

The Book-Learned Farmer.

Written for the W.H.M. by E. Jerrold Quam.

"It is kindo' queer," said Si Grubb, crossing his legs and taking a fresh chew of tobacco, "what book learnin' will do fur a feller."

"Speakin' of it now," he continued, "it reminds me of old Abner Burr's boy, Pete, an' the way he beat old Cyrus Napper growin' peas, an' how he won Napper's pretty daughter Sally, besides."

Old Abner Burr was the poorest farmer in the state. He owned forty acres of run down land that wouldn't raise enough grain to feed a chicken. His buildings were always out of repair, and the manure heaps stood rottin' in the barnyard.

Abner had one boy, Pete. He was a small feller, an' looked a lot like his mother's folks, an' he took after 'em in most everything. He was tolerable smart too, an' kept a studin' away at his books all the time.

"When Pete was about twenty years old, he got hold of some papers an' magazines that told how to farm, an' they had a lot of no account ideas about fixin' and plowin' the land."

Pete seemed mighty interested in 'em. He soon began tellin' his paw to haul out the manure an' put it on the land, an' then plow a little deeper. But the old man only laughed at him, an' said he guessed he could farm without the help of no fool paper, an' told the boy not to put up stock in sech trash, cause it warn't of no account anyhow.

But Pete stuck right to 'em. That summer I hired the boy for eight months at twelve dollars a month, an' he saved every cent of it. He told his maw that he was goin' to the agricultural school, up state that winter.

Course, old Abner laughed at that. Said he never did see anyone learn to farm out of books, an' he told the boy that he had better stay to home.

HER "BEST FRIEND"

A Woman Thus Speaks of Postum.

We usually consider our best friends those who treat us best.

Some persons think tea and coffee are real friends, but watch them carefully awhile and observe that they are two of the meanest of all enemies for they stab one while professing friendship.

Tea and coffee contain a poisonous drug—caffeine—which injures the delicate nervous system and frequently sets up disease in one or more organs of the body, if its use is persisted in.

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"There's a reason" for Postum.

But Pete's maw was more encouraging. She told the boy that if he wanted to go, that she would patch his clothes an' have things ready for him when he went.

An so it was: the day that Pete finished at my place, I paid him off an' he took his carpet bag an' walked to town, where he took the train to the agricultural school, to learn farmin' from a book.

Now, down the valley about a mile and a half, lived Cyrus Napper. Cyrus was just the opposite of Abner Burr, an' he allers raised the best crop of peas an' gardenstuff in the country. Peas was his best crop though. He used to boast that there wasn't nobody in the hull country that could beat him raisin' peas.

When young Pete was workin' to my place, I could tell, he used to think a lot of old Napper's girl, Sally, an' although they weren't seen much together, I knowed they were pretty thick.

Bein' small, an' not havin' much grit by nature, Pete was afraid of old Napper. Napper caught him talkin' once to Sally, an' had told him to his face that he didn't want nothin' to do with the Burrs, an' said if he knowed what was good for him, to hike, an' hike fast. Pete hiked. He didn't have the nerve to face old Napper.

The day Pete came back from school, I could see he'd changed. I happened to be at the depot, an' bein' as his paw warn't there to meet him, he got right in my buggy an' took him home.

He seemed to think that he had learned a lot at school, an' on the way home he kept talkin' about what he called the "possibilities of agriculture." Course, I didn't know exactly what that meant, but he explained that most all the land hereabouts, was run down an' needed better ways of plowin', an' fixin' to make it grow better crops.

The way he used big words was a corker. I couldn't understand half of what he said, although I let on I did. Before he got out of my buggy, I had hired him to help me all summer, at seventeen dollars a month.

The first Sunday come after he was home, he preened up his grit, slicked his hair down nice an' stylish, an' puttin' on a nice green necktie, I never saw him wear before, he went down to call on Sally Napper.

Well, old Cyrus Napper caught 'em sittin' on the front porch, an' he up an' tells Pete all what he thinks of him all over again. Told him that he wasn't nothin' but a worthless farmer's son, an' hadn't sense enough to raise a decent crop of peas.

Seems so Pete had got more grit down to the agricultural school, fur he stands right up an' tells old Napper, that he could raise a better crop of peas than he, Napper, ever saw.

That made old Napper mad, bein' as peas was his pet crop, an' he thunders out so loud that I could hear him clear down to my place: "You can't do it."

"Mr. Napper," said Pete, walkin' up to the irate, old man, "if I can raise a better crop of peas than you, can I—er—can—I come an' see Sally?"

"That took the old man's breath away. But bein' as he thought there warn't anybody that could beat him growin' peas, he thought that would be the best way to discourage Pete."

"Yes," he thundered again, "if you can do that, you can sure have Sally. But," he continued, "if I win, I want you to keep away. Do you understand?"

"Yes," said Pete, "I do," an' he walks off.

The first thing Pete did was to go home an' rent half an acre of land from his paw. Then he came to me an' asked me to lend him fifty dollars. As he was goin' to work for me an' I knew he was honest, I let him have it. Then, too, I was kinda curious to know how them new fangled ideas of farmin' would turn out.

He walked over every step of that piece of land takin' notes in a little book. When he came back to my place

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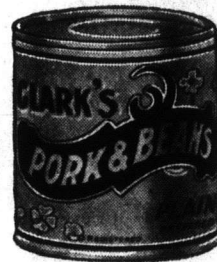
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