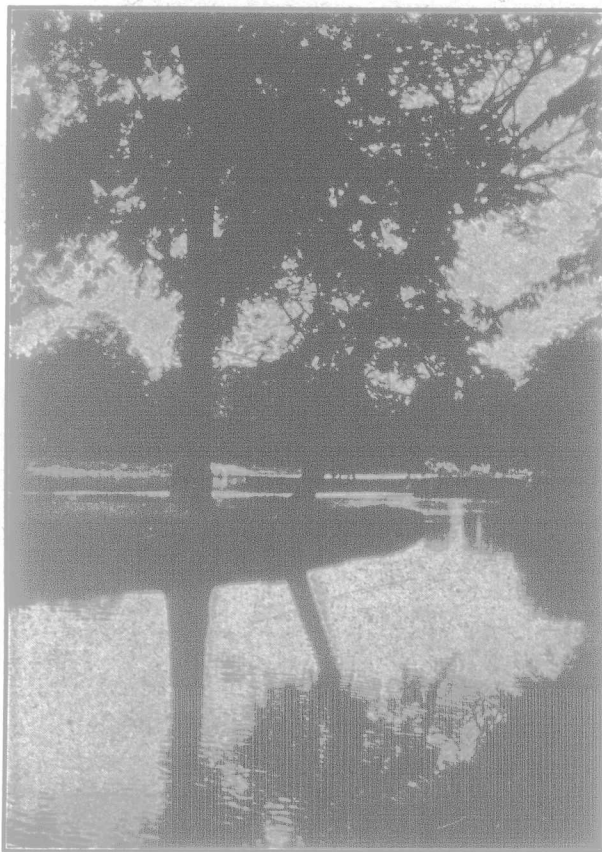


The Story of a Farm Boy.

Part IV. Why the Boy Planned to Return to the Land.

BY B. S. A.

This is the fourth chapter of "The Story of a Farm Boy." In the preceding chapters were set forth the influences instrumental in forming the boy's decision to leave the farm and take a course at an agricultural college. Then comes the end of the College term, and the subject of the story enters professional agriculture—more as a means to an end than as his real life work. In this chapter the impressions of "Jimmy" as he enters upon his new work are most interestingly told, but his longing for the freedom of the country finally decides him to plan on a return to the land.



More Alluring than the City Streets.

than diminished his love for the practical end of his calling. He had met with success, comparatively speaking. He had saved a little money—enough to give him a respectable start on a farm for himself without having to call upon "father" for aid. He had gained the knowledge he felt he required to make the most out of life on the land. Farming would mean more to him than simply a means of making a living—it would be life.

Jimmy had exploded the idea, which once had a place in his mind, that professional and other salaried city people did not have to work hard for success. His belief as a young lad, in common with that of the majority of people reared in the country, was that salaried city folk and city business men did not have to put forth much effort. True, some do not, but the great majority work, if not with their hands with their heads, and theirs is the pace that kills. It was so with Jimmy. When a man works at the highest possible tension all the time for a decade, he is not as fresh and ready for the fray as when he first began. He may have comparatively short days at the office. He could not stand long ones. But Jimmy was at work from which it was entirely impossible to get away, even when not in the office. It was exacting; it was tiring. There are no real "snaps." Diligence alone, brings success.

With sufficient capital to start without going too deeply into debt, farming, to the one who knows it from all its many angles and still loves it, has no equal. Jimmy remembered a part of an old poem which fitted his case and he used to often quote it to his wife and two little boys, for such was now his family. It referred to the farm.

"A sense of pureness in the air,
Of wholesome growth of living things;
Sky, trees, the grass, the very loam,
I love them all, this is our home."

He felt that nowhere else could even be a real home to himself and family. Where his heart was there he must be also.

Deeply and long did he consider. It takes no small amount of courage, after years of ready monthly pay checks, to break away and depend upon a farm to turn in the cash. Payments can never be so regular on the farm. Money can never be so ready. Moreover, Jimmy had grown to like his professional work as well as could be expected of one so attached to the

soil. He had congenial surroundings. He met, conversed and dealt with the recognized agricultural leaders of the day. Trips were almost a weekly occurrence with him. He went much; he saw much; he had a good job as jobs go. He hesitated to leave it. He felt that his work was reaching a far larger number and perhaps doing more good than he could hope to do in his more limited sphere in whatever community he might later find the farm to suit his somewhat critical tastes. However, he felt that he had given a decade of his best life to professional agriculture; he desired a change and believed he was justified, to be fair with himself and his family, in planning to go back to the land. Jimmy's family was by this time a big consideration. For a man who knows the country well, the city is a poor place to raise a family. I would not trade my own country advantages as a boy, although they seemed nothing other than disadvantages of the worst kind then, for all the better chances of artificial training which the city offers. Boys are a problem in the city, and Jimmy had two of the liveliest sort. He knew the gloss, glitter and hollowness of the life that lay ahead of the lads if they remained in the city. For their sake he preferred the farm.

And what of his wife? Just this. Most of the inconveniences of farm life had passed away. The farmer's wife had come, partially at least, into her own. All things were becoming new on the land. Telephones, rural mail delivery, automobiles, and, best of all, running water in the homes, lighting, and sanitary conveniences common in city houses were lightening the burden of the farmer's wife. Jimmy believed that every farm woman should get just as many of the necessary handy appliances for her half of the farming effort as the farmer himself demanded for his outdoor work. It was just as necessary in his belief that the farmer's wife have a washing machine, as it was that the farmer have a self-binder. It was more imperative that she get the necessary water for the home on tap in every room than it was that the farmer have running water in his stock barns. And so on. All these things were discussed in the home, and Jimmy's wife saw farming in its true light. The team to do it were each ready to take their end of the whiffletree and pull together.

Jimmy had been intimately acquainted with the work of the various farmer's organizations which had sprung into being during his sojourn in the city. His professional position prevented him from taking an active part in any, but he lent his sympathy to their efforts. He hoped by returning to the land to become a "booster" for organized agriculture. He believed that through co-operative union farmers could advance their calling and greatly improve their position. Besides, the revelations of the great war had shown the man on the land to be the first essential of the race.

"Man's living comes out of the soil."

Without farmers the race would succumb to starvation. The farmer is truly a producer of wealth. He is a creator of value and there is a peculiar satisfaction in earning a dollar through farm crops, or live stock, that can never be connected with the mere abstracting of the same amount from some unproductive enterprise. Jimmy loved to watch crops, calves, colts, pigs and lambs grow. He wanted to be directly responsible for the growth of some. Jimmy desired to work with living things. He felt that the place to live and build a home for a man so constituted was on the farm. He knew city life and wished it could be made possible for all those grumbling sons of the soil, who had never been obliged to make their homes and living in the city, to get away from their farms for a while. They would the better appreciate the farm and the great outdoors ever after. The only person competent to compare city and rural life is the one who has really tasted, yes, more than tasted, tried, both. Then let him who prefers the city stay therein and him who loves the land, return thereto. Jimmy's love for the land had grown with the years. He had no other road open to be honest with himself, but to return. And so he planned. He remembered the last line of an article written by a friend who had been through the same mill through which he was passing:

"It's character counts; and character grows strong and sturdy on the land."

Was Jimmy, or James, I should say,—for his hair showed a sprinkling of the silver locks which come earlier where the brain is overworked, to carry out his plans? Part five will reveal.

(To be continued.)

Canadians should not be too hopeful of an early peace. The Governments of Great Britain, France, United States and Italy are fully alive to the benefits of peace and realize how anxiously all the peoples of the allied nations await it. At the same time the present favorable military situation must not be lessened and we must remain fully keyed up to a continuance of the struggle. Dreams of peace must not weaken our determination to achieve our war aims.

Jimmy arrived in a strange city a little after eleven on a beautiful June morning. The net of shining haze, which the poets have pointed out to us as one of the pleasing features of our May and June days, was silvering the horizon walls. All nature was at its best. As the train slowed up when entering the city parks, Jimmy at once missed the broad fields, verdant in their spring garb, and could not help contrasting with the clean, wholesome country scenes through which he had just passed, and where there was room and fresh air enough for all and countless thousands more, the dingy little homes and the small and ill-kept back yards of the crowded toilers of the city. Of course, the railway passes through the poorest sections of the city, much as it does the country, but nevertheless human beings were obliged to live in the shacks adjoining the tracks. Homesickness he had mastered during his first weeks at College, and once thoroughly recovered from a severe attack of this malady the man is immune. He was not homesick. Rather was he determined. The sights he saw—his first impressions of the city where he was destined to make his abode for several years—only steeled his heart, stiffened his back-bone and increased his determination to make good—to get on and the sooner get away from it all and back to the place where he felt he would be most satisfied, and, possibly, most useful.

Jimmy has told me that he will never forget the day he entered the office in which his new duties were to be executed. It was a busy office. There was no time for preliminaries or explanations. His reception was: "Glad to see you; there's your desk, go to work," and he was at it for the rest of the hour between eleven and twelve. His first impressions of the work were unfavorable. His job was a daily grind to satisfy a never-ending and ever-increasing demand. He was supposed to be a walking encyclopaedia. He had been described by members of the College staff, who had recommended him for his pen-pushing position, as an all-round man. He must live up to his reputation. He plugged away.

The first six months formed another difficult period in Jimmy's career. He learned that College training was not sufficient in itself to turn out men capable of mastering professional agricultural work without effort. The course was satisfactory and had served its purpose—it had trained Jimmy to think, and thinkers can act where action is necessary. The point, however, is that the College-trained man must go on learning or he is never a success. His work when he leaves College must be studied even more diligently than his books while at school. Jimmy was a good student and picked up the essentials of his new occupation fairly rapidly, when it is considered that while he had a chief over him, he had no one to tell him what to do. He worked hard for six months, for it was necessary that he fail not. He was on a trial contract. After about five months of the hardest effort he had ever put forth, he concluded that he should get more for his services else he might be obliged to look elsewhere. The increase came without asking for it, and he was told by the head of the firm that he had made good. This goes a long way with any young man, and Jimmy decided then and there to stick to the job and see what there really was in it.

A few months later my true friend, as I who understood him best knew he would, returned to his old home and married the country girl of his choice. Jimmy's finances were then in such condition that the young couple were able to furnish their home without going into debt, and they settled down in their new city surroundings—both understanding the purpose of Jimmy's effort and both hoping to "some day" return to the land. They believed in living well and saving for a rainy day.

Time passes rapidly; months go faster as folks grow older. Jimmy's advancement was also rapid. He moved up to the top of his profession after two years and a half of close application. He worked without ceasing. He was absent from his duties one-half day in six years. A robust constitution and perfect health stood him in good stead. He worked, studied and rounded out his education. His salary, for wages had advanced to salary, was more than three times the amount of his initial stipend. Naturally, under the conditions, one would say he should be satisfied. But there are people who are rather hard to entirely suit. Jimmy may have been one of these. However, he still felt that he should be getting closer to the land, and he planned.

What did Jimmy plan? Why did he plan? Readers will guess at once that he turned over in his own mind ways and means of getting back on the land. Why should he? Was he not doing well? His father and mother thought so. His friends of his earlier days told him they wished they had taken a College education and had prepared themselves for a position like his. Farmers said to him: "You're far better off where you are than you could ever be on the farm. Your work is light, your pay is big, and you have a good time." Just another indication of the fact that no man knows another's work and another's business quite so well as the man himself. Personal preference goes a long way in satisfying a man's mind. Money is not all. Place is not everything. Never was man made truly happy by either fame or money. This Jimmy realized from his work day by day and he planned to return to the farm as an occupation because College training and years of professional work increased, rather