

"I don't see why you want this ground made so rich, Uncle Benny," said Joe Spangler, when they had finished planting. "Father never puts as much on his corn as we have put on this, and yet you say it ought to have more. It is very tedious having to handle so much."

The old man drew a newspaper from his pocket, and read to his audience the following paragraph:—

"Thirty years ago the farmers of the Genesee and Mohawk valleys assisted each other, in the winter, to cart their manures on the ice, so that when the rivers broke up they should get rid of them, and not be compelled to move their stables; now in those very valleys, barn-yard manure is worth two dollars or more per cord, and is so much needed, that, without its use, a crop of wheat cannot be raised which would compensate the grower. The average crop of those valleys has sunk within thirty years from thirty bushels to the acre to less than fifteen, while the whole average of the State of New York is less than eleven; that of Pennsylvania has sunk to eleven and a quarter, and that of Ohio from thirty-five to eleven and a half. Massachusetts can no longer raise grain enough to support her manufacturing population, without import from elsewhere; and with all these facts prominently before them, many farmers in these rich valleys have actually cut gutters from their barn-yards across the public road, to let the liquid manure run away. This may be considered cleanliness, but it certainly is not economy."

"There," said the old man, "you see what the majority of the New York farmers did thirty years ago, and what has been the result. No manure. no crop."

"But," replied Tony, "when you were telling us about the election, I thought you said the majority were always right."

"Ah," rejoined the old man, "that's a great mistake. Majorities are sometimes actually blind to the truth. When Noah told the people there was a terrible flood coming, there was a great majority who would not believe a word of it. It was the minority that were in luck that time. So will you be in your future practice, if you turn over a new leaf on the manure question."

"Blame the thing!" cried Bill, with sudden impatience, kicking away from him the dead body of a huge cat, "it's been in my way all day!"

"Now, Bill," said Uncle Benny, "bring the cat here again; I'll put it out of your way. That cat is manure, and must not be wasted."

They were then standing at the end of a corn-row, on the outside of the field. Bill went after the cat, and, lifting up the animal with his hoe, brought it up to the old man.

"Now," said he, "plant that cat."

As directed, Bill took up the grains of corn from the last hill, dug a hole some ten inches deep, in which he placed the animal, then covered it with earth, on which the grains were replaced and again covered, as before. There was a good deal of laughing and shouting among the boys while this was going on; but when the thing was done, Joe looked up to the old man, and inquired, "What's the use of that, Uncle Benny?"

"Why," said he, "you put a small shovelful of manure in each hill, but that cat is equal to four shovelfuls. Besides, Joe, it is a clear saving. If the cat had been allowed to dry up on top of the ground, its richness would have gone to waste; and you must learn never to waste anything, for it is by the saving of small things, no matter what they may be, that men grow rich. Now watch this corn-hill, and see how the roots will draw up strength and vigor from that decaying carcass. It will be the best hill on the whole field. I wish we had a cat for every one of them."

"But does anybody else plant cats?" inquired Bill.

The old man again produced a newspaper, and read to them an interesting statement by Mr. Edgar A. Clifton, of Staten Island, showing how richly some such experiments made by him had resulted.

When selecting his particular piece of ground for a corn-field, Uncle Benny had had an eye to the adjoining barn-yard. As already mentioned, Mr. Spangler had caused its fluid contents to be discharged into the public road, nor was there any likelihood of his going to the slight trouble necessary to prevent such wholesale waste. Uncle Benny quietly undertook it for him, by opening a new outlet directly into the cornfield. As Spangler had tried his hand at wasting, the old man would try his at saving. The ground was so situated as to make this the work of only an hour or two. It was done so effectually, that not a drop ran to waste as formerly. On the contrary, whenever a heavy summer thunder-shower fell, there could be seen a torrent of dark liquor rushing through the barn-yard, and pouring away into the cornfield, diffusing itself over at least half an acre. There were no means of causing it to irrigate a greater surface. The rain diluted the concentrated liquor down to the exact strength for the corn roots to drink in and stimulate the plants.

This ingenious bit of engineering gave rise to no remark from Spangler beyond his saying that he was glad to see the barn-yard so much drier than formerly. The old man had in fact drained it effectually. There could be no denying that it produced