

THE PIGMY SHREW

RALPH STEUCK, Abernethy, Sask.



Pigmy Shrew

It was a dark midnight and the snow was gently falling as I returned from showing a movie at Indian Head. The car lights shone brightly on that November night. Old Mother Earth was all ready for the great white blanket. The leaves had fallen and the prairie grass and all the flowers were waiting to be covered. Yes! there was a great white stillness as the snow flakes came tumbling down — two inches had fallen.

Then down through the Qu'Appelle, far ahead of the car lights,

the eyes of a doe and fawn stood motionless by the roadside. There were fresh tracks where they had crossed the road some short time before, but not another mark or sign of living thing. Then strange to behold, I saw a moving line under the snow in the glare of the bright lights. Stopping the car, I hopped out and sure enough, there it was, moving like a raised vein on the back of the hand. Some tiny animal was bull-dozing a tunnel across the road while the snow was soft. I made a grab at the moving end, only to find my friend, the Pigmy Shrew, with his long pointed nose covered with long hairs. With his caterpillar four-wheeled drive he was pushing like a bull-dozer through the snow.

He is the smallest mammal in the world, yet the busiest of all the animals. He must have something to eat every half hour. He is carnivorous in habits and eats twice his own weight of food every day. His temperature is 106. He is furnished with a poison fang used to kill animals much larger than himself. The shock of catching him is fatal within 24 hours. Yet that strange little animal is not afraid of our northern climate.

These shrews live entirely alone except for the mating season, then the mother rears the family alone. "The Taming of the Shrew" has never been done.

We Miss the Coyotes

Mrs. E. C. Boon, Tullis, Sask.

What, I wonder, is the public opinion on poisoning the Coyotes? I miss them. We live on a coulee bank and used to see them all winter — sometimes hear them till they got annoying. We don't raise sheep but they never bothered our chickens. I suppose they got the odd one, but we never missed them. I think it was foolish to poison them off indiscriminately.

It's easy to see how things become extinct. I have two boys five

and six years of age. They don't know a gopher when they see a picture of one. I don't think they ever saw a live one.

Last winter was colder than this one has been up to the present and there was more snow. Yet then the rabbits never got completely white and we even saw a weasel with a reddish color across its back, in January. There were Horned Larks about all winter, yet this year the rabbits have been white for a month or more, and I haven't seen a Horned Lark for six weeks. Apparently the weather hasn't as much to do with the creatures' habits as we suppose.