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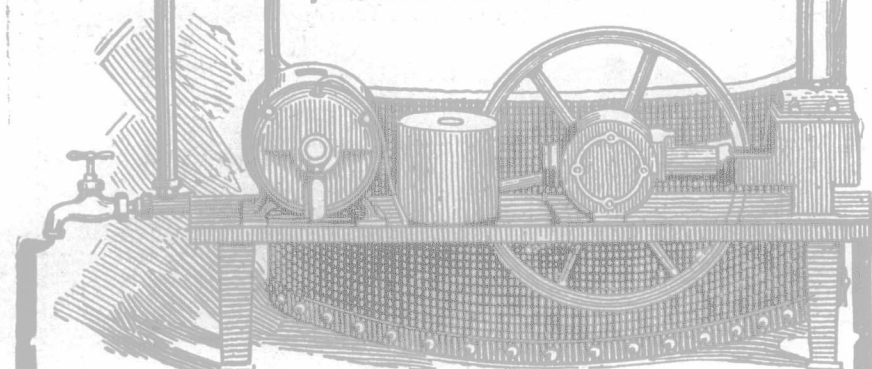
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Corona Steel Range

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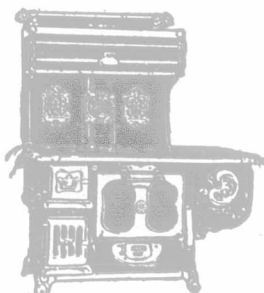
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Our School Department.

The Story of a Wormy Apple.

BY H. S. FRY, IN STORIES IN AGRICULTURE.

"Oh, George," said Mary, "look at all those beautiful apples. Aren't you glad mother let us come to the fair instead of going to school to-day?"

"They are nice, but I would rather eat some of them than look at them and not be able to eat any," replied George.

"My, I wish, too, we could have one, but I suppose if we ate them, other people couldn't look at them any longer."

"Say, Mary, isn't that a daisy one over there at the back? And look! It hasn't any prize ticket on it at all. I wonder why."

"Oh!" said Mary, when she caught sight of it, "isn't it a beauty? I think it is ever so much nicer than the others. Let's go and ask the judge why he didn't give it a prize. Maybe he meant to give it a prize and forgot about it, or perhaps he didn't see it. It's back so far and the others around it aren't a bit nice."

"All right," her brother said, "you go and ask." So Mary skipped away to where the judge was awarding prizes to some other kinds of fruit.

Now, the judge was very busy and didn't want to be interrupted, especially by an inquisitive little girl; but when he saw how eagerly Mary awaited his answer, he told her very kindly that the big red apple had a worm hole in it, and couldn't be given a prize on that account. He said it was being shown as a single specimen Northern Spy, and but for the worm injury would have won the first prize of five dollars.

"Oh! I didn't see it," said Mary, and after thanking the judge, she went back very slowly to where her brother was waiting for her.

"Isn't that a shame," George said, when Mary had explained what the judge had told her. "Just the same, I'll bet it would taste pretty good if we could get it and cut out the worm hole. Why couldn't some of those other apples have the worm and let this one get first prize? It's certainly a beauty," he ended up wistfully.

"Ah, children," said a small voice from some place quite close to them, "one never knows in this world whether things are really as they appear to be or not, until one can examine them very closely."

"Why, what was that?" said Mary. "I didn't see anybody close by. Who spoke to us?"

"Hush!" said George, looking very much surprised, "maybe he will speak again, whoever it was."

"You must not become alarmed," went on the voice, apparently coming from the big red apple they were looking at, "although I've no doubt you are very much surprised to hear an apple talk. Yes, it's I, the big apple without any prize. I get very lonely here with nobody except these scrubby little fellows here at the back to talk to. They have never had any amount of ambition in their lives, and since they are not worth very much to their masters, they are perfectly contented to sit here day after day and watch the people go by in their fine clothes. I feel quite differently about it, and sometimes when thoughtless people talk sneeringly about me I feel embarrassed and humiliated. I want to get out of sight as soon as possible. I know that cannot be, and so I must stay here until some naughty boy or girl steals me away, or my master takes me home."

"Oh!" said George and Mary together. "We didn't know apples could talk. We are very sorry you didn't take a prize, but the judge told us you were wormy. Won't you tell us about it?"

"I will, indeed, children, if you care to listen. It isn't everybody who can understand our language, but I knew you could, just as soon as you stopped to look at me and I saw how interested you were."

"Well, to begin with, my mother is a fine big Northern Spy tree in Farmer Jones' orchard, about three miles out of town. She is about thirty-five years old and just in the prime of life, because you

know, trees of my mother's kind live to be very old. The orchard, of which my mother is a part, is planted in soil which is a little lighter than the ordinary apple soil, so that we ripen a little earlier than other orchards about us. Then, too, our orchard is on a gentle southern slope and so, you see, we can get plenty of sunlight. We are extremely fond of sunlight, because basking in the sun all day makes us beautiful, and of course apples like to be good looking, just as well as little boys and girls do.

"I was born in May. I think my mother has told me since that it was the 25th of May, although I would not be sure. All my brothers and sisters were born within a week of each other, and I am one of the eldest. My father is a Baldwin tree that stands just next to my mother in Farmer Jones' orchard. I was, of course, very young, even when all my brothers and sisters were born, but I remember quite distinctly most of the things which happened then. Very early in my life I know that three of my brothers and myself formed a cluster all by ourselves out on the end of a small branch facing the sun at noon. Being the centre apple in this cluster, I was a little older than my brothers and stronger than they were. Poor fellows! They all died before they got to be very old, but as their story is bound up very closely with my own, I will tell you about them, too.

"Before an apple can grow the mother tree must put out blossoms, which are very beautiful indeed. The blossoms my mother produced were not quite as pretty as the blossoms that a Rhode Island Greening bore nearby, but of course it would be too bad if anyone had all the good things in the world, for then so many people would be unhappy. Our mother told us that we should be quite satisfied to be considered among the very finest dessert or eating apples, while the poor Rhode Island Greening is only a cooking apple, and not at all beautiful. Apple blossoms are very beautiful, so that the bees and other insects will visit them to bring nectar. Then, when the bees come for the nectar, they bring pollen from other apple blossoms, and this pollen grows down in the centre part of the flower or pistil and fertilizes the ovary, which is at the base of the flower. As soon as this is done an apple is born and begins to grow.

"As I started to tell you, I remember that when I was about a day old, four blossoms beside me opened up and pretty soon some bees came after their nectar. As it was a very bright, sunny day, and I could hear thousands of other bees working in the orchard. Before they went away from these blossoms which were beside me, some pollen was brushed off their legs on the pistil of the flowers, and a short time afterwards my three brothers were born. I might have had four brothers, but something happened and the fourth blossom didn't get fertilized. I asked my mother about it one day, and she said that if all the blossoms were fertilized, she couldn't take care of all her children, but she knew many of them would never get a chance to develop apples, so she always threw out plenty. As it was, you will see that many of my brothers and sisters died very early in life, because our mother didn't have sufficient food for them.

"You may think it very strange that my mother allowed my brothers to be born when she knew they couldn't all live, and if I hadn't heard my master's little girl and her teacher talking about it some time afterward, I don't think I could make you understand. It seems that there is what people call 'the survival of the fittest,' and that all my brothers and I were engaged in what is known as 'the struggle for existence.' Now this means that some of us were better fed and stronger than others, and the weaker ones had to die, leaving only those who were 'fittest' or strongest to grow and ripen. This struggle for existence was going on all over Farmer Jones' orchard, and I could hear some of my brothers dropping off every day for a long time, because they were too weak to keep up the struggle any longer.

To be continued.

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