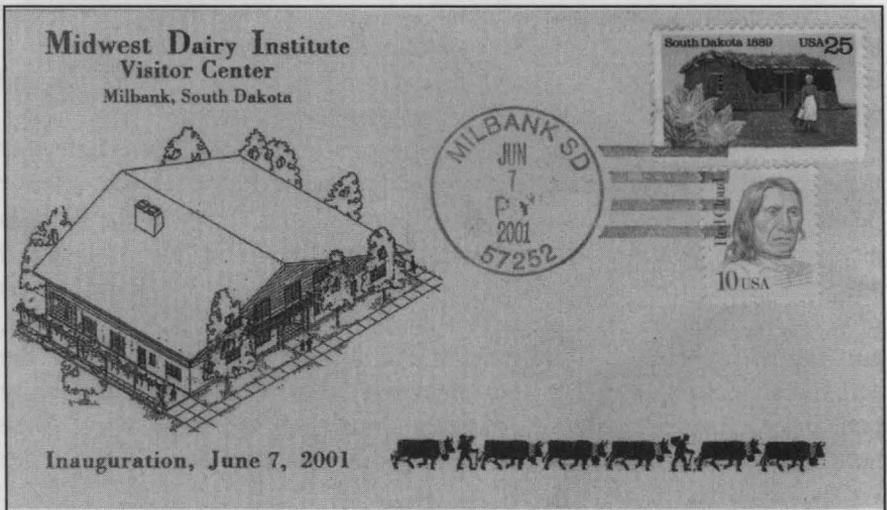
To show how much of the instinct of pleasure and pain may be traced and developed in these domesticated pets, and how much of simple and commendable pleasure these Swiss mountaineers enjoy in their daily toil, we give a sketch made by one who has visited these mountain homes and who has compared their methods of treatment with our own.

So accustomed and attached do the animals become to these bells that the deprivation of them is felt as a punishment: The cow whose superior beauty, sagacity and good conduct fit her to be the leader of the herd, is always on the gala days distinguished by the largest and finest-toned bell and the bravest ornamental collar, and so down, through all the gradations of good, to the small appendage that marks the indifferently good animal, and the total absence of ornament and distinction which stamps the self-willed vicious cow. If any cow has been guilty of straying, of unseemly behavior, breach of discipline or any vicious trick, the displeasure of the herdsman is not testified by blows but by the temporary deprivation of her

bell; and this seldom fails to reduce her to order and prevent a repetition of the offence. It is only necessary to see the cow on a gala-day, with her badge of distinction strapped around her neck, and then see her to be deprived of it, for some offence or other, to be convinced that this is true.

A certain cow that had long worn the bell of honor around her neck, had recently given birth to a calf and was considered too weak to bear the weight of the large bell, or indeed of either one. Her owner turned her out to go with the herd to the upland pastures. This summer removal of quarters is always held as a holiday. The peasants were dressed in their best clothes, the cows had on their bells and badges, and all went on gaily except the poor matron who was deprived of hers. After proceeding a few paces she began to show signs of great uneasiness, which constantly increased. It was vainly attempted to coax her forward, and soon she lay down on her side and would not move. In this dilemma one of the old herdsman went into the house and brought out the bell and collar, which the animal no sooner felt around her neck than she rose, shook herself, and raising her tail over her haunches in token of complete satisfaction, went off, prancing and curvetting with every appearance of health and gaiety, and, taking her place in the van, was from that moment as well as ever.

The lesson we would inculcate from this simple recital is that of the desirability of kindly treatment to the animals in our charge. Not only is pleasure to be derived from petting and caressing them, but vastly more profit can be secured by keeping them in a state of satisfaction and contentment.



First Day Cancel, courtesy of E. Schmocker and C. Nguyen