

GREY OWL

THE FRIEND OF WILD CREATURES.

ONE of the first acts denoting the arousing of a desire to sympathise with wild creatures, is to cage birds or animals. That is the main idea which occurs to the novice bird-lover. This person therefore captures or buys a wild creature, and perhaps without realizing the cruelty of his act, condemns it to life imprisonment, denying it all of those joys which make a wild creature's life worth living.

The novice has still to learn that there is no need to use cages, but that with the aid of that indescribable sympathy and understanding possessed by some nature lovers, so-called wild creatures can be tamed without robbing them of their freedom for one moment.

The following Canadian story by W. J. Banks, culled from "United Empire," the Journal of the Royal Empire Society, tells how a half-breed Indian, "Grey Owl," tamed wild beavers, some of the most timid yet intelligent of wild creatures.

NEARLY a half century ago Grey Owl was born on the western plains. His mother was a full-blooded Apache; his father, Scots frontiersman who, tired of the constant Indian wars that had engaged him as a Government scout, had left that calling to join the famous Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show.

So the blood of two proud and fighting peoples flows in the veins of the man who is to-day one of the most outstanding wild game conservationists. Grey Owl has travelled a varied and a romantic road since he left the tepees of the warlike Apaches, still far from reconciled to the loss of their last hunting grounds. It has brought him, at last, to contentment in a log cabin in Northern Saskatchewan, where he lives in closest communion with his little brothers of the stream and woodland.

Following his father's death, Grey Owl, as a youth, joined the Wild West show and accompanied it to Europe. But the lad's imagination had always been stirred by tales of his father's early days in Northern Canada, and it was the Cobalt silver rush of 1905 that served as the immediate cause of his crossing the sea again. As guide, hunter and trapper, he spent eight years as an adopted member of the Ojibway tribe of Northern Ontario. Serving as a sniper with the Canadian forces in France, he was twice wounded, and subsequently returned to the trap lines.

For some years there had been close restriction on the taking of beaver pelts, and those

busy builders of the northern streams had been making a come-back throughout a large area. But the lifting of the long "closed season" resulted in shameful slaughter. Greed for easy money brought a horde of trappers, with dynamite and poisoned bait, to threaten Canada's national animal with extinction and decimate the numbers of other woodland dwellers.

As Grey Owl wandered farther and farther afield in search of unspoiled hunting grounds, the gravity of the situation began to dawn upon him. It did not take him long to decide to forsake the ranks of the destroyers and start a one-man movement of conservation. What had started out as a hunting journey ended in a search for a small colony of beavers which he could protect, allow to multiply and study in their daily life so that data might be gathered to help in the fight which he saw must be waged at once to save the beaver people from total extinction.

By the side of a small stream in northern Quebec, Grey Owl built a little cabin near the water's edge, where two small beaver families were living. How he managed to gain the confidence of the shy web-footed creatures, enabling closer observation of their habits than any other man we know about has ever achieved, is a story in itself. A mother beaver had been trapped, leaving behind a helpless brood which must surely have perished if left alone. Grey Owl adopted the kittens, fed and tended them with the utmost care. So tame did they become