

## A Hot Time.

By Peter McArthur.

There are no doubt many hot jobs on the farms during the summer months, but up to the present writing I have struck nothing hotter than cultivating corn in the still, humid hours of the early afternoon when a thunderstorm is gathering. As the green-headed flies are always at their worst just before a storm, they get the horse frantic, and her attempts to dislodge her tormentors with her hind feet are so disastrous to the growing hills of corn that a man's temperature goes up steadily until he makes a sweating, panting, howling exhibition of himself. These flies are said to be especially bad this summer, and one "grave and reverend seignior" told me that the ones that attacked his horses not only bit them, but took out chunks of flesh and flew away to the woods with it, where they could eat it at their leisure. But I have my doubts of that. I am beginning to suspect that real farmers take a delight in telling me whoppers, and otherwise imposing on my credulity. For instance, a man was telling me what a hearty feeder one of his horses is.

"Why," he said, "when she is pasturing, and makes up her mind that she wants to have a roll, she never stops eating. She lies down, still eating away, and rolls over and over, without ever missing a bite." Now, I leave it to the editor if that man wasn't stretching it a little bit. But to get back to hot jobs. I thought that my job of cultivating in the blazing sun was hot enough for anyone, but I am told that a man who has never mowed away hay under a steel roof has no idea of what heat is. According to the accounts I have heard, it must be a trifle worse than mining borax in Death Valley, and that is said to be the hottest job that any human being ever undertook. But the corn job is hot enough for me.

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Yesterday afternoon I was nearer to being "bushed" than I have been since undertaking to work a farm. I was pitching hay in the field—I am told it was native blue grass, and unusually heavy—and the coils were compact, and looked to have only about one forkful in each one. We were working at the gait of men who want to get a stack finished before a shower, and I thought I was good for anything that came along. But before evening I hadn't a word to say to anyone. They could "josh" me all they wanted to, but I hadn't the energy to answer back. Every coil was bigger and heavier than the last, and the day kept getting hotter and the wind died down, and the weather got more threatening, until it seemed as if human nature couldn't stand more, but the rest of the gang didn't find out how tuckered I was. I managed to stick it out, but I am not anxious to repeat the experience. If a large plantigrade man had come along hunting for work while the trouble was in progress, he could have had any price he asked, but hired men are too scarce to be foot-loose at this time of the year. Oh, yes, I know I should be up-to-date and have a hay loader and hay fork, but any implement agent who reads this will be wasting his time if he comes and tries to sell them to me. I have noticed that a lot of farmers who are farming on about the same scale as I am keep themselves poor buying the latest improvements, and I am not ambitious to join their melancholy ranks. Improved implements are an excellent thing to have if one has enough work for them to do, but there are cases where the sensible thing is to be old-fashioned. Muscle is still cheaper than machinery for small jobs.

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This experience started me meditating on hired men. I knew "In my hot youth when Victoria was queen." Where now can we find the equals of those wonderful workers who were known in "the short and simple annals of the poor" as "Bill the Cow" and "Three-fingered Jack, the Human Hayfork?" Bill used to laugh aloud at ordinary haycocks. What he wanted was young stacks, and he would heave them up whole, and was insulted if offered anything smaller than a barley-fork to work with. And when hay forks were first introduced, did no Three-fingered Jack get all lit up at the fall fair and start on a rampage to find the agent who had sold the toys. He reeled up and down the one street of the village and "bellered like all Bashan," and breathed slaughter, and would not be comforted when he could not find the man who was spoiling the good old pastime of haymaking by introducing horse forks. Those men used to work from dawn until after dark on the longest days, and they hated a mid-day shower as badly as the men who hired them. But where are they now? For answer, let us cull a fitting threnody from Homer, mighty singer of heroes:

"They long since in earth's soft arms are reposing, Lacedemon."

Afar from their own dear land, their native land, Instead of Lacedemon, read Scotland, or England, or Ireland.

They died, and their methods of working died with them. If they could only come back, we would organize excursions and charge an admission fee to those who wished to see them at work. But we are living in another and no doubt a better age. Men do not work as they did, and could not if they wanted to. Compared with them, we are a degenerate race, even though we wear finely-laundered linen when we go to town, instead of donning paper collars and putting butter on our hair.

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Of course, time is very valuable, and we are assured by all kinds of wise people that "Time is Money." Even "The Farmer's Advocate" has published articles telling what to do on rainy afternoons, so that no time may be lost. All this is no doubt very excellent, and far be it from me to say anything that might justify lazy people in wasting time, but I am still of the opinion that no man should work during the first few minutes after a summer shower. When everything in nature has been refreshed, he should try to breathe in a little of the refreshment himself. The air is so pure, and everything in the fields and woods so beautiful that it is positively invigorating to share in the joy by which we are surrounded at such times. Even the birds, though their broods may be hungry, stop for a chorus of song among the dripping leaves. Before the storm comes up all nature is parched and wilting, but after it has passed everything is throbbing with life. The corn and oats are a fresher green, and sparkle with countless jewels. It is at such times that life in the country is at its best, if we will only forget our cares and worries to enjoy it, even though only for a minute. The beauty of the world needs to be harvested and stored away in the memory just as carefully as the crops that are now causing us so much concern. The memory of what is beautiful should be as precious to us as full granaries.

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If all the quails that are whistling in every direction these days have average families, we shall be overrun by them this fall. I never knew them to be more noisy, but as yet I have not managed to come across any young flocks. I am told, however, that a bevy of twelve or fifteen partly-grown birds was seen crossing the road into the hay stubble a few days ago, and whenever I approached an old cock that was whistling on top of a fence-post, he dropped into the grass and disappeared, instead of flying away. I am told that this is an indication that his young were near-by, and, as they hide instinctively at the approach of an enemy, I had no chance to see them. If all goes well, I shall soon have a cover for them that should rival Jack Miner's. The young trees in the wood-lot are thriving, and should soon form such a thicket as the quails love. Besides, the brush that was trimmed off the hedge was also piled in the woods, and should make a good retreat for stormy weather. Unfortunately, there will be no lack of the weed seeds of which they are said to be so fond, but another year may make a difference, and if they will only stay with us and thrive, I shall be glad to provide them with good wholesome grain. Moreover, if I catch any man carrying a shotgun, wearing knee-panties, and following a spike-tailed dog, nosing around this place, I shall be likely to talk to him with exaggerated politeness, and tell him what fine walking there is on the gravel road. And if that doesn't head him off, the things I shall say to him will not be good to hear. In any case, he will have to get out. When I am able to protect the quail from my own longing for quail on toast, I shall certainly protect them from the ravages of others. I am told that there are few more useful birds in the country, and I am certain that there are none more beautiful.

## Fruit Inspectors.

The staff of Dominion Fruit Inspectors will be largely increased this year. The territory covered by each inspector will be reduced so as to enable as much inspection to be done at the point of shipment as possible. The fruit sections of Western Ontario have been divided into eight districts, with a fruit inspector in each. The inspection at the points of export and at the distributing points in our Canadian markets will go on as usual, but with an increased staff.

The next annual meeting of the American Association of Farmers' Institute Workers will be held at Atlanta, Georgia, November 11 to 13, 1912. At the same place, and beginning November 13th, will be held the annual meeting of the Association of American Agricultural Colleges and Experiment Stations.

## In York and Ontario.

(Editorial correspondence.)

Ontario County this year has been blessed with an abundance of rain. Some fields, not under-drained and low-lying, are showing the effects of an over-supply of water earlier in the spring. Crops in York and Ontario Counties are good, but the season is late—far later than the district around London. New meadows are just being cut in many localities, and a few are commencing timothy harvest, and it seems pretty green yet; so you see it is late. The last year's seeding is giving a fair crop of hay, some fields being extra good. The older meadows, composed almost entirely of timothy, are a fine, even crop, and are giving a good yield of first-class hay. The weather is somewhat showery, and a few very heavy thunderstorms have lodged some heavy fields of grain. The yield all around promises much better than last year. Plenty of moisture is holding the crop back, and harvest is sure to be later than usual.

Winter wheat suffered greatly from spring frosts and much of it is patchy. There seems to be a great difference in the way wheat comes through the winter on poor and good soil. On soil summer-fallowed and manured, the unfavorable conditions of winter and spring did not seem to injure the crop to anything like the same extent as where the wheat was sown on poorly-prepared stubble or sod soil.

Barley is not so extensively grown in this district as it formerly was. Most of the crop is now used for feeding purposes. The wet seeding has not been favorable to the barley crop, especially on low land, although, on the higher, well-drained fields, a large yield is promised. It is now just heading, is a good length, and a dark, rank color.

Oats are growing luxuriantly, with a couple showers a week. The early varieties are heading. The straw is a good length and standing well, and last winter's bedding shortage is likely to be entirely forgotten the coming winter amid oceans of this not-to-be-despised portion of the farm crop.

Corn was sown late, and cold weather held it back for some time. Poor seed was responsible for a thin stand in many fields, but warm weather and showers, accompanied by frequent cultivation, are doing much to retrieve the earlier drawbacks. Very little corn is grown for grain purposes, silage varieties forming nearly the entire crop.

Turnips and mangels show a decreased acreage, owing to scarcity of labor and the backward season. Where sown, they are growing rapidly, and will be found valuable as a supplement to the hay and silage crops.

The labor problem is the greatest question in this district. Farms are being worked with less help year after year, partly because men are scarce, and partly on account of the use of every device known to save labor. Implements and machinery now accomplish much of the work formerly done by hired help. There is a heap of satisfaction in the four-horse plow, cultivator, disk, drill and harrow, as there is also in hay loaders, tedders, horse forks and slings, as well as the wide binder, mower and rake. It is a vast advancement upon even a few years ago, and how great has been the change during the last century or even half-century? Of course, the scarcity of hired help must be exerting some influence upon the agriculture of this district, as it is in others. Perhaps few other counties feel the loss of the "call of the city" to such an extent as do York and Ontario. Toronto claims many a boy and girl who would be far better off if remaining in the counties of their birth. With a market like that of Toronto at their doors, farmers in these counties have an opportunity which is not the privilege of those farther off from such a large center.

The beef-cattle scarcity is just as acute here as elsewhere. Ontario and York Counties once turned off many of the country's best steers, but the demand for milk in Toronto has influenced the feeders, and they have switched to the dairy cow, and the dairy cow is now keeping many a farm in a fertile state, and at the same time swelling the purse of her owners. But dairying means calf-slaughter, and calf-slaughter means dear beef.

Slowly but surely old orchards are being reclaimed, and, where placed under proper treatment, are yielding abundant returns. No better apple district is to be found in Ontario than that comprising a belt of land along the north shore of Lake Ontario. Not too heavy, nor yet too light, the soil is ideal. The climate, tempered by the waters of the lake, is also well suited to apple production, and a rapid advancement in this branch of agriculture must surely follow. W. T. Ontario Co., Ont.