

were doing in many other places where a market was within reach. The consumers, as well as the pickers, were satisfied with this coarse fruit. Being thus a good bargain for both parties, the trade was kept up wherever the common blackberry was near enough to market.

There are sections of our country in which this business of gathering wild fruit is an important item toward the maintenance of many families. They look to the blackberry harvest as a certain income. Entire households, men as well as women, abandon all other employments, and take to picking berries. They need not carry them to the cities to find purchasers, but meet with wholesale city buyers at every railroad station. These pay cash to the industrious pickers, and forward the fruit to market, where it is retailed at a higher price. They have their profit, of course, but the pickers have a better one, because the fruit costs nothing beyond the labor of gathering it; and this division of labor and profit is sufficiently remunerative to keep the business going from year to year, notwithstanding the extensive introduction of superior varieties. If it were not for this division, it is probable that the great cities would be compelled to do without much of the fruit they now consume.

But this gathering up of wild fruit by poor families is not confined to the blackberry. The woods of New Jersey are annually ransacked for the huckleberry, of which astonishing quantities are collected and sent to market, producing very serviceable amounts of money to the industrious pickers. The wild cranberry is also gathered in large quantities by the same class of people. These successive harvests, which Providence bountifully prepares for those who dwell in huts and shanties on the borders of civilization, are as much depended on as are the wheat and corn crops of the most extensive farmer.

Uncle Benny knew all about these things, and was determined to make them contribute to what he considered a praiseworthy ambition of the Spranglers to make a little money for themselves. Some of the boys wanted books, and tools, and other juvenile notions, while the girls had a dozen matters of their own to be supplied with. He thought this "old field" might be turned to great

account, and hence his recommendation that the boys should not be in an hurry to spend their money, as he had a plan of his own in relation to making the "old field" a really profitable affair to them. He was satisfied there was a fair chance by which to make the very beginning they had all been striving after.

When the blackberry crop had all been picked and sold, everybody on the farm was surprised at hearing that it footed up sixty dollars, clear of all expenses. It was really so much money found; for though the "old field" had ripened probably fifty crops, not a cent's worth had ever been turned into cash. What the family had not picked for their own use had been taken by the birds and wasps, or perished on the bushes. Philip Spangler was particularly astonished at the result. He said it would pay a half-year's interest on his mortgage.

"Yes," observed Uncle Benny in reply, "I can make this brier-patch pay interest and principal too, if you will only allow me to do what I please with it."

Spangler readily agreed that he should do as he desired, and a regular bargain was made between them on the subject. Uncle Benny was to have entire control of the blackberry field; he was to get what he could from it, and after retaining three-fourths of the profits for the boys, the other fourth was to be paid to Spangler, who pledged himself that it should be applied to paying off the mortgage on the farm.

The history of this "old field" of six acres is so remarkable that it may as well be related now. It will be remembered that it was only from the edges or outskirts that any fruit had been gathered. All the interior of the field was filled with bushes nearly as productive as those on the margin, but it was impossible to reach them. Uncle Benny made a calculation as to how many rows of canes he could make by cutting away open spaces ten feet wide from one side of the field to the other. He then compared the result with the length of margin from which they had been picking, and satisfied himself, that, if that had produced sixty dollars, he could get a sufficient length of picking surface to make the "old field" pay almost as good a profit as was made on half the entire farm. There was the