

The Story of a Farm Boy.

Part III. Why the Boy Entered Professional Agriculture.

BY B. S. A.

THE long grind of final examinations was ended. The class dinner was only a memory. The valedictory sermon was forgotten. Jimmy and I were taking down the pennants and college decorations from our room walls and stuffing them into our crammed trunks. College days were over. We were full-fledged B. S. A's., if that meant anything. It did to us. We wondered if it meant enough to the outside world to ensure our bread and butter for years to come. We discussed our future. Both were convinced that:

"Education makes the man,"

but knew, now, that the greater part of real education is never learned at schools. Both had long since decided, each for himself, that

"Tis education forms the common mind,
Just as the twig is bent the tree's inclined."

Jimmy and I were fast friends. We lingered long in the bare room after the last of our belongings were packed, talking of the best days of our lives which were at an end—the class hustles, the gridiron battles, the pillow fights, the night escapades, the bed dumpings—all the good times came back, and then we parted to meet again at Convocation for a grand finale of College days. Jimmy left his packed trunk and boxes in his room and went back home to the old farm for the two weeks of elapse before Convocation in early June. He had taken a position and was to return for his goods and take them on with him to his new venture.

Why did Jimmy take a position in professional agriculture when he so loved the farm and the things of the country? As a twig, he was bent in the direction of the land. As a tree, how could he be inclined in an opposite direction? He wasn't. He was forced to grow for a time, as many trees are, in another direction to get around obstacles, but, like trees which succeeded under such conditions, he was destined to grow stronger in his belief in the land and mightier for his own and its good.

Jimmy was the first of his class to take a position. He had hired in January. I say hired, for the money he was to receive could scarcely be called "salary." It was only "wages." Why did he take it? Undoubtedly Jimmy was dealing in futures. He saw opportunity and advancement ahead. But what was the final straw which decided Jimmy?

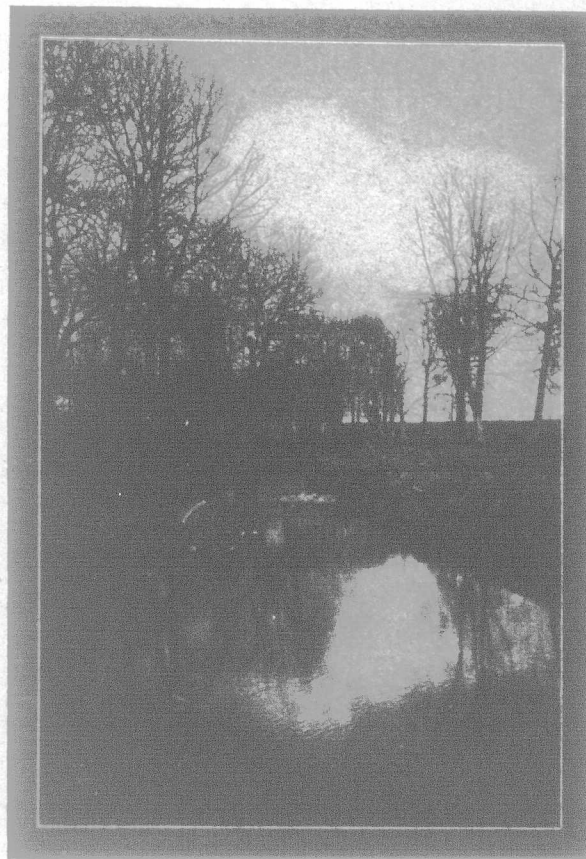
When my best college chum received his first offer to go into professional work he was still somewhat undecided as to his future. True, he hoped to get into some salaried position which offered advantages for the continuance of his education, which would ultimately lead him back to the land. His first offer he did not hesitate to turn down because of the low money consideration—less than \$1,000 per year. But from the same source came a second offer. They liked a man with back-bone enough to turn down a proposition, much as they desired to save money on their hired help. This second chance set Jimmy thinking. He saw an opportunity and then he wrote his father about it. The old farm still "pulled." Jimmy's father rarely gave direct advice, but he had a habit of saying things which made the question more difficult for the person who sought his help. This was his only answer: "They are offering you a lot of money." This left Jimmy absolutely convinced that

"The mould of a man's fortune is in his own hands." His father did not advise but he had hinted. Jimmy must make his own choices, notwithstanding, so he accepted the position. Some say he took the hint. I believe, however, he decided for himself.

He spent, as mentioned, two weeks at home before taking up his new duties. It was June and the old farm was at its best. The fields were green with growing grain. The live stock were sleek on fresh pasture. Bellevue Farm looked like a desirable place to live for the man who could finance it. It was the season between seeding and hoeing and haying. Fences were being repaired. He took his turn at the maul in pounding stakes. After a long examination grind the exercise was beneficial, and the time passed all too quickly. The day came to depart. This time his mother took his going to heart more than ever before. It was evident to him that while she always said: "Let the boy do as he sees fit," she had hoped he would eventually, at the close of his College course, return home. Parents often fail to realize that their children have grown up and are men instead of boys. Also, they do not often understand the change which a College education generally makes in the young man's outlook upon life. They cannot fully appreciate his problem. However, Jimmy's mother wept bitterly when he left, and his father felt more deeply than he showed in his face and manner. His mother's thoughts were expressed in the words: "This is the worst going away of all. You'll never come back to the farm now, Jimmy." And yet she was proud of the boy and believed he had great things ahead of him.

Jimmy arrived at his new task and was immediately introduced to work. His first impressions were borne out in years of later labor. Professional agriculture meant work—exacting work. He was not afraid of heavy tasks and he got them. Why had he chosen this occupation?

The position which Jimmy took offered no immediate "big money," but it did present an opportunity to make years of close study of economic conditions in this country, with particular attention to agriculture. Jimmy's work was a development proposition in so far as he himself was concerned and he kept pace with it,



November.

although it was impossible for him to ever get "ahead of it," as the practical farmer often says of his own operations. Jimmy wanted a chance to improve his knowledge and at the same time his financial position.

The possibilities of development of the work undertaken seemed to Jimmy, even before he was on the job and greatly more so when he finally took hold, to assure better immediate financial returns than did farming. He had little capital. By dint of industry and saving he had been able to keep his bank account up to \$300 to the day he left College. He was poor financially and could not expect to start farming on his own account. Lack of capital was one factor in keeping him off the farm. Why do such a large percentage of Agricultural College students leave the farm? Three words answer fully—lack of capital.

Jimmy's professional position paid regularly. A young man likes ready cash. It appeals to him, and Jimmy was human in this regard. He felt that he should, after four years of, to a farm boy, costly education get down to earning regular money. The farm offered uncertainty, the job offered ready cash. He took the latter and who could blame him?

I must, however, refer more specifically to one main reason which sent Jimmy into professional rather than practical agricultural effort, as it does thousands of others—the large amount of capital necessary to start a farm on a paying basis. The average College graduate hesitates to start farming with small capital. There are too many doubting Thomases in the average rural neighborhood for one thing—men who are more ready to criticize than to aid. And while graduates of the stuff that men are made, as Jimmy was, care little for criticism and what the people think, nevertheless it is a comparatively stiff proposition for a young man, fresh from his books and full of enthusiasm on scientific farming, to withstand the "gaff" of the gray-headed wise-aces who are prone to see all failures and dilate upon them, while they utterly disregard the successes. Practical farmers have, in the past, been too ready to poke fun at the College-educated farmer. True, a few bookish freaks turned out from the institutions of learning have increased the tendency to regard all College graduates as objects of ridicule. However, keeping in mind the shortcomings of human nature, the average student when his course is completed, thinks twice before he attempts to farm without capital. For live stock and implements alone necessary to start on a 100-acre or 200-acre farm in Old Ontario—to begin on anything like a fair basis for the boy—would set his bank account back at least \$3,000, and this would mean starting as a renter. Jimmy had one-tenth of the required amount. It would not do. He felt that he could get an easier start to take the position offered.

But, you say, as we have heard city people who do not know of what they speak, why didn't Jimmy's father "loosen up" and start him on the farm? The plain fact is that the average farmer cannot give his boys the start he would like. The old farm is enough to keep the old folks. They need it all until they have passed to the Great Beyond. Farmers are just as good to their children as are parents in any other walk in life, and do by them just as well in proportion to their means. By the time they get their farms clear of debt they are generally well on the shady side of fifty—many

past the three score years. They may need all that they have made. They certainly are entitled to hold it in their own right until they are through with earthly things. Usually they are saving, having learned their lesson through years of hard work and economy. Often they use in their later years only the interest, and the principal, wrapped up in the farm, is handed down to the children—a heritage worthy of the best efforts of those left behind be they College-trained or self-educated. Handing farms down generation after generation in the family name is a bit of tradition in which farmers take a pride. Jimmy's parents were no exception to the rule. They needed the farm to keep them. Jimmy was equipped to make his own way and wait for the land. His parents believed that his chances were bright for an easier living than they had experienced. Small wonder he turned to professional rather than practical agriculture. In the one there was an opening. To the other the door was practically closed.

There was another deeper reason why Jimmy took up the work he did. His new position made it possible for the young man, through diligence, to establish a good connection with the best live-stock men and farmers in the country. We must not forget that Jimmy, or James, as he now designated himself, hoped some day to be a breeder of pure-bred stock, and a practical farmer of standing among his fellows. He was still getting his education. In fact, he was to learn more in the next few years than he ever dreamed of learning in College or out of it. His College training was a start on the right road. His after experience was the development of the latent talents awakened by the efforts of the staff of teachers under whom he received his tuition. It is to their credit that they were able to turn out men competent to continue their education in the field in which they found themselves when College life was brought to a close. Jimmy was preparing for the future.

Why did Jimmy choose professional agriculture? Again, because he wanted to be equipped as a business farmer for the future. He hoped never to return to the land to get no more out of it than could a day laborer. He believed that there was more in farming than that—at least more in it for him. He believed from observation that farmers worked too diligently with their hands and did not use their heads as much as they should to save their heels. He was out for the necessary training to avoid the pitfalls into which so many have fallen. There is such a thing as doing too much hand work to the detriment of one's getting on. Jimmy's position offered an excellent opportunity to acquire the business training he believed necessary.

These in brief are the reasons my old College chum chose professional agriculture when leaving College. It is a mistake to say the College is responsible for educating boys away from the farm. Not so. When they get through, their financial condition is such that they cannot farm unless as hired men. This refers, of course, to the majority. There are exceptions to every good rule. In fact, like Jimmy, nearly all my College associates left College for other work, hoping some day to return to the land.

Jimmy labored conscientiously. He made rapid advancement, and as he went forward he remembered Ruskin's creed:

"Man's Living comes out of the Ground
And Happiness out of Honesty."

No wonder then that he began planning. What did he plan?

(To be continued.)

Do Not Leave Implements Unduly Exposed.

The loss due each year to neglect or lack of room for housing farm implements is stupendous. It exceeds in one year what it would cost to provide some protection from the elements. Woodwork will not hold up when exposed to wetting and drying; decay soon commences around the bolt holes, and in a short time the part must be replaced at considerable expense. Rust damages iron parts more than does the season's use, but yet on many farms no provision is made to guard against this loss. True, building material and labor are expensive, but the structure for protecting the implements need not be elaborate. What is needed is shelter from rain and snow. The need for taking care of the implements and making them last as long as possible is emphasized by the ever-increasing price of farm machinery and implements. Where a regular implement shed is not available as many of the machines as possible should be stored away in the barn. Applying oil to the iron parts will afford considerable protection from the ravages of rust. Mold boards of plows, points of cultivators, discs, etc., should all be gone over with oil in the fall, as it will put them in better shape for the commencement of the spring work. Why permit serviceable implements to rust and rot into uselessness before their allotted time when a little care and protection will lengthen their days of usefulness?

Save plenty of seed corn. Even if every ear fit for seed is saved there will not be enough seed corn in Ontario this year to meet the demand. Hard frosts are injurious, especially to immature seed; take it inside out of the wet and cold, as quickly as possible.