

# FARM AND DAIRY

## & RURAL HOME



We Welcome Practical Progressive Ideas



The Recognized Exponent of Dairying in Canada.

Trade increases the wealth and glory of a country; but its real strength and stamina are to be looked for among the cultivators of the land.—Lord Chatham.

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## Harvest Time Reminiscences\*

"A VETERAN," OXFORD CO., ONT.

THE most marvellous sight I have ever seen was on a visit to a son in the Western States a few summers ago. It was a great traction engine drawing six eight-foot cut binders. Younger men might not be so impressed by that sight as I was. The present generation take such evidences of man's inventive genius very much for granted. But to me it is different. I have already passed the allotted three-score years and ten. As I looked on that wonderful sight, I could close my eyes and see, as in a dream, the harvesting methods of my own boyhood days when we swung the cradle and boasted of the few acres a day that we could "lay down." The superiority of modern methods are unquestioned, but still I like to dream of those old days when men's strength and skill counted for much and the implement, comparatively, for little. I sometimes think that the importance of the man factor is being subjugated to the machine factor. Where now is the glorious competition that characterized the old harvest field when the farmer's brawny sons contended with their sire and each other the honor of cutting the widest and longest swath in the day.

\*These reminiscences are written by an editor of Farm and Dairy. They embody the ideas and to a large extent the language used by an Oxford county pioneer in telling our editor of his boyhood life on the farm. The old gentleman has now passed over the great divide to join the friends of his youth.

The implement of my father's day was the sickle, but that is ancient history, even to me. The cradle came to the harvest field when I did, and it was considered a wonderful invention. A good cradle could cut more wheat in a day than was ever dreamed possible with the sickle. Cradling was really an operation calling for skill. Last harvest I got the boys to bring down an old cradle from the loft. My joints are stiffer than they used to be, but I started strong, and in the hands of their grandsire, a looked easy to the boys. So they tried. And what a fist they did make of it! For once old age surely had a chance to smile at youth.

### HARD WORK WITH THE FLAIL.

For the most part we didn't bind the grain. We just carried it loose to the barn and beat it out with the flail when other work was not pressing. And hard work it was. A good flailer could raise as much dust as a modern grain separator. We didn't have binder twine bills in those days. We tied the sheaves with straw when we tied at all. The speed an expert could make was really marvellous, especially in long straw where splicing was not necessary.

I well remember the first reaper in our community. Its purchase created as much excitement in our little neighborhood as a good-sized war would do to-day. We were all agog with



Whetting the Cradle Blade

excitement weeks before it arrived. We were all there to see it start. Of course it was crude, but in it I saw the beginning of the end of our cradling days. I remember that the hired men, who were more numerous then than now, regarded the new invention with no friendly eye. They believed that it would make their services unnecessary. They would gladly have destroyed our pioneer reaper had they had the chance. Instead of decreasing labor requirements, however, the reaper and its successor, the binder, have enabled larger areas to be farmed and labor is in greater demand than ever.

Civilization, I am told, depends on man's ability to multiply his own power. Modern machinery enables him to do this. But still our harvests of the olden time appeal to me as the picture of a lonely man riding a binder or a mower can never do. Our harvests were sociable affairs. They were family affairs. The farmer and his sons followed one after the other each in his own swath. Occasionally they stopped for a chat. At meal time we did justice to our fare and enjoyed each other's company as the hurried, worried farmer of today, with all his superabundance of mechanical assistance and scarcity of human helpers, cannot do. Perhaps I do not see the world to-day in as rosy hues as I should. Maybe distance makes the heart grow fonder and I see the harvest days of my youth through a silver veil. But of the great advance in labor-saving machinery—well, there is no gainsaying that.



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