

Four Thousand Bushels of Corn

(Continued from page 14.)

stood a point and a half above his nearest competitor.

"Three cheers for Bill Ellis!" cried the preacher, and the crowd joined in the cheers with a heartiness that surprised even Jimmie.

Bill Ellis, with the silver cup in one hand, took off his hat and bowed almost reverently; the light of a new freedom was shining in his eyes.

As they were starting for home Mary said: "I don't care where you go, to Chicago, or anywhere else, you'll never find a jollier, better-natured, kinder-hearted crowd of people than that."

"Wasn't it great?" Jimmie agreed. "My arm is lame from shaking hands. It does a fellow's heart good to find that he has so many friends. But best of all was the way the people joined in the cheer for Bill Ellis. I guess Bill will find life a whole lot easier and happier from now on."

A few days after the ploughing match came the first killing frost, and then the tiresome wait until hunking time. A thorough inspection of both the peat forty and the preacher's field showed that the corn was ripe and sound, and that it had suffered little damage from the frost. Jimmie picked an average ear of corn from the crop on the peat forty, and dried it for a week behind the kitchen stove. Then he weighed it. It tipped the scales at just a pound.

A sample of each contestant's corn was sent away for a moisture test, so that the yields could be reduced to a strictly comparable basis. Each contestant was required to file his expense account at the time the corn was husked.

On the morning of the last day of November, Colonel Edwards's office girl told the contestants over the telephone that the awards had finally been made, and that they would be announced at the bank that afternoon. By noon the little town was crowded with the contestants and their friends.

"I don't know when I've spent a more pleasant summer, prize or no prize," the preacher said to Jimmie, as they stood waiting on the bank steps.

"Same here," Jimmie agreed. "Think of raising over a hundred bushels to the acre on eighty acres! Father won't believe it till he sees the cobs."

"How much more do you figure my forty went than your other upland corn?"

"At least twenty bushels to the acre. And the only reason I can see is the bone meal and a little extra cultivation. There's at least \$400 more from \$180 worth of bone meal, and not more than \$20 worth of extra work. I call that pretty good profit."

"That five per cent. will be a substantial addition to my salary," the preacher said. "I'm going to put it in the bank, Jimmie, and some day buy a little farm of my own, even if it isn't more than twenty acres."

"Then you expect to stay in Duke-ton always?"

The preacher smiled. "I wrote a letter yesterday, refusing to go to Indianapolis at a salary three times as large as I'm getting here."

Jimmie looked at his friend incredulously.

"It sounds foolish, doesn't it?" the preacher went on. "Well, maybe it is. But I love the country and the country people, and they seem to like me pretty well. I can be happy here, and I believe I can do some good. I think my place is here."

"I don't know but you're right," Jimmie said, soberly.

Just then the bank door opened, and one of the judges stepped out on the top step. The crowd gathered close to hear what he had to say.

"I'm not going to make a speech,"

he began. "I understand that the colonel plans to have a big meeting in the town hall before long, with professors and speeches, and the successful contestants telling how they did it, and maybe something to eat. But I told him we couldn't expect you to wait until then for the decisions."

He cleared his throat impressively, and took a piece of paper from his pocket. "The highest yielding field in the contest was Jimmie McKee's, peat forty—112 bushels to the acre." There was a hearty cheer for Jimmie McKee, and half a dozen men slapped him on the back so heartily that he was nearly thrown up the steps into the judge's arms.

"The cost of producing this corn was twenty cents a bushel. The next two forties are a tie in yield, 104 bushels. They are the forties entered by Verne Wilson and the Reverend Mr. Kellogg."

There was another cheer for the preacher and for Wilson, and Jimmie gave the preacher's hand a hearty clap.

"The cost per bushel of Mr. Kellogg's corn was twenty-one and one-half cents, and of Mr. Wilson's twenty-two," the judge continued slowly, with his eyes on the paper. "That puts Mr. Kellogg in second place, and Mr. Wilson third. Fourth place goes to Mr. Hodgeskins, with a yield of a hundred bushels even, produced at a cost of twenty-one cents a bushel."

Mr. Hodgeskins himself was one of the first to grasp Jimmie's hand with sincere congratulations after the judge finished speaking.

"You've beat me fair, my boy," he said. "And I've no cause to complain. I won't deny that my pride is a little mite hurt, but I shall get over that. I'm going to be in the front seat at the meeting to hear you tell how you did it."

"It was your \$200 that made it possible," Jimmie replied. "I feel almost guilty to think that I beat you with your own money."

"No," Mr. Hodgeskins said, as he made way for the eager friends who were surging round Jimmie. "I'm proud to have been that much help to you."

"If I could only have rented that peat forty," Verne Wilson exclaimed, as he came up and seized Jimmie by the hand, "the story might have been different! But you were too sharp for me."

"He has paid the \$50 rent all right, I guess," Jimmie admitted, with a smile.

In his eagerness to tell the good news to Mary and Aunt Jane, Jimmie ran nearly all the way home. He burst excitedly through the kitchen door, and rushed on into the dining room, and then stopped short in surprise. There sat his father and mother, and Walter and his wife.

Jimmie hesitated only an instant; the next moment he had grasped his father's hand and was hugging his mother. "Why didn't you tell us you were coming?" he exclaimed. "When did you get here?"

"Just an hour or so ago," his father answered. "We met Walter and Ellen at the station, and we all came out together."

"You haven't told us about the contest," Mary said, when the excitement of the greeting was over.

"I almost forgot that," Jimmie admitted, and then he told them the story of the awards.

"You don't mean to say that you raised 112 bushels of corn to the acre on that old peat forty—and won a \$500 prize with it?" his father exclaimed. "I thought you rented it to some one for \$50." Then a sudden light broke in on him. "Why, you rented it to yourself, and we went to the Yosemite on your money! You



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