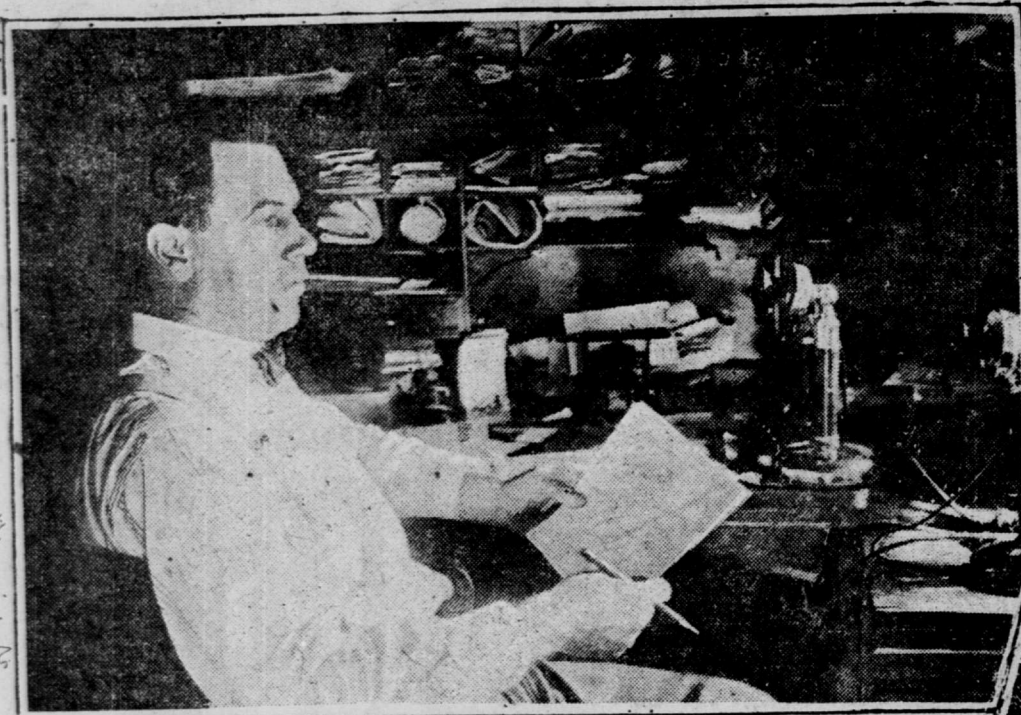


STONE of WINSTED

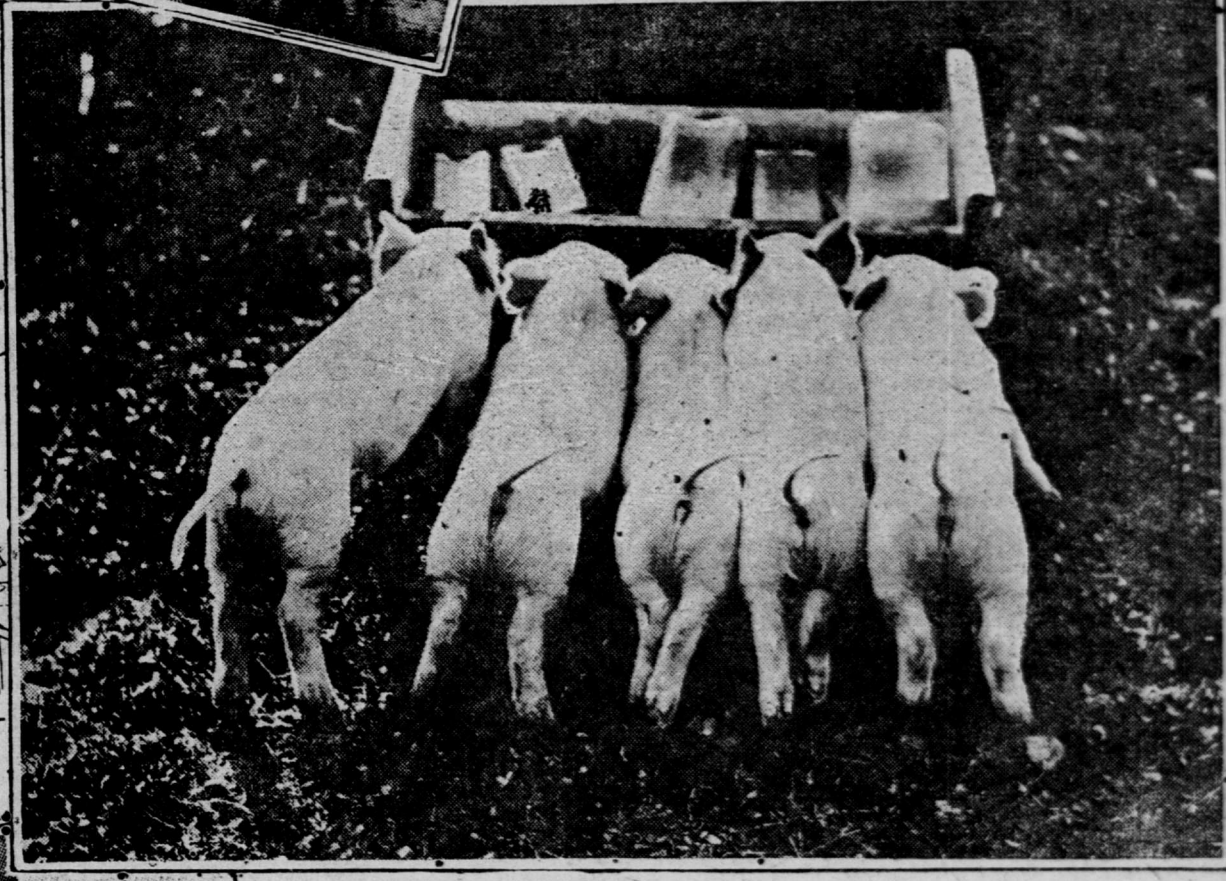
BEING an Unvarnished Account of the Wizard of Connecticut, the Master of Wondrous Tales, the Owner of the Tunnelling Trout, the Inventor of the Cheese Boring Woodpecker and the Only Human Being Who Saw the Great Frog



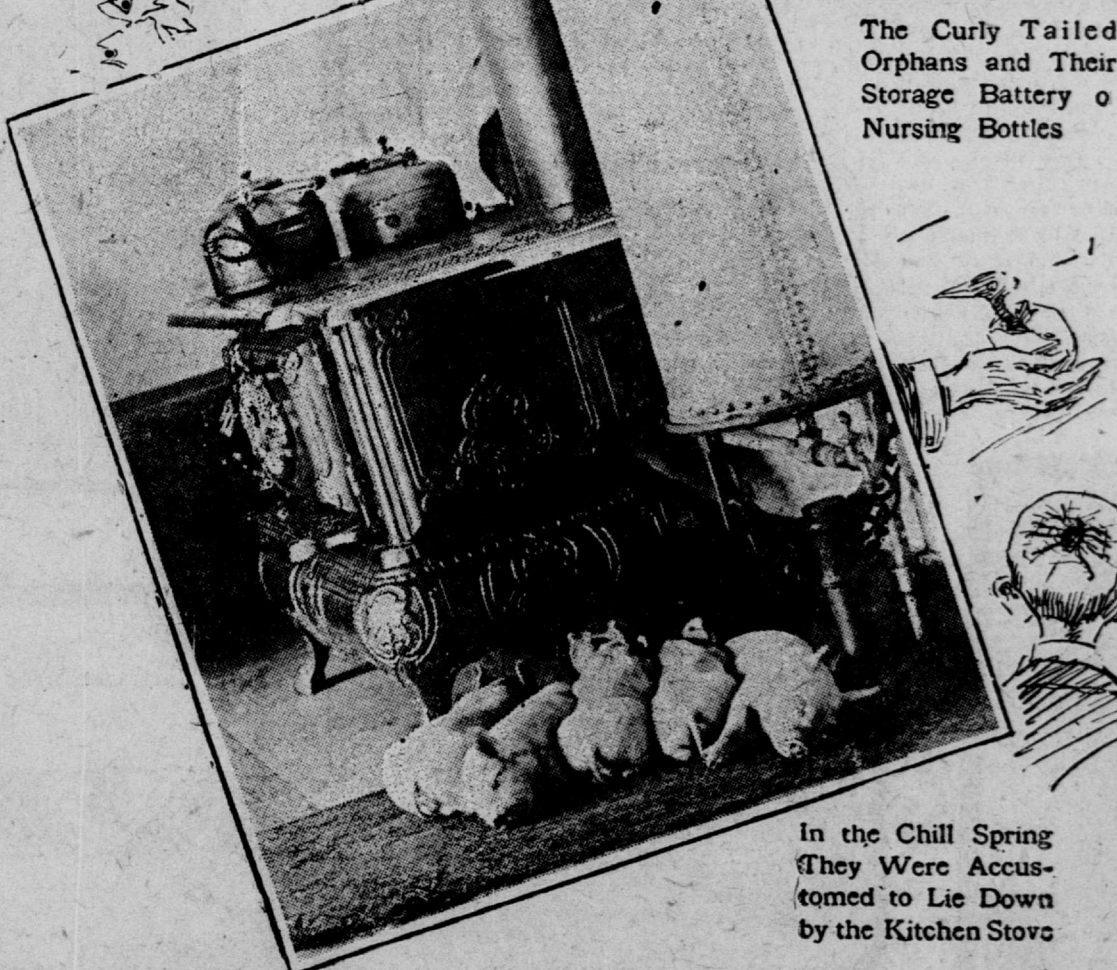
LOUIS TIMOTHY STONE.



The Only Photograph of Sheriff Middlebrook's Giant Frog



The Curly Tailed Orphans and Their Storage Battery of Nursing Bottles



In the Chill Spring They Were Accustomed to Lie Down by the Kitchen Stove

PETER!
Clear and strong the caressing cadences of the Wizard of Winsted fell into the depths of a well.

"Bl-u-u-p!"
Quick was the response to the summons. A dark and graceful form shot with arrowlike swiftness from the sandy bottom, and Peter, the Tunnelling Trout, emerged half out of the water with a look of polite interest on his high bred and intelligent face.

He did not speak, but it was as if he said: "Master, I am come to your bidding bowed."
The Wizard smiled and waved his hand. Peter, seeing that it contained no worm, disappeared as suddenly as he had come. To whom else would a dumb creature respond like this but to Louis Timothy Stone, the man who made Winsted famous?

Winsted? Yes, Winsted, Litchfield county, Connecticut, near the foothills of the Berkshires; Winsted, the home of the bait retrieving hen, of the grateful woodpecker who, saved as a callow fledgling by a dairyman, remained forever in his service boring holes in Swiss cheese; Winsted, which not all the anathemas against nature faking ever stirred from its proud pre-eminence as a mart for wondrous tales; Winsted, where Puss of the Woods became a household pet; Winsted, home of the biggest frog in the world; Winsted, the center from which went the tidings of Professor Pupin's parentless pigs and the duck which put something aside for a rainy day, hatching rattlesnake eggs for bounty.

"It was thoughtless of me," observed the Wizard of Winsted with a sigh, "not to have had a worm for Pete, but, unfortunately, ours became extinct. There used to be plenty of good bait along the edge of the little brook over there, and some fine trout, too. The hens went there, scratching around for breakfast, and they were very successful at first, but they soon realized that the fish were eating the very choicest and fattest worms. Those trout were the most greedy that I ever saw. They jumped out of water to the bank, seized their prey and flopped back again. The hens saw that two or three times, and one day they held a consultation. It happened to be a pretty bad year for potato bugs, and my friend was giving them a paris green diet. One day the hens helped themselves to all the poison they could load on their beaks and went down and washed off their mouths in the brook. The paris green, of course, got into the water and killed off all the fish, as those chicken Borgias intended. There have been none since, and the hens, having no ideas about conservation, ate up all the worm preserves, and now there is hardly any bait on this place at all."

"But you saved Peter?" I suggested.

PETER'S SIMPLE STORY

"Yes," replied the Wizard, calmly and deliberately. "Pete is a good sort. I am much attached to him. You remember my story of the tunnelling trout. Pete is a subway maker. He got away from the upper brook, following a hidden watercourse of some kind; may have used a mole for a tunnelling shield, but I doubt it. Anyway, Pete arrived with a muddy nose in the lower spring, where I found him. He has lived here ever since. I hadn't the heart to drive him away."

"Bl-u-u-p!" A flash of glossy side, and a fin waved above the water, and although Peter did not exactly say it, surely none could doubt that he meant "Thank you."

Winsted is grateful to Louis Timothy Stone, for before he began his picturesque career as faunal naturalist for the New York newspapers the town was not on the map. Pike county had a monopoly and drove a hard bargain with the downtrodden Sunday editors, making its stories longer every year and insisting on special rates even for such items as bears putting up scarecrows to frighten away the birds from the blackberries. It was twenty years ago that, modestly at first and then by slow degrees, Louis Timothy Stone came as the foe of the snake yard trust and brought into life his dependable accounts of the happenings of the New England countryside.

Winsted rests in a chalice of hills and near it are the jewels of three lakes, which on clear days are like great expanses of turquoise. For miles round about are flourishing farms, each connected with the outside world by long distance telephone and also with the sympathetic ear of the Seer. Litchfield county is a whispering gallery to him, with the Berk-

shires as a sounding board. No story of the doings of beast or bird comes out of the thicket or the wood but what "Stone of Winsted" knows. Being a wizard of fairness of mind, he spreads what he learns to ascertain if such and such a locality has a better offering. And, strange to relate, before the wires are heated even more remarkable occurrences have been found, for nothing is too good for the metropolitan journals, which the Seer zealously serves. He is the city editor of a daily paper in Winsted, which means that he gets most of the news, edits the foreign and telegraph dispatches, attends to the market reports, keeps his eyes and his ears open for those wonder tales garnered with such conscientious care and writes advertisements.

HIS LAKE RETREAT

Great inspirations come to the "man who made Winsted famous" amid the seclusion of his summer home on the shores of Highland lake. Here it is that he harvests \$20 a year from his chestnut trees and also writes many of his most profitable contributions. Wintergreen is the name of this Arden of 10 acres, which slopes down to the edge of the water, and within its boundaries are brooks for fish, trees for birds of strange plumage, caverns in the living rock where weird animals come to hibernate until the spring critter yarn season has come, and cavities where ancient toads may come forth to tell feebly of the paleozoic age, bless Louis Timothy Stone and die.

Beauteous and romantic Wintergreen, home of checkerberries and stories of checkered animal lives, holding within its limits the cottage where the Wizard of Winsted goes to commune with the secrets of earth and sky. His bedroom is an octagonal chamber perched on the second story, from the seven broad windows of which he can view the lake and shore and wood and dale with the rising of the sun.

Practical and direct is Louis Timothy Stone. His square jaw, his clear blue eyes, his broad forehead are not those of the dreamer, but would characterize the hard working man of affairs. When he speaks it is with an air of conviction. He looks the auditor squarely in the face and tells his story without the quiver of a muscle. His voice takes on inflection only when he talks of his friends of furred and feathered tribes. He was born in Winsted in 1875, and after completing his high school course plunged into the vortex of journalism, twenty years ago, and within a year after his entrance into the lists he had "landed" his first story. It was something about a chipmunk and a poker game.

His humble beginnings enabled him to acquire this domain on the shores of the lake, and to add to it year by year. Such is the gratitude of nature that the birds of the air and the creatures of the wood and field pay for their shelter and add to the preserve by furnishing stories for metropolitan markets. Like ginseng, some of these narratives are disposed of in condensed form and have much of the zest dried out of them, yet for all that every little helps. Wintergreen grows larger as the years add luster to the fame of Winsted and its sage.

HATCHED BY HAND

"I do not suppose," said the teller of tales, "that anything more happens in Winsted and its neighborhood than in any other large rural community, but I take as much care as I can to get all of interest which does occur and to present it in compact form. I find some of them here. Now, there was the crow which was hatched by hand."

"The which?" I asked.
"Claude Berne," began Mr. Stone in a low and even voice and with that intensive earnestness which shows a minute attention to details, "is a neighbor of mine, and here is the tree where we found the nest of a crow, perhaps deserted by the unkind mother or perhaps the parents were slain by some wanton hand. There were four eggs in the nest, and Claude took two and I had the others. He wanted to carry his home and put them under a sitting white duck just to see what the effect would be, and I had some scheme to hatch mine by electricity. Claude started down the road with his two eggs, walking under the broiling sun, when suddenly a beak came out of one of the shells and a little black crow hopped out on his hand. He took it home and tried to raise it under a white hen, but as only one kind of a crow is welcome in a poultry yard the poor little chap died of a broken heart."

"Bl-u-u-p!"

blithely sing and the chipmunks leap from bough to bough, the Wizard of Winsted is at his best. His mind dwell almost tenderly upon all the children of his brain.

"Out there somewhere," said he, indicating the lake, with the biberon in his hand, "is the Sheriff's giant frog. He came ashore one day and we managed to get a photograph of him, and then he jumped off the pier when he realized what had happened."

Everybody remembers the Giant Frog of Winsted, pictured not so long ago, tall as the persons who stood near him and as wide as a barn. The lake is said to have risen half an inch after his plunge back into its bosom.

Professor Michael Pupin, the eminent authority on electricity, who is connected with Columbia university, lives not far from the retreat of the fame maker of Winsted. His farm bore tragedy, for an automobile ran over Getruda, the mother of as fine a porcine litter as ever graed Connecticut. The curly tailed orphans were in despair. They pined for food and mother and refused ordinary fare. The professor mounted a storage battery of nursing bottles in a trough, pig high, and in the form of a plate drying rack or a saw buck. The necks of the bottles, with their rubber feeding appliances, were placed through the holes bored in the side of the rack and the bottles being thus placed with their bottoms up and well secured afforded rapid feeding by gravitation. The young porkers took to this substitute in avid and joyous fashion, as was evidenced by the swift moving of their tails. They all flourished. In the chill spring they were accustomed to lie down by the kitchen stove until the season advanced

reminiscent mood, "I have often wondered who that wild man was? Do you suppose that old Deacon Blank could have started all that to keep the children from getting into his blackberries?"

Who can ever forget the spook of Wonsunkamunk, who rose a flaming wraith out of the floor of the club house there, and with primitive bludgeon pursued the merry-makers nearly to the Litchfield line? It was a good ghost story, and the descriptions of the spirit gathered by the able correspondent himself were duly reproduced in pictures, and never to this day has that ghost of the silent frozen lake been laid.

VERSATILITY AND VIM IN HIM

Meteorological information of all kinds comes from Winsted. It is not recorded that late one October Mrs. Ellen M. Wright was picking raspberries by the quart and that dahlias were still in bloom. A stout armed matron had been brought from Canada to wash all little children in Winsted and put them to bed amid squalls. Where but in that Connecticut town and who but Louis Timothy Stone could have discovered that the decision would have been reached by Mr. and Mrs. Josiah Whitcomb to change occupations? He to stay at home and wash dishes; she to work in the factory.

How the news simmers out of Winsted when the indefatigable Wizard invokes the muse! In one dispatch he announced that Minister Rockhill was back from China, that a pig running wild for two months had been captured, that five large rattlesnakes and violets had been seen as harbingers of spring, and a new order issued on the railroad was to make all conductors look the younger.

It is nearly time for the floating islands on Goose pond, in the Berkshires, to begin circulating. They break adrift occasionally and then fishermen sitting on the Sargossa like wastes cut holes in the sod, drop their lines through and haul up gudgeons in great and considerable quantities.

Who can drive from his mind that beautiful lyric entitled "Wets Want Wicked Pumpkin Pie," based on the guile of certain restaurateurs who placed more spirits than vegetable in the pastry which they sold in a temperance town? What of the squirrels, which threw limburger cheese at a man who had tormented them? How time flies! They have long since repented of their unsavory deed and died in the odor of sanctity. When the discussion concerning race suicide was at its height did not the wires from Winsted sing with the story of the barber blessed with an eleventh child and who was immediately called upon by a delegation of democrats, who insisted that he accept a nomination for the legislature?

LAY OF GRATEFUL HEN

Mr. H. C. Spaulding had the grateful hen which if return for her board dug worms for him. The bird whenever she saw her master going for his fishing

We had wandered unconsciously to the well, and looking down we beheld the smiling—yet perhaps it was all imagination—the mocking countenance of the intelligent Peter.

The Sage tossed a bit of soda cracker to the Tunnelling Trout, and out of the depths shone the eyes of the creature, which now seemed all confidence and trust.

One of the charming places on the estate of Louis Timothy Stone, where the prophet rests while the ravens bring him food, is completely shut in by the giant pine trees, where for years the dried needles have been accumulating in a carpet in which one's feet sink ankle deep. His favorite seat, however, is by a spring in the center of his demesne, between the upper and lower vegetable gardens, and from its cool waters a simple lifting of a rope brings to light a basket filled with bottles of cooling and sparkling drink. The glasses are brought frigid from the same delectable source, and here, where the water rills from nature's fountain and the birds

sufficiently to permit them to wander in the open and to achieve a sty.

WILD MEN AND WRAITHS

What memories cluster about old Winsted! How the news came over the wire fifteen years ago—"Wild man loose, terrorizing country! Possé. How much?"

How the reporters went by shoals to be received at the station by the Sage himself, then slender and with the bloom of youth in his cheeks! How he conducted them through swamp and field and briar patch! Shall that memorable Sunday ever be forgotten when distracted farmers reported that they had seen a monster with eyes of flame, with his great shock of blood red hair and his purple eyes? How the hero of Buena Vista had fired at him and the creature had bounded away leaving in his wake a thin crimson trail! Ah, halcyon days were those!

Wizard of Winsted, it has been many a day since you have brought such a tale as that. "Do you know," commented he, "as he sipped in

pole and basket ran like one possessed to the garden and brought in her beak worm after worm so that he might go on his excursion well provided with bait.

"It was a good story," remarked the Wizard of Winsted, "and so true, although another man got it first, but I made New York with it in time."

How many boys have been saved from recklessness by the simple warning which came from Winsted in the story of the rude youngster who disturbed his teacher in school by blowing into and bursting a paper bag, and in so doing broke both bag and hand.

All the accounts which the Wizard commits to the wings of the morning have names attached and always suitable ones. What would a man named Otis E. Gillette do, for instance? He would be resourceful, brilliant and inventive. He was tormented by the attacks of mosquitoes on the bare citadel of his brain and at once had a picture of a spider painted on the top of his bald head, which frightened away every pest within lighting distance.

Phineas Aldrich captured 29 skunks in one day, selling them for \$80.25, and it was a gentleman of a similar name who had many of these interesting animals as household pets, so great was their admiration for the bonhomie and cheerfulness which he had ever displayed.

When the president fared on opossum in the south Winsted and its environs were not to be outdone. One old settler declared that he knew wildcat soup to be beyond compare; a second recommended consommé de woodchuck; a third was sure that black lynx puree would fill the bill.

Peanuts win the hearts of squirrels near Winsted, and that aptency of theirs resulted in a great saving for Mr. Thomas Hicks. One appreciative rodent on the payment of 10 goobers was accustomed to brush off Mr. Hicks' shoes with his bushy tail, taking the end of it in his teeth and swinging backward and forward imparting that brisk action so necessary to a perfect polish.

It was only last May at Winsted that a trout (not Peter) bit a man and hung to him for a quarter of a mile as he ran, finally relinquishing his hold when he came to an inviting stream.

These are only a few of the traditions on which the mind of the Wizard delights to dwell as he sits on Sunday afternoon listening to nature's teachings and taking deep draughts at the Pierian spring. Peace be to him at Wintergreen, where the laurel grows and the white blackbirds sing, and long life to Peter in the limpid pool and to all ravens hatched by hand.