

The Farm Boy Who Went Back

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sections of the country. The claims were writ big on billboards and in streets-cars, special letters, booklets—the very flower of the engraver's, printer's and lithographer's arts: Italian climate, territory lavishly endowed in fruits, soil, forage, grasses, river and mountain scenery, mines, and timber.

Johnny dabbled a little and lost money. One day he saw an advertisement reading: "Railroad lands at \$2.50 an acre. You can buy 160 acres, no more. The tracts are heavily timbered, scoring from 5 to 16 millions of feet of lumber a quarter section. Finest agriculture and fruit region in the country."

The land was in litigation. The government was trying to compel the railroad company to sell the land. The agent said the land would have to be sold and he was representing the attorney for the railroad company, registering applications for the land.

"You see, it's this way," he said. "Only one application will be registered for each quarter section. You select your plot, pay me \$75, and that pays all fees—the registering of the application, the filing of the deed, attorneys' fees, etc. Then you pay no more until the land is deeded to you. Decide the matter at once, for next week I am going to Chicago to open an office there."

Johnny didn't "bite," but wrote to the clerk of the county in which the land was situated. The clerk replied: "There are enough applications on file to cover all the railroad lands three or four times. It is a scheme of locators who are making money out of it."

Johnny's chase for the Holy Grail wound up with a nugget of wisdom and a determination to go back to the soil. From it he had been driven by drudgery, the long hours, the lack of social uplift, and the barrenness of inspiration. The farmers were the underdogs, throttled by the stock gamblers, fleeced by the merchants; the city lured with its higher wages, shorter hours, its paved streets, water, gas, and electrical systems, its theatres, moving-picture shows, parks, scenic railways, trolley-rides, music, churches, and the weekly pay-day with half-holiday on Saturday. There you wore better clothes, saw things happening, and could see promotion after promotion to him who proved worthy of the laurels. Advertisements lent a charm: "Learn Proof-Reading—\$25 to \$50 a week; demand exceeds the supply! \$25 to \$50 (even \$100) a week for advertisement writers! \$1,000 to \$10,000 a year sure if you master Soffie's course in salesmanship; hand-reds of positions open for the spring rush; send for free booklet! Be a Harriman, a Hill, a Burke, a Choate, or land on the Supreme bench by Spar-Time Study." Pictures just as glowing might be painted about the farm, pictures that would make you drunk with enchantment.

Toil and brains applied to the soil would bring wonderful results. Hadn't Mr. Burbank proved it? Drunk with this idea, Johnny went back to the farm with the determination to study and to understand. He started with geese. He became a regular goose about goslings and ferreted out the goose law so that he could raise every gosling hatched. He knew the difference between the African, the Emden, the Toulouse, the wild, and the Chinese. The downy African is prolific, early, and fine-flavored, but pugnacious and quarrelsome. The Emden lays only about twenty eggs a year, while the coarse and fatty Toulouse brings the record up to forty a year. The wild goose lays only five to eight eggs a season, but the eggs are invariably fertile and bring forth strong, vigorous goslings. Johnny combined strains till he had not an African nor an Emden, nor a wild, but a goose—a top-notch for flavor, earliness, size, tenderness, fecundity, feathers, profit. He shortened the fattening record a fourth by a judicious mixture of grass, grain, roots, cabbage, beef scrap, and pure water, so that he could market at flood-tide. He was becoming a creator; the joy of achievement filled his sails; no drudgery now, no city-bred distracted,

no reports of fabulous profits uprooted him. It would take a standing army to drive him from the farm.

Then he turned to seed-corn. He read, experimented, selected, combined, and eliminated till he struck thirteen on the how to go at it, very high touching perfection, but never quite reaching it. Watch him pick out the stalks that look thriftiest, hardest, greenest, and those that have large, spreading tentacles at the roots. He ties a string to those stalks. In a few days he detassels them before the pollen forms, to prevent self-fertilization. The next year he plants these selected ears in rows to themselves, one ear to a row, three grains to the hill. If only two of the grains grow he will not select seed from that hill, because of the low vitality. Summer comes; he selects the strongest plants, detassels some for mother plants, and leaves others for father plants. He ties a paper bag over the mother ears so that pollen from weak and promiscuous stalks may not fertilize his seed ears. When the pollen on the father stalks ripens, he hand-fertilizes the mother ears, then ties the paper bags on again. For his seed he selects only the very best ears from the mother stalks. Each year he gets a finer strain, more uniform, more productive. Each year a little better, but never quite perfect—see? When the ears begin to ripen, he gathers the seed. It is carefully, thoroughly dried and is kept in an even temperature through the long winter, for constant freezing and thawing play havoc with delicate corn-germs the same as with tender toes and fingers. He gleans more

long time to evaporate all the moisture down three or four feet below the surface, but down there is where the roots are growing on tilled land.

Johnny spent every dollar that he could spare on tiling his land. His crops increased in yield as the land became honeycombed with percolating channels to the tile below. His land became more fertile, full of nitrogen and oxygen; he planted his crops earlier; they ripened earlier; they grew so rapidly that weeds were choked and quality was high. His acres smiled and laughed bumper crops, and their master basked in the joys of discovery and achievement.

He learned to grow alfalfa on his clay soil. Alfalfa is a mortgage-lifter, a matchless fertilizer, unequalled for stock, making the horses sleek and the hogs fat as butter-balls. It fills the egg basket and the milk pails; pigs squeal for it; colts whinny for it; and it knocks chicken-lice seven ways for Sunday. It is a marvelous grower, giving three to nine crops of sweet hay a year. It works all the time, Saturday afternoon, and Sunday in triple shifts. Its stems and leaves and nodules gather from air and sunshine loads of warmth and nitrogen and store them in the soil. The roots go down into hard-pan many feet, making a million channels through the soil so it may become thoroughly aerated and drained.

His Cheviot sheep told of the days when they browsed the Cheviot Hills, which disserve England from Scotland, and how they got their sharp noses from picking the grass from between the rocks. Those with the sharpest and



Sir Wilfrid in Grain Fields at Yorkton

gold from his corn-fields than the farmers of the drudgery school. They come a-running to Johnny to see what he is doing and pay a premium for his corn.

Next, he got the tiling fever. Wiseheimsers told him that tiling would drain the land so quickly and so thoroughly that in dry times his crops would suffer. But Corneli Bailey put a bug into his ear. He told him to tile his clay and other soils that were not porous and naturally well-drained. It enables the surplus water to run off, leaves the soil friable so that you may break it earlier and plant earlier. The roots of plants do not grow below the line of standing water in the soil. In the spring the water stands only a few inches from the surface in untiled land. The roots grow down to this standing-water and stop, for they cannot stand wet feet and cannot grow where there is no air. Since the roots cannot grow down, they spread out close to the surface. Tile the land, and the water-level sinks down three or four feet. The plant roots keep delving and digging and stretching till they reach it. The plants have such enormous root-systems and grow so fast that they choke out the weeds. Corn roots will grow down three to five feet if you give them half a chance. If drouth comes, it takes it a

longest noses could get the most grass, hence thrived better than the others; and so, long, sharp noses got to be the only style. His Shropshires came from the shire of Shrop in merry England. Their fleeces is dull white with a fringe of brown.

Everything on Johnny's farm is alive with interest and history. He loves the farm; it is his life. No heaps of manure pile up at the rear of his barns to seep away in waste. He uses something or other to retain the nitrogen and hauls it to the fields where it may make humus and liberate new plant foods. He is intensifying. He makes as much from forty acres as others make 240. His land is fertile, well-tilled, requires less labor, fewer steps, less upkeep, less machinery.

He saves the waste in other ways. From ten to twenty per cent. of the egg-crop rots every year. Kansas loses 10,000,000 eggs a year, a loss of \$1,500,000. An hour of hot sunshine on an egg ruins it. Eggshells are porous, evaporate with age, and drink in rank poisons. A fertilized egg will spoil quicker than a sterile one; a little heat causes the germ to develop. Johnny gathers his eggs twice to three times a week. They go to the consumer fresh, nourishing, unevaporated, contagious

SUNSET IN THE ROCKIES

See how the sun, in glorious death declining,
Has touched the lake with streaks of living gold;
See how the mountains, for his death repining,
Are clad in misty mourning, grey and cold.
Above, beyond, the snowy peaks are raising
Their virgin white to meet the cloudless skies;
And, by their loveliness, all things are praising
The sun—who grows more lovely as he dies.
Fleasington, Alta. M. H. S.

with health. None of his eggs go to storage.

Johnny left the farm to get away from drudgery only to find that the city, too, belongs to the great work-a-day world. He came back to the farm prepared for contentment. A new dispensation is coming. The fields are beginning to feel a new fertility because a loving hand tills them; the birds bask in the fervor of a new appreciation; the song of the reaper is set to new tunes. The new farm means a new city, larger, cleaner, better fed.

RE FUEL SUPPLY

We wish again to call attention to the fact that there is not yet any marked tendency upon the part either of farmers or townspeople, to lay in a fair supply of their winter's fuel early, and thus permit dealers to refill their sheds once at least before winter sets in. The department's inquiries into the whole situation reveal the fact that, generally speaking, mine operators, railway companies, and retail dealers, have done a very great deal to forward the movement of large stocks of coal to the consumer's door, in readiness for winter, but that the consuming public, rural and urban alike, has not done as much as it easily might have done to avert the possibility of a fuel famine with its attendant evils in the form of suffering higher prices and hard feelings. Whether it is well founded or not, there is a general feeling that the coming winter will be a severe one. In view of this possibility are there not too many empty coal bins in town, and too many empty wagons leaving town these days—Sask. Department of Agriculture.

BIG FREIGHT BILL

On October 3rd, 1910, the Grain Growers' Grain Company paid to the various terminal elevator companies and the grain office of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company as freight on car shipments for that day, \$31,250.23. This means the freight charges on about three hundred and seventy-five cars.

INCREASES IN WHEAT YIELDS

To show that increases in area and yield may go on in later years it should be noted that much recent progress has been made in many countries. For example, in Hungary, one of the oldest wheat countries, the acreage has increased even since 1884, from 6,797,800 acres that year to 9,474,415 in 1908. In European Russia it has increased from 39,711,200 acres in 1894 to 62,766,700 in 1908. In smaller countries the acreage increases have been as follows: Roumania, 2,903,700 acres in 1886 to 4,452,000 in 1908; Bulgaria, 2,167,300 acres in 1897 to 2,422,700 in 1908; Servia, 783,500 acres in 1893 to 931,300 in 1908.

Likewise have the acre yields increased. In the United Kingdom, where farming is so intensive that it would seem hardly possible in late years to get anything more from the soil, nevertheless, the yield has increased during the past ten years almost to 2 bushels. In France it has increased over 2 bushels in the same period, in Austria 3 bushels, and in Germany the astonishing amount of 5.2 bushels.

A CONTRAST IN FARM LIFE

Farm life in the East of Europe, if compared with that in North America, is about two hundred years behind as regards its progress. In practically all continental countries, the peasant knows nothing regarding the international market. He sells his farm produce to the merchants, who are often Jews, without any knowledge of its shipping value or of the prices in the great markets of the world. The American farmer on the other hand, has a full knowledge of all that is transpiring in the leading markets affecting the price of his grain. He often watches the future market and sometimes will have transaction therein and these are occasionally made by means of the telephone. His life forms a great contrast to that of the European peasants, but the difference is greater in the commercial methods practised than in the practical farming.

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