

blossoms shows, that even those that were still unopened are mostly black on the inside, and I am afraid, that means that they have been killed. If these fears are well founded, it will be a great disappointment, for practically all the farmers have sprayed their orchards this spring—many of them for the first time.

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While the old orchard has been injured by frost I am afraid that the new orchard, which we have planted out, has suffered even more from the heat. The trees were twelve days in coming from the nursery, and arrived in a broken box from which the packing had been shaken. They were as dry as the switches in the brush heap, and if they survive I shall be inclined to believe that young apple trees cannot be killed by any treatment. Acting on instructions telephoned from the nursery, we did everything possible to revive them, and they have been planted with every care. Someone has certainly been to blame when perishable freight arrived in such a condition, and it is my intention to have the whole matter thoroughly investigated. Practically all the trees that came in this district were in the same condition, and some farmers refused to accept delivery. I have been told that even if trees that have been dried out in this way should live through the first year they almost invariably die in the second year. I shall be glad if some experienced orchardist will give me the benefit of his experience in this matter.

Reminiscences of an Ex-Hired Man.

Editor "The Farmer's Advocate":

I was born and raised on a farm. There were three boys in the family and I was the oldest. When I was 16 years old it was decided that I should hire out for the fall as we were through harvesting and there wasn't much need for my services at home. I began to look around for a job but it wasn't so easy to get work then (in the seventies) on a farm as it is now. However, when I was at the blacksmith shop one day, getting a horse shod, I learned that the farmer nearby was laid up with a felon on his hand and was badly in need of help, as most of his grain was uncut. As soon as my horse was shod I was on his back in a trice, and a brisk gallop of a few minutes brought me to the farmer's gate. We soon struck a bargain. I was engaged for a month at 30 cents a day including board, and was to come back that night, in order to start work the next morning. It is needless to state that I returned greatly elated over my good fortune. There was little preparation needed to get me ready as my new situation was barely two miles away. After supper I left home for the first time. How well I remember it although many harvests have come and gone since then! I think I can see my mother standing at the doorway of our humble log dwelling wiping the tears from her eyes, knowing full well that this parting, if only for a short distance, was the thin-end of the wedge of separation which eventually comes to nearly every home whether rich or poor. Notwithstanding my intense eagerness to get away I must confess that I felt a twinge of loneliness and sadness as I walked down the lane, through the gate and out on the road to begin the battle of life among strangers. But the exuberance and hopefulness of youth soon drove out all sense of sorrow occasioned by this initial snapping of home ties. The future was bright, and so I walked along the highway that beautiful summer evening as merry as a lark. Such, however, is the fickleness of feeling, that, I was no sooner at my journey's end, than I began to wish I was home again. And the bedroom! I have a distinct recollection to this day of how dimly dreary that room appeared to me the first night I slept in it. In the days that followed I learned that there is a mighty big difference between being a boy at home and a hired man at a neighbor's, no matter how kind and thoughtful the latter may be. Like every other hired man that is worth his salt, I got up early the next morning to do the pre-breakfast chores so that we could be ready for the regular routine work of the day by seven o'clock. Up to this time I had never been used to continuous work from morning till night. I now found out that when a boy became "the hired man" he couldn't drop work for a few minutes at any time, to play with the dog, run to the house for an apple or take a few moments rest under the spreading branches of a friendly tree. It is quite natural therefore, that before the first week was ended I was sorry that I left home, but I stuck to my place nevertheless, though I often counted the days to the end of the month.

As a great deal of the crop was uncut and my employer had no reaper I had to do consider-

able cradling—a pretty stiff job for a sixteen-year-old lad. There is something inspiring about cradling even if it is a strenuous bit of exercise. When a boy learned to handle the cradle with all the graceful curves and swings that characterized the adept cradler he felt that he was a man out and out. I never became an expert in this line of work, for reapers became quite common shortly after, and the only use for a cradle was in cutting roads around the field and around stumps and trees. Now-a-days I believe that the majority of farmers make the first round with their binder without first cutting a road, so that cradling will soon be a lost art.

The most disagreeable feature of my first experience as a hired man was having to work so much alone. Everything seemed to move so slowly, especially binding grain, which, to say the least, is a tedious job when the grain has been cut with a cradle and has lain in the sun for a day or two. The straw gets so dry and crackly that it is almost impossible to make a band. However, "everything comes to him who waits." The grain was cut, bound and safely housed, and my month was up at last. Strange to say however, I didn't leave, but hired for two months more at the rate of 25 cents a day, wet and dry. Fall plowing commenced, and I must admit that I enjoyed this part of farm-work better than anything else. With a smart team, a good plow, a clean field and a bright, crisp October day I think there is no occupation under the sun that can compare with plowing. I have had a fairly varied experience and so feel that I can speak with some degree of confidence along this line.

Another fall work that I enjoyed almost as well as plowing, was "going to threshings." This might appropriately be called the pastime of a farmer lad. In those days the machines were all driven by horse-power, usually about five teams. Two teams were furnished by the thrasher, and the rest by the farmer, who usually exchanged with his neighbors, if he hadn't enough horses of his own. The work at the threshing these days was not very heavy as there were generally plenty of men. The straw stack was the favorite resort for those who were particularly fond of an easy place, hence the older men generally gravitated to that point. The young men struck for the mow, where the work was more strenuous, especially in loose barley and peas. The steadiest jobs were cutting bands, carrying boxes and standing at the ends of the carriers. This latter work was generally looked upon as the most disagreeable part of threshing, and it was customary for each farmer or his hired man to take this place. My favorite job was cutting bands. There was something exceedingly attractive and picturesque in being near the whirling and whirling cylinder. Cutting bands however, was no sinecure, especially if the bands were thick and the knife dull. Sometimes a reckless feeder would grab for a sheaf before the band was severed and receive a nasty gash for his carelessness.

The old-time separators couldn't take in the sheaves like the modern, ravenous, grain-eating monsters. The feeders then had to loosen the sheaves before sliding them down the feed-board. It would make a youngster of to-day split with laughter to see the antics of an old-timer feeder as he literally tore the sheaves limb from limb before they were fed to cylinder. But to us boys he was the object of envious admiration and deep respect. I have wondered since if the pugilistic method of handling a sheaf was merely a pretext for lengthening out the job. Sometimes a sheaf would come bounding out of the mow, pass the band-cutter, drop into the cylinder before the feeder could catch it, thus stopping the machinery from horse-power to carriers. An accident like this often resulted seriously for the momentum of the horses would sometimes crack every arm. This entailed a long delay, while the threshers scoured the woods for a fresh supply of iron-wood trees which furnished the best timber for arms for a horse-power.

One very amusing trick that these old threshers used to indulge in, was to put on an extra spurt when the man at the head of the carriers was getting it hard on account of the increasing height of the straw stack. A signal to the driver for more speed, and to the mow men for more grain and the fun began. A heavy, continuous stream of fluffy straw rolled off the end of the carriers and the "tail man" dug in for all he was worth to keep the track clear, but there was a limit to human endurance for soon there was a blockage, off came the carrier chain and everybody but the unfortunate victim, enjoyed a few moments rest while matters were being straightened out.

The most pleasing part of the threshing program, to a lad, at least, was the meals. Such cooking! Everything known to the culinary art was piled on the table—meat, vegetables, pickles, pies, cakes, cookies, home-made bread, maple syrup, etc., etc., and to cap the climax there was

always a pudding, generally rice with raisins galore and country cream for sauce. It makes my teeth water as I write these words when I think of those threshing dinners in olden times. I presume good meals are still served up on such auspicious occasions, but they cannot beat those feasts we used to have way back in the seventies. In this connection I wish to state unequivocally that I cannot recollect a threshing that I ever attended where there was poor food, and that too in a district where there were comparatively few well-to-do farmers. I distinctly remember going to the threshing on one occasion where I expected a very common meal would be served as the man was poor and his wife wasn't noted for good house-keeping. Judge of my surprise when I sat down to one of the finest spreads it being my privilege to enjoy from that day to this. All the latent capabilities of that wife had been aroused for the occasion.

Wet days are the summum malum of hired men notwithstanding the old saying of "More Rain More Rest," to the contrary. There is not much rest for a hired man on a rainy day if he works for a wide-awake and resourceful farmer. Such employers can find a job for a hired man under any climatic conditions. During wet days in spring seed-grain is cleaned, calf stables and sheep houses cleaned out, harness washed and oiled, potatoes sprouted, and wood split. In the summer we used to throw out the surplus straw from mows, fix wagon-racks, churn, clean the mower and reaper to the sound of the rain pattering on the roof. In the fall my employers never seemed to be stuck for something to do in rainy weather. We repaired stables, cleaned grain, made axe handles, stored machinery in winter quarters, etc.

When my "time was up" at my first situation, I went home for the winter months and attended school for a short time. It was customary then for the big boys to take a few weeks schooling in the winter, to brush up in the three R's.

In the following spring I engaged with a farmer for eight months at \$10 a month. I was now a full-fledged hired man. I got a splendid place and generally speaking enjoyed my work. During the year I entered into a new and delightful experience and that was attending barn raisings. Up to this time log barns obtained generally, but a change was taking place. Farmers were beginning to build frame barns with stone stabling underneath. I was sent to every "raising" during the summer, and these events were bright spots in my year's work. I was a veritable green-horn at first, not knowing a girt from a plate, nor a purlin post from a spur-brace. I soon got the "hang of the thing" and before long was looked upon as a pretty handy fellow and was "called" near the first when sides were chosen preparatory to the final struggle. Now-a-days, I am told that the frame-work is put up with block and tackle, so that all the fun and tremendous excitement that accompanied a barn-raising twenty or thirty years ago, are banished. A droll feature in connection with barn-raising in that district is worth recording. There were two men who were always called last for obvious reason. Occasionally, for joke, the captains would call them first, to the great amusement of the crowd. It should be mentioned to the credit of these indifferent workers that they never resented the tricks played upon them, for they quickly and good-naturedly responded to their names.

The most disagreeable experience that I had as a hired man was the long working days in spring and summer. We used to work from seven o'clock till sun-down in the fields to say nothing about the chores before breakfast and after the field-work was done. Many a time I have followed a team for twelve and thirteen hours a day. Often in June I used to wonder if the sun would ever set. In my humble opinion more boys have left the farm because of the long work days, than for any other reason. One doesn't mind putting in a few extra hours during haying and harvest, but to require a hired man or any one else to put in twelve hours hoeing turnips, plowing and summer-fallow or building fences is more than any spirited young fellow can stand. I don't blame any farmers' son for "kicking over the traces" when asked to work till sun-down, from seed-time to the beginning of haying. Such an imposition is no more nor less than rural tyranny. I want to say that just as much work can be accomplished in the long run in a ten-hour day as in the old method of working till sun-down.

When a boy at home we always quit work at 6 o'clock, except in haying and harvest. It is quite evident therefore, that when I hired out and had to work two or three hours a day extra I mentally resolved that some day I would change my occupation, and after three years experience as a "hired man" I put my resolution into effect, I decided to be a school teacher, for to my unsophisticated mind teaching seemed to be an ideal calling, with its short hours and long holi-