FARMING FOR BOYS.

WHAT THEY HAVE DONE, AND WHAT OTHERS MAY DO, IN THE CULTIVATION OF FARM AND GARDEN,—HOW TO BEGIN, HOW TO PROCEED, AND WHAT TO AIM AT.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"TEN ACRES ENOUGH."

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

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PREFACE.

AMONG the multitude of recent publications designed exclusively for boys there are very few which set before them the superior charm, as well as the general superior safety, of a farmer's life. The pervading tendency of modern publications for the youthful mind has been to fit them for trade or commerce in the great cities, as if those human hives were the only spots whereon men could be prosperous and happy. Examples of friendless adventurers from the country to the city, who there rose to fortune, have been largely set before the youthful mind, while no proper notice has been taken of the much more numerous class of boys who, beginning as rakers in the hay-field, thence rose to the position of successful farmers, and subsequently to that of statesmen or public benefactors.

The charm of city life has been unduly magnified, while the greater one of country life has been overlooked. Our boys have thus too generally been taught to think the former preferable to the latter. Experience of the trials which belong to it in the end convinces them of the mistake they made in

leaving the green fields of their childhood for the dust and turmoil of the city. Many are annually repeating it, stimulated to do so by the tone of most of our publications, and by the advice of parents and friends to whom these have given a false coloring of the truth. Many are thus regretting the day when they abandoned the wide harvest-field for the narrow counter of a city shop; and too many sigh in vain for the great fortune they were speedily to acquire, and for liberty to once more return and labor on the old homestead on which they were born. If in early life insensible to its attractions, because no one taught them to understand and appreciate them, they feel and comprehend them now.

This little volume has been prepared to counteract, to some extent, this prevalent disposition for encouraging our youth to exchange the country for the city, — to convince those already living in the former that their future respectability and happiness will be best promoted by remaining where they are, as well as to impress on the minds of city parents that they will be doing for their sons an acceptable service by cultivating in them a love for country life in place of that for a city one. I have set before them striking instances of the general superiority of agricultural employments, of their comparative freedom from temptation to vice, of the sure rewards they bring to intelligently directed industry, and shown that it is a great mistake to suppose that all who exchange the farm for the city become either good, or great, or even rich. The

fact is made manifest, in the personal history of a multitude of distinguished men, that the farm, and not the city, has been the birthplace of the leading minds of all countries.

To stimulate the faculty or disposition for acquiring money, I have endeavored to show how the boy upon a farm may make a beginning. Heretofore, the children of too many farmers have been kept as mere drudges, now at school and now at work, with no pains taken to encourage their individual enterprise by showing them how to make something for themselves. The hope of profit nerves the enterprise and sharpens the wit of men. Why should our boys be so wholly excluded from all share in what, when grown to manhood, so generally becomes the great impulse to all future effort?

The mass of farmers' boys understand that they must carve out their own fortunes. If their parents would afford them some little opportunity to begin early,—an equal one with the sharp newsboy of the city,—they too would become so shrewd, so self-reliant, so expert at acquisition, even on the farm, that, educated to moderation, they would be too well satisfied with small gains to be overcome by the seductions of city life. If it be mere money which makes the latter attractive, a certainty of being able to acquire it at home would seem to be potent enough to surround with greater attractions the spot on which the farmer's boy may have been born.

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THERE is an old farm-house in the State of New Jersey, not a hundred miles from the city of Trenton, having the great railroad which runs between New York and Philadelphia so near to it that one can hear the whistle of the locomotive as it hurries onward every hour in the day, and see the trains of cars as they whirl by with their loads of living freight. The laborers in the fields along the road, though they see these things so frequently, invariably pause in their work and watch the advancing train until it passes them, and follow it with their eyes until it is nearly lost in the distance. The boy leans upon his hoe, the mower rests upon his scythe, the ploughman halts his horses in the furrow, — all stop to gaze upon a spectacle that has long ceased to be either a wonder or a novelty. Why it is so may be difficult to answer, except that the snorting combination of wheels, and cranks, and fire, and smoke, thundering by the quiet fields, breaks in upon the monot-

onous labor of the hand who works alone, with no one to converse with, — for the fact is equally curious, that gangs of laborers make no pause on the appearance of a locomotive. They have companionship enough already.

This old wooden farm-house was a very shabby affair. To look at it, one would be sure that the owner had a particular aversion to both paint and whitewash. The weather-boarding was fairly honeycombed by age and exposure to the sun and rain, and in some places the end of a board had dropped off, and hung down a foot or two, for want of a nail which everybody about the place appeared to be too lazy or neglectful to supply in time. One or two of the window-shutters had lost a hinge, and they also hung askew, — nobody had thought it worth while to drive back the staple when it first became loose.

Then there were several broken lights of glass in the kitchen windows. As the men about the house neglected to have them mended, or to do it themselves by using the small bit of putty that would have kept the cracked ones from going to pieces, the women had been compelled to keep out the wind and rain by stuffing in the first thing that came to hand. There was a bit of red flannel in one, an old straw bonnet in another, while in a third, from which all the glass was gone, a tolerably good fur hat, certainly worth the cost of half a dozen lights, had been

crammed in to fill up the vacancy. The whole appearance of the windows was deplorable. Some of them had lost the little wooden buttons which kept up the sash when hoisted, and which anybody could have replaced by whittling out new ones with his knife; but as no one did it, and as the women must sometimes have the sashes raised, they propped them up with pretty big sticks from the wood-pile. It was not a nice sight, that of a rough stick as thick as one's arm to hold up the sash, especially when, of a sultry day, three or four of them were always within view.

Then the wooden step at the kitchen door, instead of being nailed fast to the house, was not only loose, but it rested on the ground so unevenly as to tilt over whenever any one stepped carelessly on its edge. As the house contained a large family, all of whom generally lived in the kitchen, there was a great deal of running in and out over this loose step. When it first broke away from the building, it gave quite a number of severe tumbles to the women and children. Everybody complained of it, but nobody mended it, though a single stout nail would have held it fast. One dark night a pig broke loose, and, snuffing and smelling around the premises in search of forage, came upon the loose step, and, imagining that he scented a supper in its neighborhood, used his snout so vigorously as to push it clear away from the door. One of the girls, hearing the noise, stepped out into the yard to see what was going on; but the step being gone,

and she not observing it, down she went on her face, striking her nose on the edge of a bucket which some one had left exactly in the wrong place, and breaking the bone so badly that she will carry a very homely face as long as she lives. It was a very painful hurt to the poor girl, and the family all grieved over her misfortune; but not one of the men undertook to mend the step. Finally, the mother managed to drive down two sticks in front of it, which held it up to the house, though not half so firmly as would have been done by a couple of good stout nails.

Things were very much in the same condition all over the premises. The fence round the garden, and in fact all about the house, was dropping to pieces simply for want of a nail here and there. The barn-yard enclosure was strong enough to keep the cattle in, but it was a curious exhibition of hasty patchwork, that would hurt the eye of any mechanic to look at. As to the gates, every one of them rested at one end on the ground. It was hard work even for a man to open and shut them, as they had to be lifted clear up before they could be moved an inch. For a half-grown boy to open them was really a very serious undertaking, especially in muddy weather. The posts had sagged, or the upper staples had drawn out, but nobody attended to putting them to rights, though it would not have been an hour's job to make them all swing as freely as every good farm-gate ought to. The barn-yard was a hard place for the boys on this farm.

No touch of whitewash had been spread over either house, or fence, or outbuilding, for many years, though lime is known to everybody as being one of the surest preservers of wood-work, as well as the very cheapest, while it so beautifully sets off a farm-house to see its surroundings covered once a year with a fresh coat of white. The hen-house was of course equally neglected, though whitewash is so well known to be an indispensable purifier of such places, materially helping to keep away those kinds of vermin that prevent poultry from thriving. In fact, the absence of lime was so general, that the hens could hardly pick up enough to make egg-shells. Had they laid eggs without shells, the circumstance would have mortified the hens as much as it would have surprised the family. As it was, their only dependence was on the pile of lime rubbish which was left every spring after whitewashing the kitchen. The women who presided there did manage to fix up things once a year. They thought lime was good to drive away ants and roaches, and so they and the hens were the only parties on the premises who used it.

There were many other things about this farm-house that were quite as much neglected, — more than it is worth while at present to mention, unless it be the wood-pile. Though there were two men on the farm, and several well-grown boys, yet the women could rarely prevail on any of them to split a single stick of wood. The wood for the

house caused great trouble, — it was difficult to get it at all. Then when it did come, it was crooked and knotty, much of it such as a woman could not split. Yet whenever a stick or two was wanted, the females of the family must run out into the shed to chop and split it. They never could get an armful ahead, such was the strange neglect of one of the most indispensable comforts of housekeeping. If the female head of the family had only thought of letting the male portion go a few times without their dinners, it is more than likely they would have brought them to terms, and taught them that it was quite as much their duty to split the wood as it was hers to cook their dinners. But she was a good, easy creature, like most of the others. They had all been brought up in the same neglectful way, just rubbing along from day to day, never getting ahead, but everything getting ahead of them.

This farmer's name was Philip Spangler, and he was unlucky enough to have a hundred acres in his farm. The word *unlucky* is really a very proper one; because it was unlucky for such a man as Philip that he should have so much more land than he knew how to manage, and it was equally unlucky for the land that it should have so poor a manager. The man was perfectly sober, and in his own way was a very industrious one. He worked hard himself, and made every one about him do the same. He was what is known as a "slaving farmer," — up by daylight,

having all hands up and out of doors quite as early as himself, and he and they stuck to it as long as they could see to work. With him and them it was all work and no play. He had no recreations; he took no newspaper, had no reading in the house except the children's school-books, the Bible, and an almanac, — which he bought once a year, not because he wanted it, but because his wife would have it.

What was very singular in Mr. Spangler's mode of managing things, when a wet day came on, too rainy for out-of-door work, he seemed to have no indoor employments provided, either for himself or hands to do, having apparently no sort of forethought. On such occasions he let everything slide, — that is, take care of itself, — and went, in spite of the rain, to a tavern near by on the railroad, where he sat all day among a crowd of neighboring idlers who collected there at such times; for although it might be wet enough to stop all work in the fields, it was never too wet to keep them away from the tavern. There these fellows sat, drinking juleps, smoking pipes, or cigars that smelt even worse, and retailing among each other the news of their several neighborhoods.

What Spangler thus picked up at the tavern was about all the news he ever heard. As to talking of farming, of their crops, or what was the best thing to raise, or how best to carry on this or that branch of their business, —

such matters were rarely spoken of. They came there to shake off the farm. Politics was a standing topic, — who was likely to be nominated on their ticket, — whether he would be elected, — and whether it was true that so-and-so was going to be sold out by the sheriff. It was much to Spangler's credit, that, if at this rainy-day rendezvous he learned nothing useful, he contracted no other bad habit than that of lounging away a day when he should have been at home attending to his business. It was much after the same fashion that he spent his long winter's evenings, — dozing in the chimney-corner, — for the tavern was too far away, or he would have spent them there.

Now it somehow happens that there are quite as many rainy days in the country as in the city. But those who live in the latter never think of quitting work because it snows deep or rains hard. The merchant never closes his counting-house or store, nor does the mechanic cease to labor from such a cause ; they have still something on hand, whether it rain or shine. Even the newsboys run about the streets as actively, and a hundred other kinds of workers keep on without interruption.

If the laboring men of a large city were to quit work because of a hard rain, there would be a loss of many thousand dollars for every such day that happened. So also with a farmer. There is plenty of rainy-day work on a farm, if the owner only knew it, or thought of it beforehand,

and set his men or boys to do it, — in the barn, or cellar, or wood-shed. If he had a bench and tools, a sort of work-shop, a rainy day would be a capital time for him to teach his boys how to drive a nail, or saw a board, or push a plane, to make a new box or mend an old one, to put a new handle in an axe or hoe, or to do twenty such little things as are always wanted on a farm. Besides saving the time and money lost by frequent running to the black-smith or wheelwright, to have such trifles attended to, things would be kept always ready when next wanted, and his boys would become good mechanics. There is so much of this kind of light repairing to be done on a farm, that, having a set of tools, and knowing how to use them, are almost as indispensable as having ploughs and harrows, and the boys cannot be too early instructed in their use. Many boys are natural mechanics, and even without instruction could accomplish great things if they only had a bench and tools. The making of the commonest bird-box will give an ambitious boy a very useful lesson.

It seemed that Mr. Spangler was learning nothing while he lived. His main idea appeared to be, that farming was an affair of muscle only, — that it was hands, not heads, that farmers ought to have; and that whoever worked hard-est and longest, wasted no time in reading, spent no money for fine cattle or better breeds of pigs, or for new seeds, new tools or machines, and stuck to the good old way, was

the best farmer. He never devoted a day now and then to visiting the agricultural exhibitions which were held in all the counties round him, where he would be sure to see samples of the very best things that good farmers were producing, — fine cattle, fine pigs, fine poultry, and a hundred other products which sensible men are glad to exhibit at such fairs, knowing that it is the smart men who go to such places to learn what is going on, as well as to make purchases, and that it is the agricultural drones who stay at home. The fact was, he had been badly educated, and he could not shake off the habits of his early life. He had been taught that hard work was the chief end of man.

Of course such a farmer had a poor time of it, as well as the hands he employed. He happened to be pretty well out of debt, there being only a small mortgage on his farm; but he was so poor a manager that his hard work went for little, in reality just enough to enable his family to live, with sometimes very close shaving to pay interest. As to getting rich, it was out of the question. He had a son whose name was Joe, a smart, ambitious boy of sixteen years old; another son, Bill, two years younger; and an orphan named Tony King, exactly a year younger than Joe; together with a hired man for helper about the farm.

Mr. Spangler had found Tony in the adjoining county. On the death of his parents, they being miserably poor, and having no relations to take care of him, he had had a hard

time among strangers. They kept him until old enough to be bound out to a trade. Mr. Spangler thinking he needed another hand, and being at the same time in such low repute as a farmer and manager that those who knew him were not willing to let their sons live with him as apprentices, he was obliged to go quite out of the neighborhood, where he was not so well known, in order to secure one. In one of his trips he brought up at the house where Tony was staying, and, liking his looks, — for he was even a brighter boy than Joe Spangler, — he had him bound to him as an apprentice to the art and mystery of farming.

In engaging himself to teach this art and mystery to Tony, he undertook to impart a great deal more knowledge than he himself possessed, — a thing, by the way, which is very common with a good many other people. Altogether it was a hard bargain for poor Tony; but when parents are so idle and thriftless as to expose their children to such a fate as his, they leave them a legacy of nothing better than the very hardest kind of bargains.

In addition to this help, about a year after Tony took up his quarters with Mr. Spangler, there came along an old man of seventy, a sort of distant relation of the Spanglers, who thenceforward made the farm his home. Mr. Spangler and his wife called him "Benny," but all the younger members of the family, out of respect for his age, called him "Uncle," so that in a very short time he went by no other

name than that of "Uncle Benny," and this not only on the farm, but all over the neighborhood.

Uncle Benny turned out to be the pleasantest old man the boys and girls had ever been acquainted with. It was no wonder they liked him, for he was very fond of children, and like generally begets like. He was a very different sort of character from any about the farm. He had been well educated, and being in his younger days of a roving, sight-hunting disposition, he had travelled all over the world, had seen a multitude of strange men and strange things, and had such a way of telling what he had thus picked up as never to fail of interesting those who heard him. Sometimes of a long winter evening, when he was giving accounts of foreign countries, or how people lived in our great cities, or how they carried on farming in other parts of our country, he talked so pleasantly that no one thought of being sleepy. On such evenings, before he came to live on the farm, Mr. Spangler would often fall asleep on his chair in the chimney-corner, and once or twice actually tipped over quite into the ashes; but now, when Uncle Benny got fairly under way, there was no more going to sleep. Mr. Spangler pricked up his ears, and listened better than if any one had been reading from a book.

Then Uncle Benny had a way of always putting in some good advice to both men and boys, and even to the girls. He had read and travelled so much that he had something

appropriate for every event that turned up. Indeed, every one was surprised at his knowing so much. Besides this, he was very lively and cheerful, and as fond of fun as could be, and seemed able to make any one laugh whenever he chose to indulge in a joke.

In addition to all this, he was uncommonly handy with tools. Though an old man, and not strong enough to do a full day's work at mowing or haymaking, because of stiff joints, yet he could potter about the house and barns, with a hatchet, and saw, and a nail-box, and mend up a hundred broken places that had been neglected for years before he came to live there. If he saw anything out of order, a gate with no latch, a picket loose in the garden fence, or any other trifling defect about the premises, he went to work and made all right again. He even mended the broken lights in the kitchen windows, and got rid of all the old hats and bonnets that had been stuffed into them. He put on new buttons to keep up the sashes, and so banished the big sticks from the wood-pile that had been used to prop them up. He said they were too ugly even to look at.

It was Uncle Benny who nailed up the loose door-step which the pig had rooted away from its place, causing Lucy Spangler to fall on the edge of a bucket and break her nose. Lucy came out to thank him for doing the thing so nicely; for ever since the accident to her nose,

she had been very skittish about putting her foot on the step.

"Ah, Lucy," said Uncle Benny, "I wish I could mend your nose as easily."

"Indeed I wish so too," replied Lucy.

Inside of the house were numerous things that wanted looking after in the same way. There was not a bolt or a latch that would work as it ought to. All the closet locks were out of order, while one half the doors refused to shut. In fact there were twenty little provocations of this kind that were perpetual annoyances to the women. Uncle Benny went to work and removed them all; there was no odd job that he was not able to go through with. Indeed, it was the luckiest day in the history of that farm when he came to live upon it, for it did seem that, if the farm were ever to be got to rights, he was the very man to do it. Now, it was very curious, but no one told Uncle Benny to do these things. But as soon as he had anchored himself at Mr. Spangler's he saw how much the old concern was out of gear, and, providing himself with tools, he undertook, as one of his greatest pleasures, to repair these long-standing damages, not because he expected to be paid for it, but from his own natural anxiety to have things look as they ought.

The boys watched the old man's operations with great interest, for both Joe and Tony were ambitious of knowing

how to handle tools. One day he took hold of the coffee-mill, which some clumsy fellow had only half nailed up in the kitchen, so that, whenever the coffee was ground, whoever turned the crank was sure to bruise his knuckles against the wall. Mrs. Spangler and her daughters of course did all the grinding, and complained bitterly of the way the mill was fixed. Besides, it had become shockingly dull, so that it only cracked the grains, and thus gave them a miserably weak decoction for breakfast. Now, Uncle Benny had been used to strong coffee, and could n't stand what Mrs. Spangler gave him. So he unshipped the mill, took it to pieces, with a small file sharpened up the grinders, which by long use had become dull, oiled its joints, and screwed it up in a new place, where it was impossible for the knuckles to be bruised. It then worked so beautifully, that, instead of every one hating to put his hand on the crank, the difficulty was to keep the children away from it, — they would grind on it an hour at a time. Such a renovation of damaged goods had never before been seen on Spangler's premises.

CHAPTER II.

ALL FARMING IS A JOB. — STOPPING A GREAT LEAK. — GIVING BOYS A CHANCE. — A LECTURE IN THE BARN. — WORKING ONE'S WAY UP.

TONY KING was particularly struck with the improvement in the coffee-mill, for his knuckles had received a full share of the general skinning; and when the job was done, turning to the old man, he said, "O, Uncle Benny, won't you teach me to do such things before you do all the odd jobs about the farm?"

"Never fear that all the odd jobs about any farm, and especially such a one as this, are going to be done in a hurry," he replied, laying his hand gently on Tony's head. "If the owner of a farm, I don't care how small it may be, would only take time to go over his premises, to examine his fences, his gates, his barn-yard, his stables, his pig-pen, his fields, his ditches, his wagons, his harness, his tools, indeed, whatever he owns, he would find more odd jobs to be done than he has any idea of. Why, my boy, all farming is made up of odd jobs. When Mr. Spangler gets through with planting potatoes, don't he say, 'Well, that job 's done.' Did n't I hear you say yesterday, when you had hauled out the last load of manure from the barn-yard, — it was pretty wet and muddy at the bottom, you remember, — 'There 's

a dirty job done!' And so it is, Tony, with everything about a farm,—it is all jobbing; and as long as one continues to farm, so long will there be jobs to do. The great point is to finish each one up exactly at the time when it ought to be done."

"But that was not what I meant, Uncle Benny," said Tony. "I meant such jobs as you do with your tools."

"Well," replied the old man, "it is pretty much the same thing there. A farmer going out to hunt up such jobs as you speak of will find directly, that, if he has no tool-chest on hand, his first business will be to get one. Do you see the split in that board? Whoever drove that nail should have had a gimlet to bore a hole; but having none, he has spoiled the looks of his whole job. So it is with everything when a farmer undertakes any work without proper tools. Spoiling it is quite as bad as letting it alone.

"You see, Tony," he continued, "that a good job can't be done with bad tools,—that split shows it. No doubt the man who made it excused himself by saying that he was never intended for a mechanic. But that was a poor excuse for being without a gimlet. Every man or boy has some mechanical ability, and exercising that ability, with first-rate tools, will generally make him a good workman. Now as to what odd jobs a farmer will find to do. He steps out into the garden, and finds a post of his grape-arbor rotted off, and the whole trellis out of shape. It should be

propped up immediately. If he have hot-beds, ten to one there are two or three panes out, and if they are not put in at once, the next hard frost will destroy all his plants. There is a fruit-tree covered with caterpillars' nests; another with cocoons, containing what will some day be butterflies, then eggs, then worms. The barn-yard gate has a broken hinge, the barn-door has lost its latch, the wheelbarrow wants a nail or two to keep the tire from dropping off, and there is the best hoe with a broken handle. So it goes, let him look where he may.

"Now come out into the yard," continued the old man, "and let us see what jobs there are yet to do."

He led the way to the wood-shed. There was an axe with only half a handle; Tony knew it well, for he had chopped many a stick with the crippled tool. Uncle Benny pointed to it with the screw-driver that he still carried in his hand, but said nothing, as he observed that Tony seemed confounded at being so immediately brought face to face with what he knew should have been done six months before. Turning round, but not moving a step, he again pointed with his screw-driver to the wooden gutter which once caught the rain-water from the shed-roof and discharged it into a hogshead near by. The brackets from one end of the gutter had rotted off, and it hung down on the pig-pen fence, discharging into the pen instead of into the hogshead. The latter had lost its lower

hoops; they were rusting on the ground, fairly grown over with grass. The old man pointed at each in turn; and, looking into Tony's face, found that he had crammed his hands into his pockets, and was beginning to smile, but said nothing. Just turning about, he again pointed to where a board had fallen from the farther end of the shed, leaving an opening into the pig-pen beyond. While both were looking at the open place, three well-grown pigs, hearing somebody in the shed, rose upon their hinder feet, and thrust their muddy faces into view, thinking that something good was coming. The old man continued silent, looked at the pigs, and then at Tony. Tony was evidently confused, and worked his hands about in his pockets, but never looked into the old man's face. It was almost too much for him.

"Come," said Uncle Benny, "let us try another place," and as they were moving off, Tony stumbled over a new iron-bound maul, which lay on the ground, the handle having been broken short off in its socket.

"How the jobs turn up!" observed Uncle Benny. "How many have we here?"

"I should say about five," replied Tony.

"Yes," added the old man, "and all within sight of each other."

As they approached the hog-pen, they encountered a strong smell, and there was a prodigious running and tum-

bling among the animals. They looked over the shabby fence that formed the pen.

"Any jobs here, Tony?" inquired Uncle Benny.

Tony made no answer, but looked round to see if the old man kept his screw-driver, half-hoping that, if he found anything to point at, he would have nothing to point with. But raising the tool, he poised it in the direction of the feeding-trough. Tony could not avert his eyes, but, directing them toward the spot at which the old man pointed, he discovered a hole in the bottom of the trough, through which nearly half of every feeding must have leaked out into the ground underneath. He had never noticed it until now.

"There 's another job for you, Tony," he said. "There 's not only neglect, but waste. The more hogs a man keeps in this way, the more money he will lose. Look at the condition of this pen, — all mud, not a dry spot for the pigs to fly to. Even the sheds under which they are to sleep are three inches deep in slush. Don't you see that broken gutter from the wood-shed delivers the rain right into their sleeping-place, and you know what rains we have had lately? Ah, Tony," continued the old man, "pigs can't thrive that are kept in this condition. They want a dry place; they must have it, or they will get sick, and a sick pig is about the poorest stock a farmer can have. Water or mud is well enough for them to wallow in occasionally, but not mud all the time."

"But I thought pigs did best when they had plenty of dirt about them, they like it so," replied Tony.

"You are mistaken, Tony," rejoined Uncle Benny. "A pig is by nature a cleanly animal; it is only the way in which some people keep him that makes him a filthy one. Give him the means to keep himself clean, and he will be clean always, — a dry shed with dry litter to sleep in, and a pen where he can keep out of the mud when he wants to, and he will never be dirty, while what he eats will stick to his ribs. These pigs can't grow in this condition. Then look at the waste of manure! Why, there are those thirty odd loads of cornstalks, and a great pile of sweet-potato vines, that Mr. Spangler has in the field, all which he says he is going to burn out of his way, as soon as they get dry enough. They should be brought here and put in this mud and water, to absorb the liquid manure that is now soaking into the ground, or evaporating before the sun. This liquor is the best part of the manure, its heart and life; for nothing can be called food for plants until it is brought into a liquid condition. I never saw greater waste than this. Then there is that deep bed of muck, not three hundred yards off, — not a load of it ready to come here. Besides, if the cornstalks and potato-vines were tumbled in, they would make the whole pen dry, keep the hogs clean, and enable them to grow. But I suppose Mr. Spangler thinks it too much trouble to do these little things.

"Now, Tony," he continued, "you can't do anything profitable or useful in this world without some trouble; and as you are to be a farmer, the sooner you learn this lesson, the more easily you will get along. But who is to do that job of putting a stopper over this hole in the trough, you or I?"

"I 'll do it to-morrow, Uncle Benny," replied Tony.

"To-morrow? To-morrow won't do for me. A job that needs doing as badly as this, should be done at once; it 's one thing less to think of, don't you know that? Besides, did n't you want to do some jobs?" rejoined Uncle Benny.

Tony had never been accustomed to this way of hurrying up things; but he felt himself fairly cornered. He did n't care much about the dirt in the trough; it was the unusual promptness of the demand that staggered him.

"Run to the house and ask Mrs. Spangler to give you an old tin cup or kettle, — anything to make a patch big enough to cover this hole," said Uncle Benny; "and bring that hammer and a dozen lath-nails you 'll find in my tool-chest."

Tony did as he was directed, and brought back a quart mug with a small hole in the bottom, which a single drop of solder would have made tight as ever.

"I guess the swill is worth more to the hogs than even a new mug would be, Tony," said Uncle Benny, holding up the mug to the sun, to see how small a defect had con-

demned it. Then, knocking out the bottom, and straightening it with his hammer on the post, he told Tony to step over the fence into the trough. It was not a very nice place to get into, but over he went; and, the nails and hammer being handed to him, he covered the hole with the tin, put in the nails round the edge, hammered the edge flat, and in ten minutes all was done.

"There, Tony, is a six months' leak stopped in ten minutes. Nothing like the present time, — will you remember that? Never put off till to-morrow what can be done to-day. Now run back with the hammer and these two nails, and put this remnant of the tin cup in my chest; you 'll want it for something one of these days. Always save the pieces, Tony."

Tony was really surprised, not only how easily, but how quickly, the repair had been made. Moreover, he felt gratified at being the mechanic; it was the first time he had been allowed to handle any of Uncle Benny's nice assortment of tools, and he liked the old man better than ever. But who is there that does not himself feel inwardly gratified at conferring a new pleasure on a child? Such little contributions to juvenile happiness are neither barren of fruit nor unproductive of grateful returns. They cost nothing, yet they have rich rewards in the memory of the young. They make beautiful and lasting impressions. The gentle heart that makes a child happy will never be forgotten.

No matter how small the gift may be, a kind word, a little toy, even a flower, will sometimes touch a chord within the heart, whose soft vibrations will continue so long as memory lasts.

This survey of Mr. Spangler's premises was continued by Uncle Benny and Tony until the latter began to change his opinion about the former doing up the odd jobs so thoroughly that none would be left for him. He saw there was enough for both of them. The old man pointed out a great many that he had never even noticed ; but when his attention was called to them, he saw the necessity of having them done. Indeed, he had a notion that everything about the place wanted fixing up. Besides, Uncle Benny took pains to explain the reasons why such and such things were required, answering the boy's numerous questions, and imparting to him a knowledge of farm wants and farm processes, of which no one had ever spoken to him.

The fact was, Uncle Benny was one of the few men we meet with, especially on a farm, who think the boys ought to have a chance. His opinion was, that farmers seldom educate their children properly for the duties they know they will some day be called on to perform, — that is, they don't reason with them, and explain to the boy's understanding the merit or necessity of an operation. His idea was, that too many boys on a farm were merely allowed to grow

up. They were fed, clothed, sent to school, then put to work, but not properly taught how and why the work should be done. Hence, when they came to set up for themselves, they had a multitude of things to learn which they ought to have learned from a father.

He used to say, that boys do only what they see the men do, — that all they learned was by imitation. They had no opportunity allowed them while at home of testing their own resources and energies by some little independent farming operation of their own. When at school, the teacher drills them thoroughly; when at home, they receive no such close training. The teacher gives the boy a sum to do, and lets him work it out of his own resources. But a farmer rarely gives a boy the use of a half-acre of land, on which he may raise corn or cabbages or roots for himself, though knowing that the boy could plant and cultivate it if he were allowed a chance, and that such a privilege would be likely to develop his energies, and show of what stuff he was made. The notion was too common that a boy was all work, and had no ambition, — whatever work was in him must be got out of him, just as if he had been a horse or an ox. It was known that at some time he must take care of himself, yet he was not properly taught how to do so. The stimulant of letting him have a small piece of ground for his own profit was too rarely held out to him. No one knew what such a privi-

lege might do for an energetic boy. If he failed the first year, he would be likely to know the cause of failure, and avoid it in the future. If he succeeded, he would feel an honest pride, — the very kind of pride which every father should encourage in his child; and that success would stimulate him to try again and do still better. Both failure and success would be very likely to set him to reading about what others had done in the same line, — how they had prospered, — and thus a fund of knowledge would be acquired for him to draw upon whenever he set up for himself.

As before mentioned, Mr. Spangler made a strange departure from his rule of plenty of work for everybody, by quitting home on a wet day and going to the tavern rendezvous, to hear what the neighbors had to say, leaving no work marked out for his "hands" to do in his absence. These wet days were therefore holidays for the boys. All three were pretty good readers; and so they usually borrowed a book from Uncle Benny, and went, on such occasions, into the barn, and lay down on the hay to read. Uncle Benny recommended to them that one should read aloud to the others, so as to improve his voice, and enable each to set the other right, if a mistake were made. When the weather became too cold for these readings in the barn, they went into the kitchen, there being no other room in the house in which a fire was kept up.

One November morning there came on a heavy rain that lasted all day, with an east wind so cold as to make the barn a very uncomfortable reading-room, so the boys adjourned to the kitchen, and huddled around the stove. But as the rain drove all the rest of the family into the house, there was so great an assembly in what was, at the best of times, a very small room, that Mrs. Spangler became quite irritable at having so many in her way. She was that day trying out lard, and wanted the stove all to herself. In her ill-humor at being so crowded up, she managed to let the lard burn; and at this she became so vexed that she told Tony, with Joe and Bill, to go out, — she could n't have them in her way any longer.

They accordingly went back to the barn, and lay down in the hay, covering themselves with a couple of horse-blankets. These were not very nice things for one to have so close to his nose, as they smelt prodigiously strong of the horses; but farmers' boys are used to such perfumes, and they kept the little fellows so warm that they were quite glad to escape the crowd and discomfort of the kitchen. These became at last so great, that even Uncle Benny, seeing that he was not wanted there just then, got up and went over to the barn also. There he found Tony reading aloud from a newspaper that had been left at the house by a pedler a few days before. Tony was reading about the election, and how much one set of our people were rejoicing over the result.

As Uncle Benny came into the barn Tony called out, "Uncle Benny, the President's elected, — did you know it?"

"O yes, I knew it; but what President do you mean?" responded Uncle Benny.

"Why, President Lincoln. He was a poor boy like me, you know."

"But can you tell me, boys," asked Uncle Benny, "who will be President in the year 1900?"

"Dear me, Uncle Benny," replied Tony, "how should we know?"

"Well, I can tell," responded the old man.

The boys were a good deal surprised at hearing these words, and at once sat up in the hay.

"Who is he?" demanded Tony.

"Well," replied Uncle Benny, "he is a boy of about your age, say fifteen or sixteen years old."

"Does he live about here?" inquired Bill, the youngest of the party.

"Well, I can't say as to that," answered the old man, "but he lives somewhere on a farm. He is a steady, thoughtful boy, fond of reading, and has no bad habits; he never swears, or tells a lie, or disobeys his parents."

"Do you think he is as poor as we are, Uncle Benny?" said Tony.

"Most likely he is," responded the old man. "His

parents must be in moderate circumstances. But poverty is no disgrace, Tony. On the contrary, there is much in poverty to be thankful for, as there is nothing that so certainly proves what stuff a boy is made of, as being born poor, and from that point working his way up to a position in society, as well as to wealth."

"But do poor boys ever work their way up?" inquired Tony.

"Ay, many times indeed," said Uncle Benny. "But a lazy, idle boy can do no such thing, — he only makes a lazy man. Boys that grow up in idleness become vagabonds. It is from these that all our thieves and paupers come. Men who are successful have always been industrious. Many of the great men in all countries were born poorer than either of you, for they had neither money nor friends. President Lincoln, when he was of your age, was hardly able to read, and had no such chance for schooling as you have had. President Van Buren was so poor, when a boy, that he was obliged to study his books by the light of pine knots which he gathered in the woods. President Lincoln for a long time split rails at twenty-five cents a hundred. But see how they got up in the world."

"But I thought the Presidents were all lawyers," said Tony.

"Well, suppose they were," replied Uncle Benny; "they

were boys first. I tell you that every poor boy in this country has a great prospect before him, if he will only improve it as these men improved theirs. Everything depends on himself, on his own industry, sobriety, and honesty. They can't all be Presidents, but if they should all happen to try for being one, they will be very likely to reach a high mark. Most of the rich men of our country began without a dollar. You have as fair a chance of becoming rich or distinguished as many of them have had. You must always aim high."

"But how are we to make a beginning?" demanded Joe.

"I 'll tell you," replied Uncle Benny. But at that moment a loud blast from the tin horn summoned them to dinner. They all thought it the sweetest music they had heard that day, and hurried off to the house.

CHAPTER III.

A Poor Dinner. — What Surface Drainage means. — The Value of Drainage. — A wet Barn-yard. — What constitutes Manure. — Help yourself. — The Young Pedler.

AS might be expected, the party thus invited to dinner had anything but a hospitable time of it. In a general way, the boys received pretty fair treatment from Mrs. Spangler; but on that particular occasion they saw that they were called in merely to be fed, and, the feeding over, that it would be most agreeable to her if they would thereupon clear out. Things had gone wrong with her on that unfortunate day, and they must bear the brunt of it. The good man of the house was absent at the neighboring tavern, it being one of his rainy days; hence the wife had all the remaining household at her mercy, and, being mostly an uncomplaining set, she could serve them with impunity just as the humor of the moment made it most convenient. The dinner was therefore nothing to speak of, and was quite unworthy of the great noise which the tin horn had made in calling them to it. There was a bit of boiled salt pork, almost too fat to eat, with potatoes and turnips, while the dessert consisted of pumpkin-sauce, which the dinner party might spread upon bread, if they thought proper.

Uncle Benny devoured his share of this rainy-day repast in silence, but inwardly concluded that it was next of kin to the meanest dinner he had ever eaten, for he was too well-bred to take open exception to it. As boys, especially farmers' boys, are not epicures, and are generally born with appetites so hearty that nothing comes amiss, Joe and Tony managed to find enough, and were by no means critical, — quality was not so important a matter as quantity. It is true there was a sort of subdued mutiny against the unseasoned pumpkin-sauce, which was a new article on Farmer Spangler's table, that showed itself in a general hesitancy even to taste it, and in a good long smell or two before a mouthful was ventured on; which being observed by Mrs. Spangler, she did unbend sufficiently to say that she had intended to give them pumpkin-pies, but an accident to her lard had interrupted her plans, so she gave them the best she had, and promised the pies for next day.

As Uncle Benny and the boys all knew that they had been called in merely to eat, and not to lounge about the stove, and were therefore expected to depart as soon as they had dined, when the scanty meal was over, they stepped out on the way to their wonted rendezvous, the barn. The rain had ceased, and there were signs of a clearing up. But the wide space between house and barn was wet and muddy, while in several places there were great puddles of water, around which they had to pick their way. These

low places had always been an annoyance to Uncle Benny, as every rain converted them into ponds, which stood sometimes for weeks before drying up. They were so directly in the path to almost everything, that one had to navigate a long way round to avoid them; yet, though an admitted nuisance, no one undertook to fill them up.

When the party got fairly in among these puddles, the old man stopped, and told the boys he would teach them something worth knowing. Bidding Joe bring him a spade and hoe, he led the boys to a small puddle which lay lower on the sloping ground than any other, and in a few minutes opened a trench or gutter leading from it toward an adjoining lowland. The water immediately flowed away from the puddle through the gutter, until it fell to the level of the latter. He then deepened the gutter, and more water was discharged, and repeated the operation until the puddle was quite empty.

He then directed Joe to open a gutter between the puddle thus emptied and a larger one close by, then to connect a third with the second, until, by means of hoe and spade, he had the whole series of puddles communicating with each other, those on the higher ground of course discharging their contents into that first emptied, as it lay lower than the others. When the work was completed, there was a lively rush of water down, through the gutter first cut, into the meadow.

"Now, boys," said Uncle Benny, "this is what is called drainage, — surface drainage, — the making of water move off from a spot where it is a nuisance, thus converting a wet place into a dry one. You see how useful it is on this little piece of ground, because in a few days the bottom of these ponds will become so dry that you can walk over them, instead of having to go round them; and if Mr. Spangler would only have them filled up, and make the whole surface level, the water would run off of itself, and all these gutters could be filled up, leaving the yard dry and firm. These gutters are called open or surface drains, because they are open at the top; but when you make a channel deep enough to put in a wooden trunk, or brush, or stones, or a line of tiles, for the water to flow through, and then cover up the whole so that one can walk or drive over it, it is called an under-drain, because it is under the surface of the ground."

"But does draining do any good?" inquired Joe.

"Why," replied Uncle Benny, "it is impossible to farm profitably without drainage of some kind; and the more thoroughly the land is drained of its superfluous water, the surer and better will be the crops. I suppose that not one of you likes to have wet feet. Well, it is the same thing with the roots and grains and grasses that farmers cultivate, — they don't like wet feet. You know the corn didn't grow at all in that low place in our cornfield this

season; that was because the water stood there from one rain to another, — the corn had too much of it. You also saw how few and small were the potatoes in that part of the patch that runs close down to the swamp. Water is indispensable to the growth of plants, but none will bear an excessive supply, except those that grow in swamps and low places only. Many of these even can be killed by keeping the swamp flooded for a few weeks; though they can bear a great deal, yet it is possible to give even them too much. Our farms, even on the uplands, abound in low places, which catch and hold too much of the heavy rains for the health of the plants we cultivate. The surplus must be got rid of, and there is no other way to do that than by ditching and draining. Under-draining is always best. Let a plant have as much water as it needs, and it will grow to profit; but give it too much, and it will grow up weak and spindling. You saw that in our cornfield. There are some plants, as I said before, that grow only in wet places; but you must know that such are seldom useful to us as food either for man or beast. Nobody goes harvesting after spatter-docks or cat-tail. This farm is full of low, wet places, which could be drained for a very little money, and the profits from one or two crops from the reclaimed land would pay back the whole expenses. Indeed, there is hardly one farm in a thousand that would not be greatly

benefited by being thoroughly underdrained. But as these puddles are nearly empty, come over to the barn-yard, — they will be dry enough to-morrow."

Uncle Benny led the way into a great enclosure that was quite full of manure. It lay on a piece of sloping ground adjoining the public road, in full view of every person who might happen to drive by. It was not an agreeable sight to look at, even on a bright summer day; and just now, when a heavy rain had fallen, it was particularly unpleasant. In addition to the rain, it had received a copious supply of water from the roofs of all the barns and sheds that surrounded it. Not one of them was furnished with a gutter to catch and carry off the water to some place outside the barn-yard, but all that fell upon them ran off into the manure. Of course the whole mass was saturated with water. Indeed, it was not much better than a great pond, a sort of floating bog, yet not great enough to retain the volume of water thus conducted into it from the overhanging roofs. There was not a dry spot for the cows to stand upon, and the place had been in this disagreeable condition so long, that both boys and men went into it as seldom as possible. If the cows and pigs had had the same liberty of choice, it is probable they too would have given it as wide a berth.

The old man took them to a spot just outside the

fence, where a deep gutter leading from the barn-yard into the public road was pouring forth into the latter a large stream of black liquor. As he pointed down the road, the boys could not see the termination of this black fluid, it reached so far from where they stood. It had been thus flowing, night and day, as long as the water collected in the barn-yard. The boys had never noticed any but the disagreeable part of the thing, as no one had taken pains to point out to them its economic or wasteful features.

"Now, boys," said Uncle Benny, "there are two kinds of drainage. The first kind, which I have just explained to you, will go far toward making a farmer rich; but this kind, which drains a barn-yard into the public road, will send him to the poor-house. Here is manure wasted as fast as it is made, — thrown away to get rid of it, — and no land is worth farming without plenty of manure."

"But the manure stays in the barn-yard," replied Tony. "It is only the water that runs off."

"Did you ever suck an orange after somebody had squeezed out all the juice?" asked Uncle Benny. "If you did, you must have discovered that he had extracted all that there was in it of any value, — you had a dry pull, Tony. It is exactly so with this barn-yard. Liken it to an orange, though I must admit there is a wide difference in the flavor of the two. Here Mr. Spangler

is extracting the juice, throwing it away, and keeping the dry shell and insides for himself. Farmers make manure for the purpose of feeding their plants, — that is, to make them grow. Now, plants don't feed on those piles of straw and cornstalks, that you say remain in the yard, but on the liquor that you see running away from them. That liquor is manure, — it is the very life of the manure heap, — the only shape that the heap can take to make a plant grow. It must ferment and decay, and turn to powder, before it can give out its full strength, and will not do so even then, unless water comes down upon it to extract just such juices as you now see running to waste. The rain carries those juices all through the ground where the plant is growing, and its thousands of little rootlets suck up, not the powdered manure, but the liquor saturated with its juices, just as you would suck an orange. They are not able to drink up solid lumps of manure, but only the fluid extracts. Boys, such waste as this will be death to any farm, and your father must make an entire change in this barn-yard. Don't you see how it slopes toward the road, no doubt on purpose to let this liquid manure run off? He must remove it to a piece of level ground, and make the centre of it lower than the sides, so as to save every drop. If he could line the bottom with clay, to prevent loss by soaking into the ground, so much the better. If he can't change it, then he should

raise a bank here where we stand, and keep the liquor in. Then every roof must have a gutter to catch the rain, and a conductor to carry it clear of the yard. The manure would be worth twice as much if he would pile it up under some kind of cover. Then, too, the yard has been scraped into deep holes, which keep it constantly so wet and miry that no one likes to go into it, and these must be filled up."

"But would n't that be a great deal of work?" inquired Tony.

"Now, Tony," replied the old man, "don't expect to get along in this world without work. If you work to advantage, as you would in doing such a job as this, the more you do the better. You have set up to be a farmer, and you should try to be a good one, as I consider a poor farmer no better than a walking scarecrow. No man can be a good one without having things just as I tell you all these about this barn-yard ought to be. Whatever you do, do well. I know it requires more work, but it is the kind of work that pays a profit, and profit is what most men are aiming at. If this were my farm, I would make things look very different, no matter how much work it cost me. I can always judge of a man's crops by his barn-yard."

"Then I 'm afraid this is a poor place to learn farming," said Joe. "Father don't know near as much about

doing things right as you do, and he never talks to us, and shows us about the farm like you."

"He may know as much as I do, Joe," replied Uncle Benny, "but if he does, he don't put it into practice; — that is the difference between us."

"I begin to think it 's a poor place for me, too," added Tony. "I have no friends to teach me, or to help me."

"To help you?" exclaimed the old man, with an emphasis that was quite unusual to him; "you must help *yourself*. You have the same set of faculties as those that have made great men out of boys as humbly born as you, and you will rise or sink in proportion to the energy you exert. We can all succeed if we choose, — there is no fence against fortune."

"What does that mean?" demanded Tony.

"It means that fortune is as an open common, with no hedge, or fence, or obstruction to get over in our efforts to reach it, except such as may be set up by our own idleness, or laziness, or want of courage in striving to overcome the disadvantages of our particular position."

While this conversation was going on, the boys had noticed some traveller winding his slow and muddy way up the road toward where they were standing. As he came nearer, they discovered him to be a small boy, not much larger than either Joe or Tony; and just as

Uncle Benny had finished his elucidation of the fence against fortune, the traveller reached the spot where the group were conversing, and with instinctive good sense stepped up out of the mud upon the pile of rails which had served as standing-ground for the others. He was a short, thick-set fellow, warmly clad, of quick movement, keen, intelligent look, and a piercing black eye, having

in it all the business fire of a juvenile Shylock. Bidding good afternoon to the group, and scraping from his thick boots as much of the mud as he could, he proceeded to business without further loss of time. Lifting the cover from a basket on his arm, he displayed its flashing contents before the eyes of Joe and Tony, asking them if they did n't want a knife, a comb, a toothbrush, a burning-glass, a cake of pomatum, or something else of an almost endless list of articles, which he ran over with a volubility exceeding anything they had ever experienced.

The little fellow was a pedler. He plied his vocation with a glibness and pertinacity that confounded the two modest farmer's boys he was addressing. Long intercourse with the great public had given him a perfect self-possession, from which the boys fairly shrunk back with girlish timidity. There was nothing impudent or obtrusive in his manner, but a quiet, persevering self-reliance that could not fail to command attention from any audience, and which, to the rustics he was addressing, was particularly imposing. To Uncle Benny the scene was quite a study. He looked and listened in silence. He was struck with the cool, independent manner of the young pedler, his excessive volubility, and the tact with which he held up to Joe and Tony the particular articles most likely to attract their attention. He seemed to know

intuitively what each boy coveted the most. Tony's great longing had been for a pocket-knife, and Joe's for a jack-knife. The boy very soon discovered this, and, having both in his basket, crowded the articles on his customers with an urgency that nothing but the low condition of their funds could resist. After declining a dozen times to purchase, Tony was forced to exclaim, "But we have no money. I never had a shilling in my life."

The pedler-boy seemed struck with conviction of the truth of Tony's declaration, and that he was only wasting time in endeavoring to sell where there was no money to pay with. He accordingly replaced the articles in his basket, shut down the lid, and with unaltered civility was bidding the company good by, when Uncle Benny broke silence for the first time.

"What is your name, my lad?" he inquired.

"John Hancock, sir," was the reply.

"I have heard that name before," rejoined Uncle Benny. "You were not at the signing of the Declaration of Independence?"

"No, sir," replied the courageous little fellow, "I wish I had been, — but my name was there."

This was succeeded by quite a colloquy between them, ending with Uncle Benny's purchasing, at a dollar apiece, the coveted knives, and presenting them to the delighted

boys. Then, again addressing the pedler, he inquired, "Why do you follow this business of peddling?"

"Because I make money by it," he quickly replied.

"But have you no friends to help you, and give you employment at home?" continued the old man.

"Got no friends, sir," he responded. "Father and mother both dead, and I had to help myself; so I turned newsboy in the city, and then made money enough to set up in peddling, and now I am making more."

Uncle Benny was convinced that he was talking with a future millionnaire. But while admiring the boy's bravery, his heart overflowed with pity for his loneliness and destitution, and with a yearning anxiety for his welfare. Laying his hand on his shoulder, he said: "God bless you and preserve you, my boy! Be industrious as you have been, be sober, honest, and truthful. Fear God above all things, keep his commandments, and, though you have no earthly parent, he will be to you a heavenly one."

The friendless little fellow looked up into the old man's benevolent face with an expression of surprise and sadness, — surprise at the winning kindness of his manner, as if he had seldom met with it from others, and sadness, as if the soft voices of parental love had been recalled to his yet living memory. Then, thanking him with great warmth, he bade the company good by, and, with his

basket under his arm, continued his tiresome journey over the muddy highway to the next farm-house.

"There!" said the old man, addressing Tony, "did you hear what he said? 'Father and mother both dead, and I had to help myself!' Why, it is yourself over again. Take a lesson from the story of that boy, Tony!"

CHAPTER IV.

IDLERS IN THE BARN. — UNCLE BENNY'S NOTIONS. — HOW TO MAKE A BEGINNING. — LEAVING THE FARM. — BOYS AND GIRLS. — DON'T QUIT THE FARM.

BY this time the party found themselves so well chilled as to make an indoor lodgement of some kind desirable. The kitchen being prohibited ground, for that day at least, Uncle Benny pioneered the way to the barn, where the boys were glad enough to wrap themselves in horse-blankets, and, burying their legs deep in the hay, they were presently more comfortable than when sitting in everybody's way around Mrs. Spangler's smudgy stove. Uncle Benny, covering himself with a huge buffalo-robe, sat down upon a low meal-chest, and, leaning back against the front of the manger, crossed his legs as comfortably as if sitting by the fireplace. Very soon the hired man came in. He had been left for the day unprovided with work, simply because it rained; that being sufficient to take his employer off to the village, to sit until the weather cleared up, listening to the unprofitable conversation of a country tavern. But his wages went on just as if he had been at work.

It was therefore a strange company of idlers thus

assembled in the barn, not one having anything to do. The hired man might have easily found enough to employ him in the barn, or shed, or at the wood-pile, while it rained, and when it ceased for the afternoon he could have busied himself out of doors, had he been disposed to seek for tasks that his employer had neglected to provide. But he was one of that sort of helpers who do nothing not distinctly set before them, — a sort, by

the way, that no good farmer will ever employ. This man, seeing a gate open which he knew ought to be shut, would never think of closing it unless some one told him to do so. Unless he stumbled over a hoe or any other tool which some one had left in the path, he would be the last to stop and pick it up, and carry it where he knew it belonged. He required, in fact, as much looking after as any of the boys. Uncle Benny used to say of this man, that he was the most unprofitable kind of hand to have on a farm.

One of the old man's principles was, never to have a hand about him who required telling more than once to do anything. Another was, that, as he provided a place for everything, so when an axe, a hoe, a spade, or any other tool had been used, it must be put immediately back in its place, that when next wanted it might be found, and that any hand who refused to obey this law was not worth employing. These excellent ideas he took great pains to impress on the minds of the boys, teaching them the value of order, method, and regularity. He did once or twice undertake to lay down the law to Mr. Spangler also; but the latter showed so much indifference, even going so far as to say that he always found it too much trouble to put things in their places, unless it was a horse, that he gave him up as incorrigible.

The boys were often surprised, as well as amused, at

the nice precision with which Uncle Benny lived up to his favorite law of a place for everything, and everything in its place. He would often send them up into his chamber to get something out of his tool-chest. Though it was full of tools and other matters, yet he seemed to have a perfect chart of the whole contents imprinted on his memory. He could tell them the exact spot that every tool occupied, which drawer held the screws, which the four-penny or six-penny nails, which held the carpet-tacks, and so on to the very bottom He often said that he could go to it in the dark and lay his hand on anything he wanted. The boys always found things exactly where he said they were. Their experience with this tool-chest was so novel, that it made a great impression on them, and they insensibly fell into the old man's orderly habits about keeping things in their proper places.

If Uncle Benny had felt that he had any authority over the hired man, he would have soon put him to work; for he had a habit of never letting anybody stand idling about him when there was anything to do. The man's example, moreover, was hurtful to the boys. Between him and Mr. Spangler the boys would have been in a fair way to grow up complete slovens; for boys, in a general way, are literal imitators of the good or evil that may be set before them.

Uncle Benny had a hard contest to counteract the effect of these daily patterns of bad management. But his manner was so kind and sociable, he cultivated their boyish affections so assiduously, he entered so fully into all their thoughts, and sympathies, and aspirations, and he was so ready to answer their numerous questions, as well as to lend them his tools whenever they asked him, that in the end they looked up to him as by all odds the best man on the place. The last good turn, of buying for them the very kind of knife that they had so long coveted, fixed him immovably in their affections. It was a small matter for him, but a very great one for them.

It is thus that the education of a child begins. The school-room, and the teacher who may be there enthroned, are very far from being the only means. It goes on without reference to the alphabet, and even in advance of it. It begins, as some one has beautifully said, "with a mother's look, — with a father's smile of approbation, or sign of reproof, — with a sister's gentle pressure of the hand, or a brother's noble act of forbearance, — with handfuls of flowers in green and daisied meadow, — with birds'-nests admired, but not touched, — with creeping ants, and almost imperceptible emmets, — with humming bees, — with pleasant walks and shady lands, — and with thoughts directed in sweet and kindly tones and words, to incite to acts of benevolence, to deeds of virtue, and to the source of all virtue, to God himself."

The very tones of Uncle Benny's voice, his lessons of instruction upon every-day topics, his little kindly gifts, his confidences, his commendations, and sometimes his reproofs, were all important agencies in the education of these neglected boys. He lent them books and papers to read, taught them lessons of morality, and was constantly directing them to look upward, to aspire, not only as men, but as immortal beings. The school-room would have been highly advantageous to them; but, seeing that they were allowed only a winter's attendance there, they had an able mentor in the good old man whose lot had been cast among them.

These four had not been long in their comfortable quarters in the barn, when Tony broke silence by saying: "Uncle Benny, you said that you would tell us how a poor boy should make a beginning. Will you tell us now?"

"Ah, Tony," replied the old man, "there are fifty ways in which to make a beginning. But the first steps in any beginning that will go on prosperously and end happily are these. Fear God, honor your parents, be strictly honest, never violate your word, nor do any act which, if it afterwards become known, will cause you to feel ashamed. You saw that pedler-boy. He must have made a beginning with but little more than a shilling, perhaps not so much. But he must have had pluck as well as the shilling, for the shilling

would have done but little for him without the pluck to set it going. No matter how small, it was a beginning; and if a boy never begins, he will never come to anything useful. He turned his shilling into dollars, his dollars into merchandise, such as you saw in his basket, and then his merchandise into more dollars still. That boy will be sure to prosper. I have no doubt that he has money saved up somewhere. A beginning shows that a boy is in earnest to do something, that he has a head, and is not, like a fiddler, all elbows. If it set him thinking, it will keep him thinking, and this thought will improve his chances by detecting errors and showing him how to avoid them. Half the poor outcasts of this world were made so because they had n't the pedler-boy's courage, — the courage to begin. Had they made a start, they might have prospered as well. You are both desirous of doing something to make money."

"Yes, indeed!" shouted the boys with one voice.

"Well," replied Uncle Benny, "a farm is a poor place for even a smart boy to make money on, unless the farmer has heart and soul enough to give him a chance. That don't happen as often as it should, for farmers think too much of what only themselves want, and too little of what their boys do. This farm is about as poor a one, I fear, for the boys to make money on it as any one I ever saw, unless Mr. Spangler thinks, as I do, that they ought to have a chance.

"Won't you ask father, some day, to let us try?" inquired Joe.

"But I don't want to stay here," added Tony. "I want to go to the city, to New York or Philadelphia, and make money there."

Uncle Benny was surprised at hearing this avowal from Tony King. It was the first intimation he had ever received that Tony wanted to quit farm life for city life. Though he was aware that the poor fellow had no living friends, — at least none that he knew to be living, — as the last of them, his father's brother, had gone to the West some ten years before, and had not been heard of since, yet he had not suspected Tony of having even thought of quitting the farm.

He could not help mentally agreeing with him, that for an ambitious boy the prospect was not encouraging. He was surrounded by one of those combinations of unfriendly circumstances that almost invariably drive boys from the country to seek their fortunes in the city. No attractions were set before him to make the farm a pleasant home. It seemed as if Mr. Spangler had wholly forgotten that he had himself once been a boy, for he evinced no sympathy with the young minds around him. His own sons had no recreations of his suggesting or providing. Their holidays occurred only when it rained. No one had thoughtfully supplied them with fishing-lines, though there was capital sport within a walk of two miles. What little they could do at fishing was always done in a hurry, sometimes in the rain,

sometimes on a Sunday. Those were the only times when they could be spared from work. If they set snares for rabbits or muskrats, they were the rude contrivances which their schoolmates had taught them to make. They had no pets, for they had never been taught a loving disposition, — no pigeons, no chickens, no beehive, not even a dog. The home affections had been so sadly neglected, that even in the hearts of the Spangler boys there was an unsatisfied blank. In Tony's there was a still greater one, for he was an orphan.

There was also quite a noticeable difference between the treatment extended to the boys and that which the girls received. The three boys slept in a great garret room, a rough, unfinished apartment, hung round with cobwebs, and open enough to permit the wasps to enter and build long rows of nests. There was nothing to educate the eye to neatness or order, — no curtains to the windows, no carpet on the floor, no chairs on which to sit while dressing or undressing, no looking-glass or washstand, — nothing, in short, to give a cheerful aspect to the place in summer, or to make it comfortable in winter. Any room seemed good enough for the boys.

Yet there was a better chamber on the floor below, carpeted and furnished. But though strangers never came to that house for entertainment, still it was too good a room for the boys. Thus their personal comfort was neglected.

They saw nothing around them to make home attractive, nothing to invest it with charms exceeding those of all other places. Hence a disposition sprang up to look abroad for comfort, for counting the chances of doing and living better in a new location. There was a growing anxiety for the time to arrive when they should be free to quit an occupation which they upon whom rested the highest obligation to make it agreeable had made distasteful.

On the other hand, the girls in this household occupied one of its best chambers, carpeted and furnished, with a dressing-bureau, chairs, and tables, with curtains to the windows, and a variety of other accessories. It is true that there is a natural aptitude in women for making even bare walls attractive, — for collecting around them conveniences and elegances of their own devising, and with very meagre materials investing their especial chamber with an air of snugness, cleanliness, and comfort beyond the capacity of the other sex. Such tendencies are inherent in women. But the materials for achieving these results must to some extent be placed within their reach. Here the girls were provided with the essentials, — a rag carpet, it is true, and quite decrepit chairs and tables, — but their native taste contributed the rest. But from the boys even these essentials were withheld; and being deficient in the housekeeping instinct, they lived on in their comfortless garret, conscious of its deficiencies, but without the tact necessary

to supply them. If others observed this, it did not matter; it was only the boys' room, and was good enough.

Moreover, of a stormy day, when out-of-door work was impossible, the kitchen was always large enough to contain the girls without their being in anybody's way; but there was never room for the boys. They had wet clothes, muddy shoes, and were complained of as sitting down in the most inconvenient places round the fire. But it was because no others had been provided for them. They soon learned they were not welcome there, — the room wherein, of all others, a farmer's boy conceives he has the right of entrance and domicile, was made so unpleasant that they generally kept away from it. They were treated too much as inferiors, as of no account except being good for so much work. It is such neglect, such treatment as this, that drives hundreds of well-meaning and deserving boys from the farm to the city. No doubt there are many who live through it all, and remain at home. No doubt there are farmers' sons who develop superior talents for some particular branch of science or art, for the successful practice of which a great city is the only remunerative field. It may be proper for such to leave the farm, as every man should go where he feels he is most wanted, and the world may be benefited by such enlargement of their field for usefulness. They are evidently born for some other pursuit than that of farming.

It was this general neglect that was working on Tony's

active mind so strongly as to lead him to think of adventuring on a city life. Though he knew nothing of the risks of that, yet he understood the discomforts of this. Boy-like, he was willing to encounter the former, though unknown, in order to escape from the latter, which he knew too well. The exhortations of Uncle Benny had so generally ended in a condemnation of Mr. Spangler's mode of farming, without effecting any marked improvement in the management, that Tony began to despair of an amendment in which he could participate. All boys who happen to be born on farms are not calculated to make good farmers. Some are so constitutionally organized that their tastes and talents run in another direction. Taking that, they succeed; but adhering to the farm, they would fail. Others dislike farming because of its hard work, — no one whose duty it is taking pains to diversify that work by interweaving amusement or recreation, or the stimulant of juvenile profit. Others can see in farming no prospect of becoming rich.

But Tony did not belong to either of these classes. He had been born in the country, had no aversion to hard work, and would prefer remaining on a farm; but he was getting tired of Mr. Spangler. It was singular, however, that, while thinking of making a change, it had never occurred to him to go away and engage with a really good farmer, where he would be sure to learn the business thoroughly. Instead of entertaining this sensible idea, he had thought only of a

plunge into the city. But Tony was young in the experiences of this world, and had much to learn.

The dissatisfaction thus manifested by Tony to the farm life around him was a new difficulty for Uncle Benny to smooth away. Heretofore he had had only Spangler's lapses and mismanagement to contend with, but here was trouble in a new quarter. Yet his concern for the welfare of these boys was so great, and he was so well satisfied that they could do pretty well at farm life if there was any way of making them contented, that he resolved to do his utmost toward counteracting these unexpected symptoms of restlessness. He was quite pleased that the youngest boy, Bill Spangler, came into the barn just in time to hear Tony's remark about quitting the farm, as he too would have the benefit of his reply.

As the old man was a great reader, he generally carried a newspaper of some kind in his pocket, from which he was in the habit of reading aloud to the boys any article that struck him as being likely to amuse or instruct them. Sometimes, when they had been debating or discussing a topic with him, he would produce a paper containing an article on the very subject they had been talking about, and on his reading it aloud, they found in it a remarkable confirmation of what he had already told them. As it was in a newspaper, the boys consid-

ered that it must be true, and as it always supported him in his views, they wondered more and more how the old man came to know so much, as well as always to be right. These readings became so popular with the boys, that, whenever a chance offered, they uniformly inquired if there was not something more in the paper that was worth hearing.

The fact was that Uncle Benny, discovering how tractable these boys were, and how much they needed the right kind of instruction, had subscribed for two or three papers which he knew contained such reading as would be useful to them. After examining them himself, he would select some subject discussed or explained in them, which he thought would be important for the boys to understand, and then, putting the paper into his pocket, would give them, on the first suitable occasion, a verbal account of the matter, or start a discussion about it. After it had been pretty thoroughly debated and turned over, he would produce the paper and read the article aloud. Of course it confirmed all that he had been saying, and as it was in print — for they saw it there — it clinched the argument beyond dispute, and must be so.

But this little stroke of ingenuity was not adopted by Uncle Benny for the purpose of impressing his audience with an exalted idea of his superior knowledge or wisdom, but merely as an attractive mode of interesting their minds

in subjects with which it was important that they should become well acquainted. It was surprising how much his method of proceeding interested them. There has been a great deal said of the usefulness of farmers' clubs, and of the addresses delivered before them. No one will doubt their having done good service to the farming community, or that the more of them we have the better it will be for us; but, considering the size of Uncle Benny's audiences, and the general lack of knowledge pervading them, it may be doubted whether his lectures, delivered sometimes in the barn, sometimes on the rider of a worm-fence, sometimes even when hoeing up weeds, were not quite as productive of good as many others having not only larger audiences, but greater pretensions.

His system had another advantage. The boys always wanted to see the newspaper for themselves, to have it in their own hands. This was exactly one of the results the old man was desirous of bringing about, as they were sure to read over the articles he had himself read aloud, besides studying the remaining contents. As he had great faith in the value of agricultural papers among farmers' boys, as well as among farmers too, he kept the boys supplied with all the reading of this kind they desired.

Now it happened, oddly enough, when Tony King said he wanted to give up farming and go to the city, that Uncle Benny had that very week been reading an article

in a newspaper which spoke about farmers' boys rushing into it. The old man, being equally opposed to their making such a change, laid it down to Tony very plainly indeed. He told him the idea was absurd; that he did n't know what was best for him; that his great want was to learn to be contented where he was, and to wait until he was at least five years older and wiser before he thought any more of changing. Then, by way of settling the matter, he drew the paper from his pocket and read as follows: —

"The very worst thing a country boy can do is to leave the farm and come to the city, in hopes of doing better. Yet they come here every week by dozens, giving up good places where they are well taken care of, and pitch in among a crowd of strangers who take no notice of them, or give short answers when they are applied to for a situation, or even a small job. They take it for granted that there is always plenty to do here, and that it is an easy thing to get a situation in a store or counting-house, where there is little to do and good pay for doing it. They see that the clerks and shop-boys who sometimes come among them in the country are all well-dressed and smart-looking fellows, with plenty of money in their pockets, which they spend as freely as if there was no end to it, — gunning, boating, hiring carriages to drive the girls about, &c. They think that these smart clerks must have a capital life of it

in the city. They also now and then hear of a poor country boy who went into a city store and made a fortune in a very short time. Thus they get to envying the life of the town boys, and are uneasy and restless until they make the trial of finding out how difficult and dangerous such a life is. They see only the bright side of the picture.

"But all these boys are greatly mistaken. It may look very genteel and easy to stand behind a counter and do nothing but measure out goods, but it is close and confining labor nevertheless. If it is cleaner work than scraping up a barn-yard or currying down a horse, it is not half so wholesome. Besides, it is not an easy matter to get a situation in a store. Our city is full of boys born among us, whose parents find great difficulty in obtaining places for them. Many of these boys go into stores and offices without getting a dollar of pay. The privilege of being taught how to do business is considered compensation enough, — they actually work for nothing and find themselves. Our store-boys have no time for play. They have no green fields to look at or ramble over, nothing but dust, and mud, and hot bricks, with quite as much real hard work as the country boys, only it is of a different kind. What boy of the right spirit would desire to come here and merely run of shop errands all day, learning nothing but how to go about town, when he could stay in the country, sure to learn

how to get a living? Besides, a boy here is surrounded by temptations to ruin, and the poorer he is the more certain are they to lead him astray. Where one such does well, there are two who turn out thieves or vagabonds. We say to you, boys, stay on the farm where you are. If you are determined to come, don't come without you have some friend here who will receive you into his house, provide you with employment, and take care of you. But anyhow, wait until you are older, say twenty-one at least. Then, if you don't think better of it, you will be somewhat able to fight your way, for here it is nothing but fighting."

As the old man read this very deliberately, the boys listened with the utmost attention. "There!" said he, when he had finished, "that man knows what he says. He lives in the city, and understands about it. You see that he advises you exactly as I do."

This unexpected confirmation had a powerful effect on the minds of all the boys. It applied so directly to Tony's case, as to make him think differently of the chances of a city life. As usual, he wanted to see the article for himself, and, beginning to read it aloud to the other boys, the old man left the barn, thinking that a little free conversation on the subject among themselves would do no harm.

CHAPTER V.

SOMETHING TO DO. — THE VALUE OF PIGEONS. — BUYING PIGS AND PIGEONS. — THE OLD BATTLE-GROUND AT TRENTON. — HOW TO KEEP PIGEONS.

NO law of our physical nature is more imperative than that we must exert ourselves, — we must have something to do. If it everywhere applies to men, it acts even more energetically upon boys. Activity, mental as well as bodily, is a necessity of boyhood. Nothing is more irksome for a lad than to be required to sit still for an hour, because that implies the doing of nothing. Yet give him hook and line, add a worm or a grasshopper, and anchor him within reach of a ditch with probably only a single fish in it, and he will wait hours in excited expectation of a nibble. It passes for fishing, and is therefore enough of action, for the time, to satisfy the desire for activity which gives life and animation to boyhood. This longing after action, innocent in its direction, is to be encouraged, not repressed. The rollicking fellow who runs, and leaps, and halloos, is as worthy of having his taste for amusement cultivated, as the quieter student whose life is in his books, or the more calculating youth whose mind begins thus early to run on the profits of trade. The general trait develops itself differently in

each, and in all it should be promoted and encouraged. If checked by violence, or deadened by neglect or want of opportunity for indulgence, discontent succeeds. An urgent necessity of the boyish nature thus remaining ungratified, relief is sought in distant scenes or objects which promise to afford it.

These boys on Spangler's farm were therefore all anxious to be doing something for themselves. It was not mere work they were coveting, as of that they had sufficient, but some little venture that they would prize as being exclusively their own. Uncle Benny comprehended the case so fully, that he took the first opportunity to lay the matter before Mr. Spangler, and to urge upon him the necessity of giving the boys a chance. He said it would be a very small thing to let Tony keep a pig, while Joe could have a flock of pigeons, and Bill might have a brood of chickens. Spangler could n't see the necessity for it, did n't know what the boys wanted with all these, said that every one of them would eat corn, and inquired where that was to come from ; besides, where were they to get pigs, and pigeons, and chickens to begin with ? The idea of cheering them on by a little aid did not enter his mind. He had never yet put himself out of the way to gratify his boys.

As to the corn which the new pets were to eat, the old man said, if he would permit them, they could raise it for themselves. They could easily plant and cultivate a couple

of acres at odd times,—before breakfast or after quitting farm work; and if they used any of his while theirs was growing, they would replace it when their crop came in. Uncle Benny pledged himself that he would see to all this, that he would make the boys keep accounts of what they used, and indeed of all their other expenses, and that Mr. Spangler should lose nothing by it. As to the land they were to have, he told Spangler that he could spare it well enough; that he had now at least three times as much as he knew how to farm properly; that he had good boys about him who deserved to have some favors shown them; and wound up by warning him that there was great danger of all three becoming discontented, and disposed to leave him as soon as they could, unless their wishes were in some way gratified.

It was a very great struggle for Spangler to yield to proposals of a kind so new to him. But even his wife had less influence over him than Uncle Benny. If any other person had made a similar proposition, he would have silenced him by a flat refusal. Even as it was, it went very hard with him to consent to any part of it. He clung to the two acres the boys wanted, as if it was all the land he had; as, like many other men with large farms, he had never imagined that he had too much. But he objected strenuously to the boys being permitted to keep pigeons, as he said they would attack his wheat-fields, and eat more grain than their

heads were worth. Besides, they would fly away for miles round, and the neighbors would complain of the damage they would be sure to do, the blame of which would all rest on him.

But the old man reminded him that, as to his wheat crop, he starved it so effectually that no flock of pigeons could make it much poorer. Besides, he said, it was a great mistake to suppose that pigeons on a farm, even when kept in large numbers, were in the habit of injuring the grain crops. He knew that farmers generally considered them as thieves and depredators, and so shot them when they came upon their grounds; but they condemned them ignorantly, and shot them unwisely, just as they did king-birds because they were believed to eat up their bees, or crows for pulling up their corn. The king-birds, that are frequently seen darting at the bees about a hive, eat up the drones only, as anybody could ascertain who would kill one and open his crop. So, where the crows pulled up one hill of corn, they devoured a hundred grubs. In short, he made use of the occasion to give Spangler a lesson on the history and habits of our common pigeons, that enlarged his knowledge of the subject very considerably. He told him that in England pigeons were protected by law from being killed, by a penalty of ten dollars in our money, and that in foreign countries they had been raised for centu-

ries as a source of profit. They are all fond of the seeds of weeds and of many wild plants, they are most industrious workers in devouring them. It is in search of such seeds that they are seen alighting in the fields at all seasons of the year, as well when no winter grain is ripening as when it is. They thus do the farmer a great service in keeping his fields clean, by preventing an increase of weeds.

No matter at what time of year a pigeon's crop may be opened, it will be found to contain at least eight times as much of the seeds of weeds as of wheat, or rye, or corn, or other grains. It is also very remarkable, that the grains thus taken from the fields are defective ones. They take only the worthless seeds. For these reasons these birds should be regarded as the best weeders that a farmer can employ; for while he merely chops up a weed, often when it is so well grown that it ripens its seeds on the ground where he may have left it, the pigeons come along and make clean work by eating them. The farmer removes merely the weeds, but the pigeons remove the cause of them.

Any one who has kept these birds on his premises must have noticed how fond they are of pecking among the rubbish which is thrown out from a barn-floor after threshing wheat or other grain. They will search there, for many days together, hunting out the shrivelled grains,

the poppy-seeds and cockle, and other pests of the farm, thus getting many a good meal from seeds that barnyard fowls never condescend to pick up. When the latter get into a garden, they scratch and tear up everything, as though they were scratching for a wager; but a pigeon is better bred by nature, — he never scratches; hence he disturbs no seeds the gardener may have planted. When he gets into the garden, it is either to get a nibble at the pea-vines or the beans, as he is extravagantly fond of both, or to search for weeds.

This fondness of the pigeon tribe for seeds of plants injurious to the farm is much better known in Europe than with us. At one time, in certain districts of France, where large numbers of pigeons had been kept, they were nearly all killed off. These districts had been famous for the fine, clean, and excellent quality of the wheat raised within them. But very soon after the number of pigeons had been reduced, the land became overgrown with weeds that choked the crops. The straw, in consequence, grew thin and weak, while the grain was so deficient in plumpness and weight as to render it unfit for seed. Every farmer remarked the difference when the districts had plenty of pigeons and when they had only a few. The people therefore returned to pigeon-keeping. Every landlord, in renting his farm, required his tenants to build a pigeon-house or dove-cot, in order

to insure crops. Many of these were very expensive structures. It has been further observed in other districts in France, that where pigeons are most abundant there the wheat-fields are most productive, and that they never touch seed which has been rolled in lime.

The defence of this beautiful domestic bird which Uncle Benny thus made in reply to Mr. Spangler's objections quite disarmed him; for he had great respect for the old man's superior knowledge; and as it appeared the pigeons would not only do no harm, but would really be likely to do much good, he consented to all that was required, — the boys should have pigs, fowls, and pigeons, and two acres of ground on which to raise their food.

This extraordinary concession was made just before Christmas. It took the boys so by surprise, and they were so excited by the prospect before them, that, after going to bed, they talked it over during half the night. They had not been much used to receiving Christmas presents, but if they had, and had now been overlooked, they would not have missed them. Tony's gratification was so lively that it gave a different turn to his thoughts. He forgot all about wanting to try his luck in the city, and a new ambition sprung up to remain on the farm. A motive had been created, a stimulant had been set before him; there was a prospect of his doing something he had long desired, — make a beginning.

Farmers do not understand the value to themselves, or the importance to their boys, of little concessions like these. They are the surest agencies for developing the self-reliance of a boy. When working for himself, labor becomes pastime, — it is sweetened by the hope of reward. Lessons set before the mind under such circumstances become indelibly impressed upon it, for personal experience is the best teacher of all. The farm, instead of being an object of aversion, becomes one of preference. The boy's treasure being there, there also will his heart be found. Yet this simple process for imbuing him with a fondness for rural life, and of weaning him from his undefined longings after the trials, the hazards, and the disappointments inseparable from venturing on a life in the city, is so generally neglected as to become the fruitful cause of numberless desertions of the country homestead.

As Christmas is everywhere a holiday, so it was on the Spangler farm. The boys, exuberant and gleeful, were in ecstasies when Uncle Benny told them he intended they should go with him to Trenton, see the sights, and look after pigs and pigeons. That city was but a few miles away. They put the horse to the wagon, and drove off over a frozen highway which much travel had beaten perfectly smooth. Of course their whole conversation was about what they were to see in Trenton, of their prospective pets, what they would do, and how much money they would

make another year. Uncle Benny underwent a crossfire of questions, and listened to hopes and fears, most incessant and diversified. But what else could such hopeful boys be expected to indulge in? It was the first real jubilee of their lives, and the ride was memorable for them all.

As they neared the city, they heard the beating of drums and the firing of distant musketry. Coming still nearer, the firing continued, and then Uncle Benny informed them that that day was the anniversary of the great battle of Trenton, when Washington surprised and captured the Hessians, and that the military companies of New Jersey and Pennsylvania were then holding their annual celebration of that memorable event, by repeating, in the streets and suburbs of Trenton, the same movements, the same attacks, retreats, and surrender, as in the battle itself. The boys begged him to whip up and get in so that they might witness the whole affair, as they had been so shut up at home as never to have seen such a company of soldiers together. The old man, ever ready to confer a pleasure, hurried up the horse, and had him snug at a livery-stable just as the sham-battle was fairly under way.

Then the boys saw a body of troops marching down State Street. These represented a party of the Hessians who had been suddenly routed out of their quarters by the Continentals. As they came down, they occasionally faced about and discharged their muskets at an imaginary body

of the Continentals coming in from the country. Then another division of Americans came down, by a different street, upon a second party of the Hessians, exactly as it had been when the real battle was fought. These also fired, as did the Hessians, and for some minutes the cracking of guns rattled briskly through the city. Then came bayonet charges and countercharges, followed by the retreat and complete surrounding of the Hessians. Presently the boys saw them lay down their arms and surrender to the Americans on the very spot where the enemy had surrendered in 1776. It was an unexpected treat for the boys to witness this exciting exhibition, and for a time they thought nothing of the errand on which they came to Trenton.

As might be supposed, the streets were thronged with citizens, while the doors and windows of the adjoining houses were occupied by spectators of the scene. The ladies waved their handkerchiefs, and the crowd threw up their hats and shouted as they perceived the victory to be complete. When the Hessians surrendered, they were treated with quite as much attention as rebel prisoners of the present day have undeservedly experienced. Instead of having their arms taken from them, their pockets searched, and being marched off to prison, the Continentals escorted them to the neighboring taverns, where they got the best kind of a dinner. It is quite probable their captors were equally hungry and thirsty after the terrible battle they had fought, and out of com-

pliment to their prisoners went through a similar exercise with toddy-sticks and carving-knives. The boys were surprised to find, when the battle was over, that nobody had been hurt; but had they remained in town until night, they would have seen a great many wounded men limping about the streets, some of whom appeared to have been shot about the head or in the neck, and who limped so badly as to require both sides of the pavement to enable them to keep on their feet. There had been instances of these wounded men limping over even into the gutter. But as the boys witnessed none of these exhibitions, they thought the sham-battle the grandest incident of their lives.

Beside the citizens, there was a large crowd of people from the country, who had come in to be spectators of the celebration. Though it had been regularly kept up, yet they did not seem to tire of it, and flocked in just as regularly as the anniversary came around. Getting out of this dense crowd, Uncle Benny took his party down Greene Street to the narrow old stone bridge that crosses the Assanpink Creek. As the boys were greatly interested in all they saw, and as the old man had recently been reading to them this part of the history of the Revolution, no doubt in his own mind intending to take them to see these very things, he pointed out the bridge as being the same old one where the British had several times attempted to cross and get at Washington on the heights upon the other side of the creek, and that

here it was they had each time been driven back with terrible slaughter. Here, too, it was that the young girls, dressed in white, had scattered flowers in the road in front of the great hero, and sung their beautiful welcome, when he was passing over the bridge after the war had closed.

They stayed a long while on the bridge, listening to what he said of it, and talking over these old times.

"Here, boys," said the old man, "is the same bridge, here are the same streets, on which these great battles were fought, but the men who fought them are all gone, not one

of them is now alive unless it be a solitary old pensioner. Even the young girls are all gone."

"But," said Bill, the youngest of the three, looking up into the old man's face, "are not *you* an old Revolutioner?"

"Not yet," replied Uncle Benny. "I am old, but not old enough to be a Revolutioner."

From this spot they wandered over the outskirts of the city, looking into the pig-pens that abound there, in search of an eligible porker with which to make a beginning. They went about leisurely, and of course saw a great variety, some in nice clean pens, and some in pens so foul that it was evident the dirty pigs were not doing nearly so well as the clean ones. All this was carefully pointed out to the boys, and they did not fail to remark the difference. At last they came to a man who had a number of what he called the Chester County Whites, — fine round fellows with short legs, short ears, short faces, and long bodies.

This was the kind Uncle Benny had been seeking for. The boys themselves acknowledged that they looked nicer and fatter than any others they had seen. As all were now deeply interested in pork, the boys bristled up and entered into these matters with zeal; and their opinion being asked by the old man which pig, of all they had seen, they would prefer, they agreed upon the Chester Counties. So a young sow was purchased, which would drop a litter of the pure breed in about two months. For this purchase Uncle Benny

advanced the sum of thirty dollars out of his own pocket, the money to be refunded to him by sale of the pigs that were to come, the seller agreeing to deliver the sow at Mr. Spangler's farm the following week, so as to allow time for putting up a suitable pen.

This purchase made, they set out to inspect the hen-roosts and pigeon-houses. It was concluded not to buy any chickens just then, as Mrs. Spangler had quite a number already on the farm, and Uncle Benny thought there would be danger of disputes arising with her about eggs and other matters, and he did not choose to run the risk of ruffling her feathers. But he advanced four dollars to pay for six pairs of pigeons, which he was to receive back from the increase of the flock. He thought it better to lend the money to the boys than to make them a present of it, as it would rest on their minds as a sort of weight or obligation, teaching them the necessity of care and economy to clear it off. The pigeon-dealer put the birds into a roomy box with a covering of slats, and the party started for home.

The boys were at work early next morning, under Uncle Benny's direction, fitting up a pigeon-house. There was a large loft over the wagon-shed, where they resolved it should be. It had a good, tight floor, to which they could ascend through a trap by means of a step-ladder. The front was open, but this they soon made all right by nailing up laths sufficiently close to keep the pigeons in, but so far apart that

they could put out their heads and survey the premises, so as to become perfectly familiar with them before being allowed their liberty. Part of this lattice-work projected two or three feet beyond the front, thus affording to the birds a view, from two sides and the front, of all that was going on out of doors. They then provided nests by making rough boxes about fifteen inches square and four inches deep, which they pushed back under one of the eaves, giving the pigeons a chance at the seclusion which they invariably covet when ready to lay and hatch out their young. These fixtures were made of odd stuff they found lying about. But the great help toward doing even this was found in the old man's tool-chest. They could have done very little without him and his tools.

When these hasty but sufficient preparations had been made, he required them to put into the loft a low earthen pan, of large size, filled with water, for the pigeons to bathe in, as well as to drink from; for pigeons are thirsty beings, and delight in water. No creatures enjoy drinking more heartily. They plunge the head in nearly up to the eyes, and take a full draught at once, not slowly and deliberately, like chickens. He also fitted up for them a feeding-trough about two inches deep, which he covered with a wire network, so as to keep the pigeons from getting into it, but with the meshes large enough for them to put in their bills and take out the food. This would keep the latter free from dirt,

as well as prevent waste. Then over one corner of the loft he caused to be spread at least a bushel of fine gravel, broken lime, and pounded bricks, to assist digestion and furnish material for the formation of egg-shells. Beside this there was a supply of common salt, an article which is indispensable to the health of pigeons.

The making of all these preparations was of course a great affair for the boys, but it was surprising how heartily they carried them through. The simple fact was, their sympathies had been enlisted in a cause exclusively their own. They therefore kept to their work as energetically as if sure to get rich by it. Indeed, while thus engaged, there were a great many conjectures indulged in as to when the pigeons would begin to lay, how many eggs would be hatched in the course of a year, and whether they should take the squabs to Trenton market and sell them, or whether it would not be better to let them grow up, and thus increase the flock to a large size, before they began to sell any. There was a general impatience among them to hurry up the laying, and have it begin immediately. If that important operation could have been performed by the boys themselves, there is no doubt but they would have cheerfully undertaken it. It is probable that, if it had been in their line to do the hatching, they would have undertaken that branch of the business also.

Everything being thus made ready to receive the pigeons, they were let loose in their new quarters, there to become

reconciled to the strange scenes around them. The food that had been taken from the corn-crib was carefully measured, and entered in an account-book that Uncle Benny had provided, so that all should know what was the cost of keeping pigeons, and that the boys should be taught account-keeping, as well as the importance of having a written record of their doings. Besides these advantages, it was necessary for the satisfaction of Mr. Spangler. He had thought pretty well of their keeping a pig, but he had a very poor opinion of the pigeons, notwithstanding the luminous disquisition of Uncle Benny as to their being an advantage on a farm. He said from the first that they would eat their heads off, and that he knew he should have to foot the bill. It was therefore highly desirable to know exactly the cost of feeding them, if it were only to satisfy him. As the responsibility of the whole enterprise rested on Uncle Benny, he was determined to see that no part of it was neglected.

The pigeons very soon became reconciled to their new lodgings, as pigeons always will be when they have roomy quarters, with plenty to eat and drink. The greater the number, the sooner they accept a new place as their home; and, as a general rule, the larger the flock the better it thrives, as pigeons are eminently social in their natures. A solitary pair, put into a new house, will be very likely to leave it and unite with a large flock established elsewhere. To do this they will travel many miles. But as in this case the boys had

procured a dozen, there was sufficient companionship to make any home agreeable that was as well attended as this was. They were constantly seen in the projecting lattice-work in front of their quarters, enjoying the sun, stretching their wings, and looking all over the premises, as if wanting to make acquaintance with them.

CHAPTER VI.

BUILDING A PIG-PEN. — HOW TO KEEP PIGS. — A GREAT INCREASE. — TWO ACRES OF CORN. — LIQUID MANURE THE LIFE OF A PLANT.

THIS important part of the general future being thus successfully under way, the next thing was to fit up a pig-pen, for the new queen in the boys' affections would very soon be brought home. As there was a scarcity of materials on the farm for constructing a fashionable modern pen, with brick walls, shingle roof, plank floor, and costly iron feeding-trough, Uncle Benny directed them to use a large old molasses-hogshead, that happened to be lying idle. One of the boys got into it and removed all the projecting nails from the inside, then, placing it on its side, and blocking it so that it could not roll over, they put into it an abundant supply of straw for a bed. They then built a fence of old posts, broken rails, pieces of board, sticks from the wood-pile, and any other waste stuff they could find. In fact, there was nothing else to be had. It was a tottering, decrepit sort of affair, although strong enough to keep the pig in, but it enclosed sufficient room to give her a fine range, while the great hogshead would be sure to afford a retreat always dry and warm, — in fact, just such a shelter as a pig must have, if one expects him to keep himself clean and in thriving condition.

Though Uncle Benny had himself superintended the erection of a structure which was destined to be the theatre for very important events, yet, when finished, he gazed upon it with a sort of architectural dismay. He had a nice eye for the beautiful; but here was a collection of all the crippled boards and half-rotten posts and rails that such a farm as Spangler's generally contains in wasteful abundance. "It must be whitewashed," he exclaimed. "I am ashamed of it. Your pig will be ashamed of it too, and the neighbors will laugh at it. The hogshead will do, but the fence must be whitewashed."

Mr. Spangler, coming up at that moment, and hearing the old man's remark, joined in by saying, "Yes! It beats me all hollow! There 's no worm-fence on the farm like it."

The uneducated eye of the boys being unable to appreciate the squalid features of the structure, they were surprised at these disparaging estimates of the results of their labor, but, on promising that they would supply the whitewash as soon as the weather became warmer, the subject was dropped.

In due time the expected and long-desired pig was brought to her future home, and she went cheerfully into it, giving no critical attention to the fence, but making directly for the feeding-trough, which had been crammed, with boyish generosity, as evidence of a hearty welcome. She was a

sleek, demure, and very motherly looking pig, and her white skin was so much cleaner than any of the dirty razor-backed animals in Spangler's pen that everybody remarked it. Mrs. Spangler herself, with all the girls, could not resist the temptation of coming over to see what they had heard described at every meal since Christmas. Even they observed the difference; but one of them, whose name was Nancy, rather spitefully remarked that it would n't last; she 'd soon be as dirty-looking as the others. This so nettled Joe, that he said the pig should be called after her; and the boys falling in with the idea, they formally adopted the name. Even Uncle Benny always used it when speaking of her.

The advent of this animal created even more interest among the boys than that of the pigeons. The latter were away up in the loft, out of reach, and not proper subjects for handling or talking to, besides being shy and unsociable, except among themselves. But Nancy was down upon the ground, always accessible, ever desirous of seeing company, and with so quick an ear that the lightest approaching footfall would bring her out of her warm hogshead to see what was coming. Whether it was company she wanted, or a bucket of swill, was of little apparent consequence. She turned out regularly when any one came near, and drew up to him with amusing familiarity.

The fact was that Bill Spangler had become as attentive

to her as if she had been his sweetheart, and he seemed to live, and move, and have his being in hanging around the pen, or in getting over the fence to give her a grateful scratching with the currycomb. After a very brief practice under this rough shampooing, Nancy took to lying down on her side the moment Bill put his foot over the fence, and waited, with an impatient grunt, for Bill to begin. It was amusing to see how highly she relished these rough but acceptable attentions, shutting her eyes, as if oblivious of all outward things, even of the feeding-trough, dropping her ears in perfect repose, stretching out her legs, and abandoning herself entirely to the soothing influence. Every one was satisfied that Nancy's skin became cleaner and whiter under this treatment, even to the putting on of a silky brightness. Uncle Benny was so sure that she was improving under it, that he gave Bill great credit for having undertaken the labor of two or three curryings daily.

Bill also kept the pen in order. Having been provided with a clean, dry bed, she kept that clean herself; for it is the instinct of a well-bred pig to keep his nest in good order, if a nice dry one be given him, with adjoining space for other purposes. In this useful duty Bill was not dismayed by the occurrence of a drizzling, muddy day. On the contrary, as the boys on such occasions generally had the most time to spare, so Bill spent his holidays in Nancy's pen, scraping

and piling up the supernumerary contents, and putting in fresh litter. Of course his boots got so muddy, that, when going in to meals, the girls regarded him as an object of suspicion; and when he happened to stand too close to a hot stove, especially when his clothes were damp, the exhalations became so pungent as very justly to expose him to the most damaging imputations. But he was proof against all the slurs thrown out at such times. If his boots had been in the pig-pen, his heart had been there also.

Uncle Benny required all that Nancy consumed to be charged against her in a separate account, so that the boys should know whether she really did eat her head off, as her namesake in the house had spitefully predicted she would. There was no getting for her even a mouthful of kitchen-slop; Miss Nancy had been so stung by having her name undervalued, that she was careful to throw all to her father's great long-legged hogs. But as a sort of equivalent for this manifestation of hostility, the boys picked up numerous odds and ends about the place for Nancy's benefit, such as they had never before thought of saving. When they saw a stray cabbage-leaf or turnip lying about, or a nubbin of corn, they put it into their pockets until they had a chance of giving it to her. Though it was still cold weather, with no green things about, yet they were often surprised at the variety of trifles they could find when thus on the lookout for them. Between these three caterers,

Nancy had quite a luxurious time of it, even though spitefully cut off from the run of the kitchen.

Uncle Benny watched the behavior of the boys toward their new pets, and as the winter wore away became more and more gratified at the beneficial influence which the care of them was exercising on their habits. He considered it a great gain for a very small outlay. Nor did he fail to remind Mr. Spangler of the important fact, going into particulars which compelled him to admit that these little concessions had done the boys much good. It was a hard thing for him to give up the convictions of a lifetime, but he did nevertheless, — though sometimes winding up with a request that the old man would wait till the year's end, and see how the experiment would result.

As Bill was devoted to Nancy, he was up in advance of the other boys, and off to her pen to give her her breakfast. One morning early in March, on reaching it in the performance of this pleasing duty, he was confounded by seeing ten young pigs in the hogshead. There was too much grunting and squealing around Nancy to permit her to hear Bill's step as he came up to the pen, nor did she happen to see him. So he stood for a moment, surprised beyond anything within his memory, gazing at the joyful sight, then turned back to the house, routed the other boys out of their beds, and ran shouting up to the girls with the glorious news that Nancy had ten pigs! No news-boy

ever cried out the tidings of a great victory over the Rebels with such voluble glee, as when Bill ran stamping down stairs with the news. He thundered even at Uncle Benny's door, then opened it, and told him also what had taken place.

Of course it created a great sensation, and very soon the whole family was gathered around Nancy's pen. There was no denying the thing; Nancy had brought the boys ten pigs, — nine plump little fellows and a runt. Even Mr. Spangler came out before he got breakfast to see if it could be so, and if the pigs looked any better than a litter which had fallen to his lot the week before.

As to the boys, they were pleased beyond measure. Nancy came grunting and sniffing toward the spectators, as if the matter were a great relief to her also, and behaving as though a good warm breakfast, with plenty of it, would not come amiss. Altogether it was a noisy and lively scene, and appeared to give general satisfaction. But its real interest lay in the single fact that Nancy belonged to the boys. Had she been one of Spangler's drove, no one would have felt much concern about the matter but herself. It also went far toward establishing another point, — that when the boys of a farmer's family are permitted to interest themselves in any little independent operation of their own, the family itself is pretty certain to become interested also.

That very day the boys were to quit school for the winter;

so they hurried off to the school-house to spread the news among their fellow-pupils. There was great interest as well as great envy among them, for only one or two of the whole number had been allowed by their parents any privilege of the kind. The good luck of the Spanglers created so much anxiety to imitate them that there sprang up a demand for pigs that seemed likely to exhaust the entire litter. It can hardly be doubted that, if Nancy herself had been trotted out into the school-room with her squeaking brood, the boys would have laid violent hands on all of them, and there would have been so general a scramble for pigs as to send her home bereft even of the little runt. Bill was quite carried away by his enthusiasm, so far forgetting himself as to say that Nancy had eleven, instead of only ten. This, however, was an accidental slip, and occurred when the teacher called him up to know what was the meaning of the buzzing and excitement and inattention to their lessons which was shown by the scholars, as he discovered they had something in their heads that morning more interesting than reading or ciphering.

When the litter was three weeks old, Uncle Benny told Bill he must take out the runt pig and bring it up by hand, or it would surely die, and that would be a loss of at least ten dollars. The other pigs, which were fat and strong, fought it away from Nancy so that it got scarcely anything. He said that even the runt pig of a litter ought to have a chance, as well as the boys. He liked to see fair play all

round. Bill accordingly took it away and kept it by itself. He fed it on the kitchen swill, which, having been cooked, was just what it needed, and nursed it up so faithfully, that in the end it turned out as fine as any in the litter, while he learned the useful fact that a poor dwindling pig could be saved and made a profitable animal by the exercise of a little care.

Before the middle of March the pigeons had laid and hatched. When it was ascertained that most of the nests contained young ones, Uncle Benny directed the boys to let the birds out by removing one of the slats, and adjusting it like a pendulum, so that it could be readily swung back again into its place, and the opening closed. They began by opening this swinging door-way an hour or two before sunset, as at that time of day the pigeons would be certain to fly only a short distance from home, even if without young ones. They accordingly went out, took a short flight, as if merely to practice their wings, and all returned in good time. After a while the door was opened at noon, and, the pigeons being found to be thoroughly domesticated, the front lattice was removed altogether, so that they could go and come when they pleased. The fact of their having young ones to feed made their stay a permanent one. This relieved the boys from much care, and, the birds having the range of the whole farm, they obtained in the fields so large a portion of their food as to make a perceptible diminution of expenses.

After May had come, the boys set about planting the two acres of corn which they were to have for themselves. Spangler did not exactly like this part of the arrangement, but there was no getting out of it now, as by this time the pigs and pigeons had consumed so much corn and meal that he had good reason to expect a loss unless he gave the boys a chance to replace them. Uncle Benny selected a field close to the barn-yard, that had been sadly neglected. But there was no manure for it, as Spangler had emptied the barn-yard for his own crops. But he generously gave them the privilege of taking from it such scrapings as they could find. They accordingly went a manure-hunting with a will. Taking hoe, and rake, and shovel, they cleaned out at least twenty holes and corners where considerable deposits had been carelessly left for several years, — all, therefore, nicely rotted. They poked their hoes under the barn and drew forth surprising quantities. They took up the loose planks under where the cows and horses had been standing, and turned out extensive deposits of the very best quality. Spangler was amazed at the extent of these collections, and now began to fear that he was likely to lose manure as well as corn. It seemed impossible for him to entertain any other idea than that whatever he gave to his boys, or allowed them to make for themselves, was so much loss to himself.

The supply being scanty, they were unable to give the land a good broad-cast dressing, yet they had enough to

afford an extra quantity to each hill. This they applied faithfully and well, Uncle Benny constantly enjoining it on them to feed high, — that the corn required feeding as much as the pigs. He sometimes even thought that they could have done nearly as well by putting all the manure on one acre instead of two, as in that case they would have had only half as much ground to attend to, with a strong likelihood of harvesting quite as much corn. But this was the beginning only, and it was not to be expected that things would go on as bravely at the first attempt as they would afterwards. In reality, the boys had wanted more than two acres, thus adopting, as if by instinct, the common error of undertaking too much. Like many others, they supposed a man's crops were in proportion to the quantity of ground he cultivated, not in proportion to the thoroughness with which he enriched it. But Uncle Benny knew otherwise, and that two acres would be quite as much as they could manage. As it turned out, there were more than they had the means of manuring properly.

"I don't see why you want this ground made so rich, Uncle Benny," said Joe Spangler, when they had finished planting. "Father never puts as much on his corn as we have put on this, and yet you say it ought to have more. It is very tedious having to handle so much."

The old man drew a newspaper from his pocket, and read to his audience the following paragraph: —

"Thirty years ago the farmers of the Genesee and Mohawk valleys assisted each other, in the winter, to cart their manures on the ice, so that when the rivers broke up they should get rid of them, and not be compelled to move their stables; now, in those very valleys, barn-yard manure is worth two dollars or more per cord, and is so much needed, that, without its use, a crop of wheat cannot be raised which would compensate the grower. The average crop of those valleys has sunk within thirty years from thirty bushels to the acre to less than fifteen, while the whole average of the State of New York is less than eleven; that of Pennsylvania has sunk to eleven and a quarter, and that of Ohio from thirty-five bushels to eleven and a half. Massachusetts can no longer raise grain enough to support her manufacturing population, without import from elsewhere; and with all these facts prominently before them, many farmers in these rich valleys have actually cut gutters from their barn-yards across the public road, to let the liquid manure run away. This may be considered cleanliness, but it certainly is not economy."

"There," said the old man, "you see what the majority of the New York farmers did thirty years ago, and what has been the result. No manure, no crop."

"But," replied Tony, "when you were telling us about the election, I thought you said the majority were always right."

"Ah," rejoined the old man, "that's a great mistake. Majorities are sometimes actually blind to the truth. When Noah told the people there was a terrible flood coming, there was a great majority who would n't believe a word of it. It was the minority that were in luck that time. So will you be in your future practice, if you turn over a new leaf on the manure question."

"Blame the thing!" cried Bill, with sudden impatience, kicking away from him the dead body of a huge cat, "it's been in my way all day!"

"Now, Bill," said Uncle Benny, "bring the cat here again; I'll put it out of your way. That cat is manure, and must not be wasted."

They were then standing at the end of a corn-row, on the outside of the field. Bill went after the cat, and, lifting up the animal with his hoe, brought it up to the old man.

"Now," said he, "plant that cat."

As directed, Bill took up the grains of corn from the last hill, dug a hole some ten inches deep, in which he placed the animal, then covered it with earth, on which the grains were replaced and again covered, as before. There was a good deal of laughing and shouting among the boys while this was going on; but when the thing was done, Joe looked up to the old man, and inquired, "What's the use of that, Uncle Benny?"

"Why," said he, "you put a small shovelful of manure

in each hill, but that cat is equal to four shovelfuls. Besides, Joe, it is a clear saving. If the cat had been allowed to dry up on top of the ground, its richness would have gone to waste; and you must learn never to waste anything, for it is by the saving of small things, no matter what they may be, that men grow rich. Now watch this corn-hill, and see how the roots will draw up strength and vigor from that decaying carcass. It will be the best hill on the whole field. I wish we had a cat for every one of them."

"But does anybody else plant cats?" inquired Bill.

The old man again produced a newspaper, and read to them an interesting statement by Mr. Edgar A. Clifton, of Staten Island, showing how richly some such experiments made by him had resulted.

When selecting his particular piece of ground for a cornfield, Uncle Benny had had an eye to the adjoining barnyard. As already mentioned, Mr. Spangler had caused its fluid contents to be discharged into the public road, nor was there any likelihood of his going to the slight trouble necessary to prevent such wholesale waste. Uncle Benny quietly undertook it for him, by opening a new outlet directly into the cornfield. As Spangler had tried his hand at wasting, the old man would try his at saving. The ground was so situated as to make this the work of only an hour or two. It was done so effectually, that not a drop ran to waste as formerly. On the contrary, whenever a heavy

summer thunder-shower fell, there could be seen a torrent of dark liquor rushing through the barn-yard, and pouring away into the cornfield, diffusing itself over at least half an acre. There were no means of causing it to irrigate a greater surface. The rain diluted the concentrated liquor down to the exact strength for the corn roots to drink in and stimulate the plants.

This ingenious bit of engineering gave rise to no remark from Spangler beyond his saying that he was glad to see the barn-yard so much drier than formerly. The old man had in fact drained it effectually. There could be no denying that it produced remarkable results. Into whatever part of the cornfield this wash of the barn-yard was carried by the spring rains, it bore with it so stimulating a vigor that there the corn came popping up out of the ground in advance of all other places. In addition to coming up earlier, the corn was evidently stronger and healthier, presenting a deeper tinge of green throughout the season. It refused to turn yellow under a succession of cold days and colder nights, though all the other plants became pale and spindling. Many of the hills showed double the number of ears, that the others produced.

The boys could not fail to notice these things from the start. The weeds came in to share in this general feast of fat things. As this had been a neglected spot, so there the weeds had been allowed, for many years, to grow and

ripen their seeds. These seeds, now fed by ten times their usual supply of nourishment, sprang up rapidly and thickly in proportion. Every dormant germ seemed to put on vitality under the quickening influence. Varieties now vegetated which had not been seen on that place for many years. These numerous pests had evidently started with a determination to dispute with the corn for undisturbed possession of the ground. Had they encountered no opposition, they would have quickly smothered the whole crop.

But as they multiplied, so did the labors of the boys increase in subduing them. Uncle Benny was compelled to spend much of his time in keeping this crop clean. He had set out to raise corn, not weeds. Moreover, he had a stake in it as well as the boys. But while working with his hoe around the corn-hills, he was never tired of admiring the surprising difference between the half-acre upon which the barn-yard had been emptied and that of the remainder of the field. The latter was good, but the former was magnificent. It maintained its superiority throughout the season, the roots striking into the earth so widely and deeply as to hold up the stalks in a heavy August storm which prostrated half of the others.

It afforded, moreover, too striking an illustration of the theory and practice of applying manure, to be overlooked. The boys, frequently working in the cornfield, came to un-

derstand clearly how it was that a plant grew almost wholly by virtue of the liquids that were supplied to its roots, not by merely undecomposed manure. They knew well that rain-water was a good thing, but here they saw that, when the barn-yard extracts were mingled with the rain, the mixture was the true food for plants. So clearly were they made to comprehend this formula, that they regretted a hundred times their inability to bring a larger portion of the cornfield within convenient distance of the barn-yard.

CHAPTER VII.

VISIT TO A MODEL FARM. — THE STORY OF ROBERT ALLEN. — HOW TO RAISE HORSERADISH. — NO SUCH THING AS LUCK.

THE disposition to go ahead which the boys displayed, as well as their aptitude for learning, were strong encouragements with Uncle Benny to continue his fatherly care over them, — to teach them that it was impossible to earn genuine manhood except by steadily and industriously serving out their boyhood. He found his own interest in all their little concerns insensibly increasing, and noticed also that even Spangler himself took constant observation of their doings, though he seldom gave a word of encouragement, but rather doubted whether their labors would ever pay a profit. He estimated results by their money product, not by their moral and educational value.

On the afternoon of a fine early-summer day the old man obtained permission to take them with him to a farm some two miles off, for the purpose of showing them how a really good farmer managed his business. The boys had often heard of this place, and had many times walked by it, but had never ventured up to the house or over the grounds. It belonged to a Mr. Allen, and consisted of sixty acres. The history of this man was so

remarkable, that Uncle Benny, thinking it afforded an example that ought to be impressed on the minds of the boys, took occasion, as they walked leisurely along, to relate it to them.

Mr. Allen was one of a large family of children, his father being a laboring man, so poor that he was glad to have them placed out whenever a situation could be found for them. No great pains were taken to see that the places were good ones, where a tolerable share of schooling would be allowed, or where they would be likely to receive a thorough agricultural education. The father was too poorly off in the world to be very nice in choosing places; besides, his children had had so indifferent a training at home, that whoever took them was quite certain that, if they were ever to do any good, they must be taught how to do it.

This one, Robert, was accordingly placed with a very penurious man, who allowed him very little time, even in winter, for schooling. His very name had a suspicious sound, — it was John Screwme. The poor boy was excessively fond of study, and had luckily learned to read well before he left home. He accordingly read everything he found about the house, and even carried a book of some kind in his bosom whenever he went ploughing. This he read and reread when he paused to rest his horses, seeking to carry in his memory, while following in the furrow,

the information he had obtained. It was so when not at work, — the same passionate desire to obtain knowledge occupying his time and thoughts. But his master's house was a very poor school in which to learn, with very few books or papers about. He therefore borrowed from the neighboring boys all that they were able to lend him.

But this supply was insufficient for his wants, as he had become a rapid reader. He had the great good sense to understand that it was important for him to qualify himself, while young, for the business he was to pursue in after life, — that of farming. Hence he sought for books on agriculture and natural history, but few of these could be obtained.

His master was a widower, with an only child, a daughter, whose temperament was directly the opposite of her father's. She was as fond of cultivating flowers as Robert was of reading books. Her father had indulged her by subscribing for an agricultural paper, which came once a month, and which cost only half a dollar a year. It was the cheapest of all, and therefore he took it. This Robert devoured as soon as it came, but it was far from being sufficient for him. The girl also wanted more; but as neither of them had any money with which to subscribe for other papers, Robert undertook the setting of traps for muskrats, rabbits, and moles, and succeeded in catching great numbers of them. The girl took off the skins and

dried them, and Robert walked with his spoils to Trenton, and sold them to the storekeepers. He thus raised money enough to pay for an agricultural paper which came every week. From the reading of this he derived so much information, that he never afterwards permitted the subscription to run out.

Among other useful things, it taught him how to manage bees. So he bought a colony, and, being extremely observant and careful, he gradually multiplied them until the product amounted to twenty or thirty dollars every year. His master made no objection to his doing this, as the bees consumed only such food as would have been wasted had they not gathered it from the fields and flowers. In this bee culture the daughter, Alice, assisted him very materially, giving him prompt notice of a swarm coming out, and sometimes even assisting him in getting them safely into a new hive. Several times, from the profits of his honey, he was able to present her a handsome book at Christmas, and, on more than one occasion, a new bonnet. His bees thus made it a very easy matter to pay for his weekly paper, as well as to keep himself supplied with numerous new works on his favorite studies.

As might be expected, such a boy was always observant of whatever was going on around him, — of everything from which he could get a new practical hint. Having on one occasion gone to Trenton to dispose of his honey in the

market, after he had pocketed his little roll of notes, he strolled leisurely through the long building, from end to end, to see what others had brought there to sell, as well

as to learn what prices they were getting. But he saw nothing that attracted his attention particularly, until, on coming out at the lower end, he noticed an old man with a very rude machine resembling that of a perambulating

scissors-grinder, having his foot on the treadle, with which he was driving some kind of a mill. He stood quite a long while looking at the machine, endeavoring to ascertain what the old man was doing. While thus standing, several women and children came up in succession, with little cups in their hands, into which the old man measured a gill or two of a white, pulpy preparation, for which each buyer paid him a few cents. It struck him that the old man must be grinding this pulp; so, coming close up to the machine, he at once perceived a strong odor of horseradish. It was this the old fellow was grinding; and Robert saw that he had customers for it as fast as it could be produced. He had seen in the machine-shops about Trenton many great machines, but this was truly a *grater.*

Now he understood all about raising horseradish, and knew that it could be grown more readily even than potatoes; but never having seen it anywhere except on his employer's table, he had no idea that a large quantity could be sold, and hence was greatly surprised at finding how quickly it went off in the market. He immediately inquired of the old man how much he gave for the roots, of which he had a bushel or two in baskets near him. He replied, two dollars a hundred for the smaller ones, and three or four for the largest; adding, that he would buy as many as he could bring him.

The boy was so elated at this unexpected discovery of

something that was exactly in his own line, that he asked no more questions. But that evening he looked over all the old numbers of the agricultural papers in the house, to see if they contained any information about the cultivation of horseradish, what was the best soil, whether there was a superior variety, or any other instructions to guide him in undertaking what he shrewdly thought he could make a profitable operation. He found a dozen articles on the subject, which contained the experience of practical growers, with minute directions how to plant and cultivate, as well as how to harvest, a large crop, and where to find a market for it. He had seen these articles before; but as his mind was not interested in the subject at the time, he gave them only a passing notice. But now that his attention had been directed to it, he discovered in them an almost priceless value. They were exactly what he wanted, and he read them over and over. He made up his mind that, if he had inquired of every farmer in the township how to cultivate so simple a thing as horseradish on a large scale, not one could have told him half as much as did these old numbers of the agricultural papers he had been preserving.

Here Uncle Benny took occasion to remind the boys that it was impossible for a man to be a really good, progressive farmer, without not only having a full supply of the best agricultural papers, but diligently studying their contents,

as well as preserving the numbers for future reference. He said they were full of sound advice and instruction, and kept their readers informed of all the new seeds, plants, machines, and breeds of animals, as they were either discovered or introduced. It was only by having his eyes and ears open to these things, that a farmer could get along successfully, and keep up with the best.

He went on to tell them that Robert, discovering that a deep, rich soil was the best for horseradish, immediately made up his mind that the very place for him to plant it would be by the side of a long ditch in the meadow, which had been cleaned out that very fall. As the ditch-bank could not be used for any crop, — at least his employer was not the man to put it to any useful purpose, — Robert easily obtained his permission to plant it with horseradish. He would have refused anything that he could use himself. As may be supposed, Robert thought of this matter the whole winter, and was impatient for spring to come round, that he might make a beginning. At Christmas he went to Trenton and engaged from the old man in the market as many of the lower ends of the horseradish roots as he would need. On measuring the ditch-bank, by pacing it off, he found he could get in three rows containing altogether two thousand roots, and so contracted for that number at five dollars per thousand. The old man had been in the habit of throwing away these "tails," as there was

no steady demand for them, and was glad enough to find a customer.

When April came, Robert put the ditch-bank in order with his own hands, doing most of the work by moonlight, and then actually planting the roots by moonlight also, as his employer would not spare him even a half-day for himself. The roots were about five inches long and were planted in rows. Holes about eight inches deep were made in the ground with a sharp stick, into which the roots were dropped, thus leaving them a few inches below the surface. It was a long and tedious job for a boy like him to undertake and go through with, but he was full of ambition to do something for himself, and this was about the only chance he saw. Then during the whole growing season he kept the ground clear of weeds, and frequently stirred it up on the surface, all which greatly promoted the growth of the plants. They threw up such luxuriant tops, that by midsummer they shaded most of the ground and smothered a large portion of the weeds. All this attention to his horseradish bed was bestowed at odd times.

But he was well rewarded for his labor, as at the close of the season he had a fine crop of roots. They were so large, and there were so many of them, that he was obliged to hire a man to dig them up and wheel them to the house. His employer had paid no more attention to the crop during the summer than he had to Robert's bees; but when he came to

see the splendid result of his labor, he was astonished at his success, and told Alice to help him wash and trim them up for market. This she was willing enough to do, as Robert's tastes and hers were so similar that they had long been close friends, ever ready to oblige each other. By devoting one or two evenings to the task, the roots were made ready for the Trenton market. There Robert was allowed to take them, and there, sure enough, he found the old man at work in the market-house with his machine, still grinding out horseradish for a large circle of customers. He sold his crop for sixty dollars, and was so delighted with his success that he treated himself to a new coat.

He also bought for Alice, in return for the help she had given him, a neat little dressing-box, containing trifles which he thought would please her, for there was not a particle of meanness in Robert's disposition. While he was ambitious, and industrious, and saving, he was far from being stingy. Besides, he had already learned that pleasure was reciprocal, and that no one feels it who does not at the same time communicate it; for to be really pleased, one must be pleasing to others. As he saw that Alice was gratified by his thus thinking of her, he was abundantly gratified himself.

This purchase of a new coat was a clear saving to Mr. Screwme. He was pleased in turn, thinking how much he had saved, and readily gave Robert permission to use the ditch-bank as long as he desired, as his horseradish farm.

Thus the industrious fellow was encouraged to look ahead, and a bit of waste land was in a fair way of being turned into a productive one, by the shrewdness and energy of a mere boy. Taking all the land on the farm, there was not an acre that produced more clear profit than this, though the rest had had twice as much labor in proportion bestowed upon it.

Still, the owner did not take the hint thus given to him, and try what could be done on a larger scale. The reason was, that raising horseradish was not regular farming, — it was something out of the usual line, — well enough for a boy to amuse himself with, but not the kind of farming he had been brought up to. Another reason was, the neighbors would ridicule him. In truth he was not a wise man, for wisdom is not the mere seeing of things that are actually before us, but consists in discerning and comprehending those which are likely to come to pass. He would have thought it all right for him to plant an acre of cabbages, because it was done by others; but an acre of what he considered a new farm product, such as horseradish, was too great a novelty, though he saw that the crop paid well. Nor was he sufficiently wise to see that the time was coming when a plant so easily cultivated would be grown upon fields as large as any of his.

Thus Robert was left in undisturbed possession. He started the second year under better auspices, as, in trimming

his roots for market, he had cut off and saved the lower ends for another planting. This would save him ten dollars, besides affording him not only better "sets" than he had begun with, but twice as many. He thought that he would double his crop by planting both sides of the ditch. On asking permission of his employer, he readily gave it, adding that, if he chose, he might plant the bottom of the ditch also.

The boy's ambition seemed to have won some little sympathy from his master; for, when planting-time came the next spring, he actually assisted Robert by ploughing up the ground and putting it in order for him. Then, as Robert made the holes in the ground, he called on Alice to drop the roots into them, as she was quite willing to do. With this help he got on finely with his double crop. But he was obliged to hire a man occasionally during the summer to keep the ground in order, as he knew it was never worth while to set a plant in the ground and then neglect it. But he had the money with which to pay for such labor. Still, it cost very little, as to his ditch-banks was devoted all the spare time he had. His bees gave him no such trouble, as they took care of themselves. The better preparation of the ground caused a quicker and larger growth of the plants, and of course there was a better yield than that of the first season. He sold the second crop for more than a hundred dollars, and could have disposed of three times the quantity. That season his honey sold for over twenty dollars.

Most of this money he saved, spending very little except for books and papers, all which he studied so assiduously, that, by the time he came of age, he was one of the best-informed young men in the neighborhood, with a respectable library about him. He was a fine, handsome-looking fellow, of pleasant manners, steady habits, and, besides all this, had more than four hundred dollars, all made from the profits of his bees and horseradish.

"You see, boys," said Uncle Benny, "how much can be accomplished, from the very smallest beginnings, by a boy who has ambition, good sense, and industry. But all these acquisitions, especially the mental ones, come from application. It is the price that every man must pay for them, and they cannot be had without it. To expect good results of any kind without application, would be as absurd as for you to hope for a crop of corn without having planted a hill."

The old man went on with his story. He told them that, when Robert came of age, he was able to manage the farm far better than his employer had ever done. He continued to do the principal work until he was twenty-three years old, at which time his employer died, and a year after that he and Alice were married.

"Now," continued the old man, "the farm we are going to see is the same one on which Robert Allen began life as a poor boy. All this happened years before you were born, so

that you will see great changes from the condition of the farm as it was in the time of Robert's boyhood."

The boys listened to this history with profound attention. It ran so nearly parallel to the current of their own thoughts that they could not fail to be struck with it. They had seen Mr. Allen very often, and two of his sons had been their companions at school; but they had never before had the least inkling that so wealthy a farmer had sprung from so small a beginning. The farm, therefore, as they approached it, acquired a new interest in their eyes, and they surveyed with increased attention whatever belonged to it.

A few steps farther brought them to the gate, which opened into a lawn of moderate size, in which were pear and apple trees many years old, now gorgeous in a profusion of bloom. These living monuments of the thoughtfulness of a former generation had been carefully trimmed of all the dead wood, and their trunks had been whitewashed. Indeed, the fences, the out-houses, and every spot or thing to which whitewash was appropriate, shone out gayly and cheerfully in a coat of brilliant white. A dozen large stones, that lay about in the edge of a luxuriant border near the house, had been brushed in the same way, presenting a beautiful contrast with the rich green of the early springing grass. Even the projecting stump of an old apple-tree, that had once stood in the lawn, held up its slowly decaying head in all the glory of a similar covering.

The stone dwelling-house, evidently very old, but very comfortable, had shared in the same beautifying application. Its ancient doors, and sashes, and shutters had been replaced by new ones of modern finish. For the old roof there had been substituted a new one, with projecting eaves and ornamental brackets. An ample piazza at the front, built in cottage style, was clustered over with honeysuckles, from whose opening flowers a thousand bees were gathering honey. Some architect, skilled in the beautiful art of transforming an old farm-house into an elegant modern cottage, had evidently touched this venerable homestead with his renovating hand, engrafting on its uncouth outlines not only symmetry, but even elegance. The whole aspect of the premises struck the visitors with admiration of their trimness and cleanliness, while a more practised eye would at once set down the owner as belonging to the higher order of farmers.

As they turned a corner of the house on their way to the rear, they were met by Mr. Allen and his two sons, the schoolmates of the Spanglers. Greetings being cordially exchanged, the visitors were politely invited into the house; but Uncle Benny replied that he had brought his boys with him to see what there was out of doors, and that he would like them to learn for themselves how a good farmer managed his business.

"Ah," replied Mr. Allen, "it requires a man superior in one way or another, to be a really good farmer."

"But," rejoined Uncle Benny, "men are estimated by their

success in life, and, by common consent, success is held to be evidence of superiority. You are known as the luckiest man in the township."

"But I don't believe in luck, Uncle Benny," replied Mr. Allen. "It was not luck that made me what I am, but God's blessing on my labors, from the time I was a poor boy up to the present hour."

They walked forward to the barn-yard. The fences round it, and all the adjacent buildings, had been newly whitewashed. There were gutters which carried away from every roof the rains that fell upon it, and led them into a low spot a long distance off, to which the pigs had access as a wallow. The barn-yard was shaped like an earthen pie-dish, lowest at the centre, so that no liquid manure could run away. The bottom had been scooped out and furnished with a coat of clay nearly six inches thick, so that no liquor could soak away into the ground. There was but a single outlet for the fluid, and that led into a capacious cistern, connected with a pump, by which the contents were raised into buckets and used on the garden close at hand. This had been in operation only a year or two; but Mr. Allen described the result on his garden products as almost incredible, and he should use the pump and cistern more frequently than ever. "This liquor," he said, "is what a plant lives and grows fat on, just as a pig grows on what you give

to him. If I were able to manure my whole farm with these juices of the barn-yard, I would saturate the manure-heap until the water came away colorless, and spread it over the ground."

As the Spangler boys heard this, they looked up to Uncle Benny in a very knowing way, evidently recognizing the words of this excellent farmer as conveying the identical lesson the old man had taught them at their own squalid barn-yard.

There were a dozen head of cattle in the yard, fine, portly cows, of quiet mien and buttery promise. They had all been born within its enclosure, and had never been allowed to go beyond its limits. During the growing season all their food was cut fresh from the fields, and brought to them regularly three times a day. This arrangement cost additional care and money, but it saved some hundreds of dollars' worth of fences, while it trebled the products of the barn-yard. It saved acres of clover from being trampled down and wasted, thus enabling the land to feed double the number of cows. The abundant yield of butter found a quick market at Trenton.

From this spot they were taken to the pig-pen, and there they saw the Suffolk and Chester County breeds, all in clean quarters, with warm shelters covered from the rain, the outer part of the enclosure strewed with an ample supply of cornstalks and other litter, which

they were rapidly grinding up into the most valuable kind of fertilizer. Bill Spangler, having a particular home-feeling for the pig-pen, examined the animals in this enclosure with the greatest care. The others were equally interested. Though they noticed how complete the pen was, and how superior were all its arrangements to their own, yet, after a long and close survey, Bill could not help exclaiming to the Allen boys, "There 's no sow here equal to our Nancy!"

CHAPTER VIII.

NEVER KILL THE BIRDS. — PETS OF ALL KINDS. — WHAT UNDERDRAINING MEANS. — MORE HORSERADISH. — ENCOURAGING THE BOYS.

FROM this point of observation they moved off to the garden, where they found everything in such nice order that it amazed and delighted Uncle Benny, who did not fail to point out to his pupils all the strong features of its management, comparing them with the miserably neglected condition of their own garden. Every fruit-tree had an old crook-necked squash hung upon it, far out of harm's way, pierced with a hole for a bird's nest. Mr. Allen evidently had a pride in this abundant supply of accommodation for the birds, for, addressing himself to the Spanglers, he called their especial attention to the subject. "Do you see, boys," said he, "how the birds are building in all these squashes? They are my journeymen insect-eaters. Do you know that these birds destroy millions of worms and bugs and millers, which prey on the fruits and flowers of the farm and garden? I could not do without them, as, if I had no birds, I should have no fruit. I have tried it for myself, and it has been tried more extensively in European countries, where they attend to small matters of this kind much more attentively than we do here. Why,

Tony, you know what the wire-worm is. Well, in a single department in France that worm has been known to destroy three successive harvests, each worth nearly a million of dollars. In portions of Germany, other insects have destroyed immense forests of large trees. One of the kings of Prussia once ordered all the sparrows killed because they ate his cherries; but two years afterwards he found his cherries and other fruits devoured by caterpillars. It was the same thing in Hungary, when the sparrows were generally destroyed; the insects, having no enemies, multiplied so fast that they consumed so much of the crops that laws were made forbidding the destruction of the birds. We shall have the same ruin here if we allow our small birds to be killed as everybody is now killing them. If we are to do without birds, we must make up our minds to go without fruit. This is the reason why every tree in my garden has its bird's nest. My boys never shoot a bird, not even an owl, for an owl is one of the farmer's best friends, — better than a dozen cats about the barn. He is the sharpest mouse-trap that can be set, because he goes about after the mice, while the trap holds still until the mouse thinks proper to walk in. Even the common buzzard, that every fool shoots when he can, will eat up six thousand field mice annually, — and how much grain would that number consume, or how many apple-trees would they nibble to death? No, no, boys, never kill the birds. Don't

even drive them away, but coax them about you in flocks. It costs more to do without them than to have them."

Most of this was news to the boys, as no one had taken pains to impress them with the value of birds to a farmer, except Uncle Benny, who had occasionally referred to the subject. But what they saw here was a practical lesson that had its effect, for when they went home, not having any squashes at hand, they hunted up a dozen deplorably old boots that had been kicking about Spangler's premises, and nailed them to the trees, thus bringing a new set of shabby things directly within everybody's view. However, it was the best they could do with the meagre means they possessed, and it showed a disposition to imitate good examples. It was found, however, that the birds were not well pleased with the smell of old leather. Though they repeatedly went in and out of the boots, evidently anxious for places in which to build their nests, yet only two or three took possession. Uncle Benny was not sorry, as the great ragged boots, hung where he could not fail to see them, were a constant eyesore to him; and as soon as it was evident the birds refused to build in them, he had them all taken down.

On coming out of the garden, Mr. Allen led them into the open yard in front of his carriage-house and corn-cribs. There was a great flock of pigeons picking up the remains of the noonday feeding which had been

thrown to them. The Spanglers were delighted, and examined the pigeons attentively, but could not discover that they were any better than their own. The proprietorship of pigs and pigeons had already produced the good effect of making them observant and critical, thus teaching them to compare one thing with another.

"Now," said Mr. Allen to Uncle Benny, "these all belong to my boys. They began with only two pairs of birds, and you see to what they have grown."

"How many of them do you sell every year?" inquired Tony of the Allens, in a tone too low for the others to hear.

"Thirty dollars' worth of squabs," he answered, "and some seasons a good many pairs of old birds, — besides what we eat up ourselves."

"But who finds the corn?" inquired Tony, bearing in mind the bargain which Spangler had imposed upon them when consenting to his boys procuring pigeons.

"O," said he, "father finds it, but I 'll show directly how we pay for it."

In addition to the pigeons there was a large collection of fine poultry, with a dozen broods of different ages, some just hatched out, the little fellows running round the coops in which the mothers were confined. There was also a flock of turkeys moving slowly about, with all the gravity peculiar to that bird. Uncle Benny made

up his mind he had never seen a more inviting dinner-party than these would very soon make.

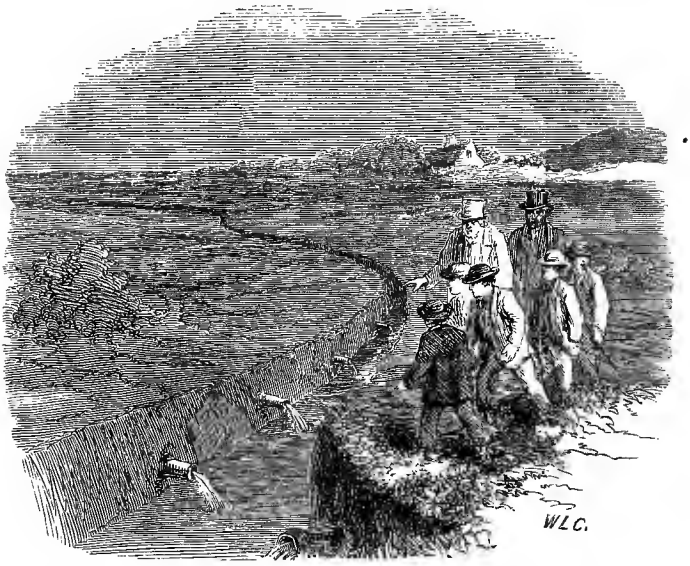
From the poultry-yard they wandered all over the farm. Everything was kept in the nicest order. No unsightly hedgerow of weeds and briers fringed fences, nor was a broken post or rail to be seen. The fencing had been made in the best manner in the first place, and would therefore last a lifetime. The winter grain stood up thick and rank, showing that the ground was in good heart. The corn had been planted, and in fact all the urgent spring work had been done, Mr. Allen having so managed it as to be ahead with whatever he had undertaken. Great piles of manure, with marl intermixed, were scattered about several fields, ready to be used on crops that would be put in at a later day. The springing grass on the mowing ground showed that it had been top-dressed with manure the preceding fall, and that the grass roots had been all winter drinking up the rich juices which the rain and melting snow had extracted and carried down directly into their ever open mouths. Everything about the farm showed marks of its being in the hands of a thorough man, who, in addition to understanding his business, had an eye to neatness, taste, and economy.

Uncle Benny was impressed with the completeness of all that he saw. He called the attention of his pupils to the remarkable difference between the practice of Mr.

Allen and Mr. Spangler, stopping repeatedly to explain, and enter into minute particulars. The results were so manifestly superior to any they had witnessed at home, that they did not fail to appreciate them. The old man's effort was to make them understand why it was that results should differ so widely. He told them the soil of the two farms was exactly similar, one farm, naturally, being as good as the other. The difference was altogether in the mode of management. Mr. Allen manufactured all the manure he could, and bought quantities of fertilizers. He sold some hay, because he produced more than he could use, but his straw was all worked up on the farm. He was quite as likely to set fire to his dwelling-house as to burn a pile of corn-stalks. On the other hand, Mr. Spangler took no pains to accumulate manure, neither did he purchase any; but even what he did collect was spoilt by the deluge of rains that carried off all its stimulating juices into the highway. As to selling hay, he had scarcely enough for his own use, while more than once he burnt up a whole crop of corn-stalks. Thus, while one farm was growing richer every year, the other was growing poorer.

Presently they came to a beautiful meadow of at least ten acres, through the centre of which ran a wide ditch, with a lively stream of water in the bottom. As they came up to the bank the Spanglers observed an earthen pipe pro-

jecting from the opposite bank, and spouting forth a strong jet of water. Proceeding farther they noticed another, and then another still. In fact they saw them sticking out all along the course of the ditch, about thirty feet apart. Every



one of them was discharging more or less water. As they had never seen such things before, Tony inquired what they were.

"These are underdrains," replied Uncle Benny. "You know I showed the other day what surface-drains were, — w you see what underdraining is. Those pipes are called tiles."

"But where does all the water come from that we see pouring out of them?" inquired Joe.

"Come from? Why, it comes from everywhere, — above, below, and around the drains," replied Uncle Benny. "When a rain falls, it soaks its way down through the earth, that is, all that the earth don't require, and finds its way into the underdrains, and then runs off as you see. Then the water which rises from the springs under this meadow finds its way also into the drains, and is carried off like the surplus rain-water. If it were not for these drains the land would be so water-logged that nothing but wild grasses and aquatic plants would grow on it; but now you see it is yielding the very finest kind of grass. If your father's meadow, now filled with ferns and skunk-root, were drained as this is, it would be quite as productive."

"Quite as good," added Mr. Allen. "This meadow was as foul and worthless as Mr. Spangler's when I began to underdrain. I never spent any money that paid me half as well as the money I have laid out in underdraining. It cost me about three hundred dollars to do this work, but the land is a thousand dollars the better for it, — in fact, it was good for nothing as it lay a few years ago. All the water you see pouring out of these drains was formerly retained in the ground. It is just so much more than the land required. Now it has exactly enough, and it is the difference

between enough and too much that converts a meadow into bog, or a bog into a meadow.

"When I was a boy," he continued, "it was on the margin of this long ditch that I made the first attempt at farming for myself. It was a rough place then, Uncle Benny, and I had a hard row to hoe. My crop of horseradish from this ground was the beginning of my success in life. I made only a little money, it is true, but it was a great deal for a boy. I can see now that its value was not in the number of dollars I made, but in the stimulus it gave to my energies. It braced me up, it gave me confidence in my own powers, it taught me not only that I was able to do something for myself, but exactly how to do it. Still, it was very satisfactory to know that I was making money, young as I was. But I have never sought to make money merely for the love of it, but only that it might be used wisely and generously, — the only way in which it can be profitably expended.

"Now, my lads," he continued, addressing himself to the boys, "I have heard of a youth who once picked up a guinea lying in the road. Ever afterwards, so the story goes, as he walked along he kept his eyes steadfastly fixed on the ground, in hopes of finding another, and in the course of a long life he did pick up at times a good amount of gold and silver. But all these days, as he was looking for gold, he saw not that heaven was bright

above him, and nature beautiful around. He never once allowed his eyes to look up from the mud and filth in which he sought the treasure, and when he died, a rich old man, he only knew this fair earth of ours as a dirty road in which to pick up money as you walk along. Boys, you were not made for a pursuit so degrading as this. Remember it when your turn comes."

"But," added Uncle Benny, "if you found the cultivation of horseradish so profitable, why did you abandon it?"

"Bless you, Uncle Benny," he replied, "I have never quitted it from the day I set the first root into the ground up to the present hour. On the contrary, I have enlarged my operations in that line perhaps a hundred-fold. Come this way and see what we are doing."

He then led them to the upper end of the meadow, where the ground was higher and drier, though it had also been underdrained. Here were three acres set with horseradish. The harrow had just been run over the field between the rows, and the green tops were peeping here and there above the surface. Uncle Benny had travelled all the world over, and, as he was sometimes disposed to think, had seen everything there was in it. But he admitted that here was a thing new even to him; he had never stumbled on a three-acre field of horseradish until now. It was as great a novelty to the

boys, who knew nothing more of the cultivation of the plant than seeing a few roots growing on the edge of a dirty gutter at home, while they were utterly ignorant of its marketable capabilities. They could tell everything about corn, but not an item about horseradish. Uncle Benny knew there must be some kind of a demand for it, but how extensive that might be he had never had occasion to learn. Hence he and his pupils stood in silent surprise at this unexpected exhibition.

"But what is to become of the vast quantity of roots you are producing here?" inquired Uncle Benny. "Does the world want as much horseradish as this? Who is to buy it, and who is to eat it?"

"Not a bit of fear as to a market," replied Mr. Allen, smiling at the old man's surprise and incredulity. "New York never has enough, never had, and never will have. One dealer in that city takes my whole crop, and is annually calling for more. I am determined next year to double the quantity of ground already planted."

"You surprise me," said the old man. "Then the crop must pay. How many roots can you grow upon an acre?"

"Why, you see these rows are three feet apart, and the plants are set one foot asunder in the rows, thus giving me nearly fifteen thousand per acre. At that distance, on suitable soil, the average weight per root would

be one pound. The rows are just wide enough apart to get safely through with a small cultivator, so as to keep down the weeds, — for when I set out to raise anything, I can't afford to raise weeds also. Weeds don't pay, — we don't believe in them."

"And what can the New-Yorkers afford to give you per root?" again inquired the old man.

"Don't know what they *can* afford, but they *do* afford to pay me an average of five cents," was the rejoinder.

"Why, that 's far better than Spangler's cabbages, or anybody else's," added Uncle Benny.

"No doubt of it, — it's better than my own, and they are equal to any in the neighborhood," replied Mr. Allen. "The fact is, Uncle Benny, agriculture has made such astonishing progress within the last fifteen years, and our great cities have so increased their population, that what at one time was the most insignificant farm product has risen to the position of a staple, which everybody wants. I could name a dozen such. But take the single article of horseradish, one of the most insignificant things that ever grew in a farmer's garden, in some wet place where it could catch the drip of the kitchen pump. I see you are smiling at the idea, but hear me through. It is now cultivated in fields of from ten to twenty acres, and goes to the great cities by hundreds of tons. There is a single dealer in New York who buys thirty tons

annually. He has machinery, driven by steam, which grinds or rasps it up into pulp, after which it is mixed with vinegar and bottled up in various ways to preserve its strength and flavor. It is then sold in great quantities as part of the stores of every ship, not only as a condiment for the table, but as a certain preventive of the scurvy. In this prepared state it goes all over the country, and is thus consumed in every hotel and boarding-house. Even private families have become so luxurious and indolent in their habits as to refuse to grate their own horseradish, preferring to buy it ready grated. Thus there is a vast body of consumers, with only a limited number of growers. But it is used in other ways, in the arts, and for other purposes. Go into any market-house in a large city, and you will see men with machines grinding up horseradish for crowds of customers who come daily to be supplied with a few cents' worth. These apparently small operators do a very large business, for the pennies have a way of counting up into dollars that would surprise one who has never gone into a calculation.

"The facility of getting horseradish ready ground induces people to buy many times the quantity they would if compelled to grind for themselves. I have no idea that the business of growing it can be overdone. I have been raising it for twenty years, and have found that

the more I produce, the more I can sell. Besides, there is no farm crop that gives less trouble or pays better."

While this colloquy was going on, the boys had wandered some few paces away, and the Spanglers were examining the three acres with close attention, when one of the Allens exclaimed, "That's our acre, — we take care of that, — that's the way we pay father for our corn."

This piece of information was very satisfactory to the Spanglers. They had been wanting to know how the Allens contrived to feed their pigeons, whether out of their own crib or their father's.

Just then Mr. Allen and Uncle Benny came up, and the former said, "Now this outside acre of horseradish belongs to my boys and their sister. They take the whole care of it except harrowing the ground, but doing the hoeing, weeding, and harvesting, their sister helping them to wash it and get it ready for market. I think it right to give them a chance to do something for themselves. I remember when I was a poor boy, that a very mean one was afforded to me, though I wanted so much to make some kind of a beginning. All the money this acre produces belongs to them. They keep regular accounts of what is done upon it, charging themselves with the ploughing, cultivating, and also with what we estimate their pigeons will consume. All the money produced

from these two sources, after deducting expenses, belongs to them, and I put the most of it out for them as an investment, where it increases a little every year, and will be a snug capital for them to begin life with. I think it is about the best investment, next to underdraining, that I have ever made."

CHAPTER IX.

HOW TO MANAGE A PEACH-ORCHARD. — A BOY'S WORK-SHOP. — A CROWD OF POULTRY. — MAKING THE HENS LAY. — A BOYS' LIBRARY.

AS they strolled over the grounds on their return to the house, they passed a peach-orchard in its prime of bearing, which showed a surprising amount of bloom. The old man paused at the end of a row to admire the beautiful symmetry of the trees. They had all been headed in by an experienced hand, — that is, the extreme ends of the limbs had been cut off by means of a sharp knife set in the end of a handle about three feet in length, by which one half of the wood made the preceding summer had been removed. Even the topmost branches had been shortened in the same way, so that the fruit at the very top could be readily gathered by standing on a common chair, while the remainder could be reached from the ground. The trees, being thus deprived of all long, straggling limbs, were kept in a smaller space, and were compact and rounded in their outline.

As Uncle Benny had never seen this mode of pruning the peach-tree adopted by any other person, Mr. Allen explained the theory on which it was founded. He said that the peach-tree bore its fruit on the wood which had grown

the preceding year, and that much of this new wood was sent out from the ends of the branches. There was therefore a continual extension of these branches upwards and all round the tree, until they pushed out so far in search of air and sunshine that the limbs became too weak to support the load of fruit which grew upon their extremities. They consequently broke down under the excessive weight; the fruit thus falling to the ground did not ripen, and was therefore lost, while the tree itself was seriously injured by the loss of the great broken limbs which had to be cut away. It was the habit of the tree to produce too much, and the prevailing sin of the peach-grower was that of permitting it to bear an excessive crop.

The true remedy was to begin when the trees were planted. As the roots spread, so the limbs multiplied and extended. This extension must be arrested by shortening them every year, in the spring for instance, and cutting off at least one half of the new growth. The operation gave the tree a beautifully rounded head from the start, and there would be no difficulty in preserving the same compact outline. Of course this trimming removed one half of the fruit-buds, so that the tree would produce only half as many peaches as when permitted to sprawl away over twice the quantity of ground.

But this reduction of the quantity of fruit was exactly the result which every careful horticulturist would seek to

produce. What he lost in quantity he would realize in quality, and it is quality that commands great cash returns, not quantity. If he had fewer peaches, they would be three or four times as large and fine, and consequently would command the best price of the market. He would also have fewer to gather and handle. His trees would be all the better for being thus prevented from breaking down under an excessive crop, as the loss of a hundred tips of young wood resulted in no injury, while the tearing away of two or three old limbs was followed by wounds which generally went on growing larger, until the tree died before its time.

As regarded the superior quality of the fruit produced, Mr. Allen said there could be no dispute about it among those who had ever tried this mode of checking the excessive bearing propensity of the peach. A little reflection would convince any one of its reasonableness, even without having witnessed the result. Though the top of the tree was reduced in size, and the fruit-buds diminished in number, yet the roots went on extending, — there was no pruning of them. As they extended themselves in search of nourishment, so they accumulated it in proportion to the extension. This annual accumulation was sent up into the tree as the fountain from which it was to form new wood and perfect a crop of fruit. But though half the fruit-buds were removed, yet the volume of nourishment was as great as before. It would therefore pour into each peach exactly

double the amount of food it could have done had no buds been removed. The distribution of this over a full crop would only result in small-sized peaches, while its concentration upon a half-crop would bring the half-crop up to, and even beyond, the value of the whole one.

Turning round to Tony King, who, with the other boys, was listening to this explanation, Mr. Allen added: "Why, Tony, take your litter of pigs as proof of what you have heard. You now feed them tolerably well, I suppose; but if you were to kill half of them, and continued giving to the remaining half the same quantity of corn and swill that you had given to the whole number, don't you think those that thus had double feed would grow a great deal faster than they do now?"

This was a form of illustration they could not fail to understand, and they readily assented to its soundness.

"Well," he continued, "it is the same with peaches, and almost all other fruits, — feed them liberally, and you will have the best."

There were some three hundred trees in this peach-orchard. Uncle Benny, as well as the boys, was puzzled to know what it was he saw tied round the but of each tree just at the ground. His eyes were too old to tell without going up to one of them and stooping down to examine. On doing so he discovered that every tree was encased in a jacket of coarse, thickish pasteboard, which reached about an inch below the

ground, and stood some six inches high, just embracing all the neck or soft part of the bark at the surface. It was kept to its place round the but by a string.

Mr. Allen explained the meaning of this contrivance. He said that, very soon after he had planted his trees, he discovered that the worms had attacked them; and finding it a very troublesome business to hunt them out from the roots of so many trees, he concluded it would be much less labor to prevent their getting in, than to get them out after they had once made a lodgement. He therefore, after thoroughly worming the trees in the spring, supplied each with a pasteboard jacket, which his boys tied on the whole orchard in a day. The peach-fly was thus kept from laying its eggs in the soft bark at the surface of the ground, the only place it selects; and as no eggs were deposited on his trees, they had not been troubled with worms since he had practised this cheap and simple remedy. The jackets were put on in April, taken off in November, and laid by until wanted the next season.

Uncle Benny and his boys were surprised at the variety of new things they met with on this farm. As long as they tarried and they strolled, the novelties appeared to increase in number. Drawing nearer to the house, they passed extensive beds of strawberries, and long rows of raspberries. When they came to the outbuildings, Mr. Allen took them into quite a large room attached to the carriage-shed, which he

called the boys' tool-house. The visitors had never imagined anything like what they saw here. There was a work-bench and a lathe, with a complete assortment of carpenters' and turning tools. Most of them were hung up in places especially provided for them, or arranged in racks against the side of the room, convenient to whoever might be at the bench.

Nothing elated the boys so much as this exhibition of mechanical fixtures, — it was an epitome of a hundred aspirations. There were little boxes, rabbit-traps, and other contrivances, in the room, which the Allen boys had made for themselves, showing that, young as they were, they had already learned the art of using tools. The Spanglers looked round the room with admiration, perhaps with envy.

"Better than our barn on a rainy day," said Uncle Benny, addressing Tony.

"Yes, or anything else on our place," he responded.

"Now, Uncle Benny," said Mr. Allen, "I have somewhere read that there is in all men a *making* or *manufacturing* instinct. Our houses, ships, machinery, in fact, everything we use, are the practical results of this instinct. Boys possess it strongly. A pocket-knife is more desirable to them than marbles or a humming-top. They can whittle with it, — make boats, kites, and twenty other things which all boys want. Tools are a great incentive to industry and ingenuity. Give a smart boy the use of such a place as this, or a little tool-chest of his own, and he will cease to associate with the

rude crowd in the street among whom he had found amusement. He will stay more at home, where he will learn to do many little useful jobs about the house. He will be kept out of mischief. Let him make water-wheels, little wagons, toy-boats, sleds, and houses. The possession of a tool-chest will develop his mechanical ability. I don't know who it is that writes thus, but they are exactly my ideas. This is a busy place on a rainy day."

This work-room served a double purpose, as one side was devoted exclusively to hoes, and rakes, and spades, and other farming tools. The inflexible rule of the farm was, that, when a tool was taken out for work, it must be returned to its proper place as soon as the work was done. Placards were posted up behind the lathe and bench, bearing these words in large letters: —

"A PLACE FOR EVERYTHING, AND EVERYTHING IN ITS PLACE."

A little patient drilling of the boys in this rule made them obedient and thoughtful. There were no tools lying in odd corners about the farm, hoes hung up in trees where none would think of looking for them, or spades left in the ground where the last digging had been done; but as each went regularly into its place, so it could always be found when wanted. There was consequently no loss of tools, nor of time in looking for them.

The Spangler boys were also struck with the small size

of some of the farming tools. There were hoes and rakes and spades scarcely half as large, and not nearly so heavy, as those usually wielded by men. On taking hold of these, they could feel the difference between them and the clumsy tools with which they worked at home. The handles were thinner, the iron-work was lighter, and they felt sure they could do more work with these convenient implements than with the heavy ones they had always used. It was as much by the unnecessary weight of the tools that their young muscles were fatigued, as by the labor itself. Uncle Benny noticed the same thing in these, and admired the wisdom of Mr. Allen in thus consulting the comfort of his boys by providing them with implements adapted to their strength.

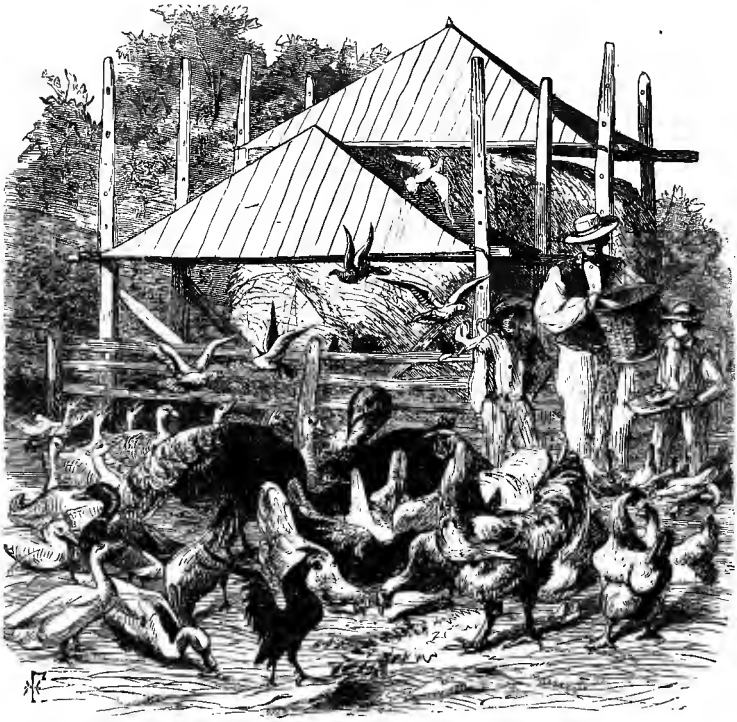
"If," said the latter, "we are ever to make labor attractive to our sons, we must be careful not to disgust them with it, by requiring them to work with tools so heavy that strong men only can handle them without breaking down under their weight. How absurd it would be to harness a man to a horse-rake, and expect him to rake up a hay-field with it. Yet half our farmers never take this matter into consideration, but act as if they thought a young boy could handle a clumsy hoe as comfortably as they do. I find it has paid me well to invest a few dollars in these light tools for the boys. They don't overtask their strength, and hence they can stand up to a full day's work without coming home so fatigued as to wish that no such thing as work had ever been invented."

The Spanglers followed their leaders out of the tool-house with evident reluctance. It seemed to have obtained a stronger hold on their affections than anything they had so far seen. The ownership of a jack-knife had at one time been all their modest ambition desired; then the possession of a tool-chest like Uncle Benny's would have gratified their utmost wishes; but having witnessed this profusely furnished establishment, their longings, like those of children of a larger growth, seemed to acquire intensity as the difficulty of gratification increased. That night they talked of tools until sleep overtook them in bed, and dreamed of them after it had closed their eyelids.

By this time it was so nearly sunset that Mr. Allen's great stock of poultry had congregated just in front of the company, knowing by instinct that, if bedtime were approaching, supper-time also must be close at hand. They knew well the young hands that fed them, and held up their heads in hungry expectation of the generous meal they were to receive. But the feathered crowd was so much larger than it had been a few hours before, that the visitors paused to inspect it.

There were chickens of the best domestic breeds, with here and there an uncouth colossal Shanghai, standing up on great clumsy legs, like a gallinaceous giant, overtopping the squat figures of the common fowls. An irate hen, impatient of the expected corn, would now and then, with sudden peck at some quiet but equally hungry neighbor, seize

a feather in the wing or neck of the unsuspecting waiter, and wring from her not only the feather, but a piercing cry. As this barbarous sport was constantly indulged in through-



out the crowd, a loud clamor of pain and spite and impatience rose up from among the hungry assemblage. The turkeys stalked at random through its dense ranks, holding up their

heads and looking round with a native gravity, although equally keen for supper, and once in a while plunging suddenly forward to escape the pinching lunge of an exasperated hen. Overhead, the pigeons sailed in a large flock, while many of them clustered on the roofs and eaves of the buildings which overhung the feeding-ground, too timid to battle with the turbulent and squalling crowd which now had it in possession, but ready to settle down whenever the gastronomic foray should begin. Altogether it was the busiest and noisiest scene of the kind the Spanglers had ever witnessed; nor did they know it was possible for Mr. Allen's farm to present it, so limited had been their opportunities of seeing even what their nearest neighbors were doing.

"How is it about eggs in winter?" inquired Uncle Benny, addressing himself to Mr. Allen. "Do you get any? Spangler has a breed of hens that appear to do nothing in cold weather but eat. They did n't lay an egg last winter."

"Ah, Uncle Benny," replied Mr. Allen, "he don't manage his hens the right way. Indeed, I don't know any operation of his that 's carried on as it should be, though his farm is naturally as good as mine. It is management altogether that makes a farmer, and mismanagement that breaks him. Why, I sent eggs to Trenton twice a week all through the winter, and eggs are high now, you know. I think they have more than paid for all the fowls have consumed;

— the boys have it down in their account-book, and could tell to a cent both how much feed has been eaten and how much money the eggs have brought. I don't allow them to receive or lay out a cent without setting it down. If they buy a fishing-pole or a Jews-harp it must go down in the book, for at the year's end, when they find they have spent so much money, they must be able to tell me and their mother *how* it was spent. You may think it a great deal of trouble to be so particular, and it was so to get them into it, but it is a kind of trouble that pays in the end. My boys thus learn early what they must learn some time, and what too many are never taught at all.

"Now," he continued, "others no doubt do better with their poultry in cold weather than myself. But my plan is to confine them in quarters that are roomy, airy, and kept as clean as a thorough cleaning once or twice a week can make them, with warm shelter from cold winds and rain. I am particular about letting them have only clean water to drink, and that always within reach. Then there is a full supply of broken oyster-shells, lime, and bone-dust, with ashes and gravel. All these are necessary to continued good health, and to keep off vermin.

"Then, as to feeding, they get every green thing from the kitchen that most persons throw to the pigs, such as cabbage-leaves, celery parings and tops, with turnip and potato parings. They also have boiled potatoes and Indian

meal, and every scrap of cold meat from the kitchen. It is not always there is meat enough, in which case I supply them with what is called chandlers' greaves, or cracklings, softened by soaking in water. Of this I give them as much as they want, never allowing them to be without meat of some description. I have often brought home a sheep's pluck, and, after chopping it up fine, given it to them raw. They devour these things so greedily as to satisfy me that meat, or animal food of some kind, such as worms, grasshoppers, flies, and other insects, is necessary to the healthy life of poultry. At all events, they never laid eggs regularly for me in cold weather until I began to give them plenty of meat."

"I regard your success as evidence of the soundness of your system of feeding," replied Uncle Benny.

"There is really a great deal of reason in it, when one looks into the subject," he resumed. "You see, Uncle Benny, that, when fowls range over the ground in summer, they pick up an almost endless variety of animal food, such as worms, crickets, grasshoppers, and flies. But as cold weather comes on, all this supply of food disappears, and it is very remarkable that as soon as the supply diminishes they begin to quit laying. When these rations are entirely cut off by severe winter weather, the supply of eggs ceases. The two results occur with so much uniformity as to satisfy me that the production of eggs is dependent on the supply of animal food.

"Every farmer," he added, "knows that hens do not lay in cold weather, but few understand the cause, or if they do, they are too careless to apply the remedy. I have learned to look upon a hen as a mere machine for manufacturing eggs. She may be likened to a sausage-stuffer. If you introduce into it no nicely seasoned compound of the proper materials, I wonder how it can be expected to turn out sausages? It is precisely so with a hen, — if you expect her to turn out eggs, you must introduce into the wonderful machine which grinds up worms and sheep's pluck into eggs some assortment of the materials that will enable her to project them regularly every day.

"Now the machine will certainly work, if you keep up its energies by giving it such food as it needs. Our stoves require twice as much feeding in cold weather as they do in summer, and I never yet saw a grist-mill that would turn out flour unless you put grain into the hopper. There is another curious fact which long practice in poultry-raising has brought under my notice; that is, that eggs laid by a hen well supplied with animal food are not only larger in size, but richer in quality. My Trenton storekeeper often tells me that my eggs are larger than any other winter-laid ones that he sees, and that they generally sell for a few cents more per dozen. All these odds and ends of pluck and giblets that my fowls get during the winter cost very little money. But in return for that outlay, look

at the result, — I really double the length of the laying season, adding the increase at the very time when eggs are scarce and bringing the highest prices. If it were not for this plan of feeding, I don't believe my poultry-keeping would pay much profit. To make poultry profitable you must exercise care. But can you make *anything* pay without careful management? If there be such things, I should like to know what they are."

"I think you have hit it this time also," observed Uncle Benny. "Whatever your hand touches seems to prosper."

"But most of these little variations from the practice of other farmers are not of my own originating," replied Mr. Allen. "I learned them principally from books and periodicals. From one I obtained the whole formula of how to proceed, while in another a mere hint was dropped. But even a hint, Uncle Benny, is sufficient for an observing mind. Some which struck me as pointing to valuable results, I followed up and improved upon to the greatest advantage. Now I have a treasury of these things, which I will show you."

He led the whole company forward into the house, and ushered them into a room which he called the library. There were shelves covering two sides of a very capacious room, filled with books, periodicals, and newspapers. The old man glanced hastily at the titles, and found that there were works on history, biography, and travels, with at least thirty volumes of different agricultural publications, showing that Mr. Allen

was a close student of whatever was passing in the agricultural world, keeping up, from week to week, with the wonderful progress which is everywhere witnessed in the art of tilling and improving the soil, and with the multitude of valuable suggestions and experiences which crowd the agricultural publications of our country. There were also pen and ink, paper, and an account-book, always convenient for making an entry when in a hurry. On another table, especially provided for the boys, were similar conveniences. In short, the whole arrangements and appliances of the room were such as would make them attractive to boys who had the least fondness for reading, while they would be potent helpers to such as were ambitious of acquiring knowledge. They gave unmistakable indications of Mr. Allen's mind and taste, showing that within doors, as well as without, his ambition was to be progressive.

Uncle Benny looked round the comfortable room in silent admiration, and determined in his own mind that he would make renewed efforts to put within reach of the Spanglers some additional portion of the great volume of current knowledge adapted to their condition. Even they were struck with the cosiness of the quiet room, the two older ones contrasting it with the comfortless kitchen which was their only refuge at home.

"This is a popular place for a stormy day, Uncle Benny," observed Mr. Allen. "This and the workshop are great

institutions on my farm. I am sometimes at a loss to know which the boys like best. But the variety, the change from one to the other, is a valuable incident of both. The workshop is excellent by daylight, but here they can spend their evenings, and here the whole family can gather together. It becomes, in fact, the family fireside; and there is no school so important as that. My children learn much at school, but here they learn infinitely more, — the cultivation of the affections, the practice of good manners, the lessons which are to fit them for future usefulness and respectability, and I trust for happiness hereafter. This fireside education is woven in with the very woof of their childhood, and it is such that it must in every case give form and color to the whole texture of human life. I never had a home like this until I created it for myself. Had I been granted the boyish opportunities that you see I am so careful to bring within reach of my children, I should have been far better informed than I am. There is no show about it; — show may be easily purchased, but happiness is a home-made article."

"I look upon you as an example," replied Uncle Benny. "Neither do I wonder at everything seeming to prosper that you undertake. Your children must rise up and call you blessed."

CHAPTER X.

HAVING A DOZEN FRIENDS. — KILLING A SNAKE. — CRUELTY CONDEMNED. — LECTURE ON A WORM-FENCE. — VALUE OF AGRICULTURAL FAIRS. — A RETURNED ADVENTURER.

THE party soon took their departure. As this was the first time that Uncle Benny had been over Mr. Allen's farm, he was proportionately surprised at what he had there seen and heard, and felt vexed with himself at having thus long overlooked so useful a school of instruction which stood open almost at his very door. But he treasured up the valuable hints he had received, and was ever ready to set before the Spangler boys the strong moral of the example they had so fortunately witnessed. The incidents of the afternoon formed the staple of their conversation during a slow homeward walk. Tony King had been powerfully impressed by them. They seemed to operate on his young mind as discouragements to hope, rather than as stimulants to perseverance and progress. He had let in the idea that the distance between his friendless condition and the prosperous one of Mr. Allen could never be overcome by any effort he could exert. In this frame of mind he suddenly exclaimed, looking up to Uncle Benny, "How I wish I had some friends to help *me* on!"

The old man stopped, surprised at this explosion of discon-

tent, and replied by saying, "Tony, you have a dozen friends without appearing to know it."

"Who are they?" he eagerly inquired.

"Hold up your hands!" replied the old man. "Now count your fingers and thumbs. There! you have ten strong friends that you can't shake off. There are your two hands besides. What more had Mr. Allen, or the little pedler who sold you that knife? They began with no other friends, no more than you have, and see how they have carved their way up. If you can't use this dozen of friends to help you on in the world also, it will be your own fault. It will be time enough for you to pray for friends, when you have discovered that those you were born with are not able to provide you with what you may need."

Before Tony could reply to this home thrust, a little garter-snake, only a few inches long, came running across their path, directly in front of the boys. Bill Spangler, observing it, cried out, "Kill him! Kill him!" and Tony also noticing the delicately striped little creature, as well as that it was hurrying out of the way as quickly as it could, instantly jumped upon it, and with his heavy boot stamped it to death at one blow.

Now, in most men, and certainly in all boys, there seems to be an instinct that must be born with them, which impels them to kill a snake whenever he happens to come within reach of boot or stick. If not a natural instinct, descending

to them from our first mother, it must be one of those universal propensities that boys learn from each other with the ready aptitude of youth, and with a sanguinary alacrity. It is another great illustration of the strength of the imitative faculty among our boys. It is of no moment what may be the true character of the poor wriggler that happens to cross their path, whether venomous or harmless: the fact of its being a snake is enough, and if they can so contrive it, it must die.

It was this propensity that caused Bill, the youngest of the three, to shout instantly for the death of the little garter-snake, and impelled Tony to spring forward, with sympathetic promptness, and stamp its life out. There was not a moment's pause for thought as to whether the creature were not in some way useful to man, nor had either of the boys been taught to remember that, even if a living thing were of no use, there was still room enough in the world for both them and it. Hence, no sooner had the snake come within sight than its fate was sealed.

Uncle Benny did not belong to that class of men who think themselves justified in killing insects or reptiles wantonly, merely because they happen to be disagreeable objects to look upon. The slaughter of the poor snake had been accomplished with so much suddenness that he had no time to interpose a good word in its behalf, or he would have gladly spoken it. The act was therefore a real grief to him, not

only from pity for the harmless creature whose body still writhed with muscular activity, even after consciousness of suffering had departed, but because it showed a propensity for inflicting needless pain on the unoffending brute creation, which he had never before seen developed in these boys.

"That was very wrong, boys," said the old man; "that snake did you no harm, nor could it injure any one. On the contrary, these field snakes of our country are the farmer's friends. They devour insects, mice, and other enemies to the crops, but never destroy our fruits. They do not poison when they bite. They are not *your* snakes, — you did not give them life, and you have no right to take it away. There is room enough in this world for all living things that have been created, without a single one of them being in your way. Now get up here."

Saying this, he mounted himself on a huge rider of Spangler's worm fence, and, when the boys were all seated beside him, produced a newspaper from his pocket, and, observing that he was going to give them an extract from a lecture of the Rev. Mr. Beecher, proceeded to read the following appropriate sentences: —

"A wanton destruction of insects, simply because they are insects, without question as to their habits, without inquiry as to their mischievousness, for no other reason than that wherever we see an insect we are accustomed to destroy it, is wrong. We have no right to seek their destruction if they

be harmless. And yet we rear our children without any conscience, and without any instruction whatever toward these weaker creatures in God's world. Our only thought of an insect is that it is something to be broomed or trod on. There is a vague idea that naturalists sometimes pin them to the wall, for some reason that they probably know; but that there is any right, or rule, or law that binds us toward God's minor creatures, scarcely enters into our conception.

"A spider in our dwelling is out of place, and the broom is a sceptre that rightly sweeps him away: but in the pasture, where he belongs, and you do not, — where he is of no inconvenience, and does no mischief, — where his webs are but tables spread for his own food, — where he follows his own instincts in catching insects for his livelihood, as you do yours in destroying everything, almost, that lives, for your livelihood, — why should you destroy him there, in his brief hour of happiness? And yet, wherever you see a spider, 'Hit him!' is the law of life.

"Upturn a stone in the field. You shall find a city unawares. Dwelling together in peace are a score of different insects. Worms draw in their nimble heads from the dazzling light. Swift shoot shining black bugs back to their covert. Ants swarm with feverish agility, and bear away their eggs. Now sit quietly down and watch the enginery and economy that are laid open to your view. Trace the canals or highways through which their traffic has been

carried. See what strange conditions of life are going on before you. Feel, at last, sympathy for something that is not a reflection of yourself. Learn to be interested without egotism. But no, the first impulse of rational men, educated to despise insects and God's minor works, is to seek another stone, and, with kindled eye, pound these thoroughfares of harmless insect life until all is utterly destroyed. And if we leave them and go our way, we have a sort of lingering sense that we have fallen somewhat short of our duty. The most universal and the most unreasoning destroyer is man, who symbolizes death better than any other thing.

"I, too, learned this murderous pleasure in my boyhood. Through long years I have tried to train myself out of it; and at last I have unlearned it. I love, in summer, to seek the solitary hillside, — that is less solitary than even the crowded city, — and, waiting till my intrusion has ceased to alarm, watch the wonderful ways of life which a kind God has poured abroad with such profusion. And I am not ashamed to confess that the leaves of that great book of revelation which God opens every morning, and spreads in the valleys, on the hills, and in the forests, is rich with marvellous lessons that I could read nowhere else. And often things have taught me what words had failed to teach. Yea, the words of revelation have themselves been interpreted to my understanding by the things that I have seen in the solitudes of populous nature. I love to feel my relation to

every part of animated nature. I try to go back to that simplicity of Paradise in which man walked, to be sure at the head of the animal kingdom, but not bloody, desperate, cruel, crushing whatever was not useful to him. I love to feel that my relationship to God gives me a right to look sympathetically upon all that God nourishes. In his bitterness, Job declared, 'I have said to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister.' We may not say this; but I surely say to all living things in God's creation, 'I am your elder brother, and the almoner of God's bounty to you. Being his son, I too have a right to look with beneficence upon your little lives, even as the greater Father does.'

"A wanton disregard of life and happiness toward the insect kingdom tends to produce carelessness of the happiness of animal life everywhere. I do not mean to say that a man who would needlessly crush a fly would therefore slay a man; but I do mean to say that that moral constitution out of which springs kindness is hindered by that which wantonly destroys happiness anywhere. Men make the beasts of burden, that minister to life and comfort, the objects, frequently, of attention that distresses them, or of neglect that is more cruel. And I hold that a man who wantonly would destroy insect life, or would destroy the comfort of the animal that serves him, is prepared to be inhuman toward the lower forms of human life. The inhumanity of man to animals has become shocking. I scarcely pass through the streets of

Brooklyn or New York, that I do not behold monstrous and wanton cruelty. There are things done to animals that should send a man to prison every day of our lives. And it is high time that there should be associations formed here to maintain decency and kindness toward the brute creation, as there have been formed in Paris and London, and almost all civilized countries except our own. Cruelty to animals tends to cruelty to men. The fact is, that all those invasions of life and happiness which are educating men to an indulgence of their passions, to a disregard of God's work, to a low and base view of creation, to a love of destructiveness, and to a disposition that carries with it cruelty and suffering, and that is hindered from breaking out only by fear and selfishness, lead to a disregard of labor and the laborer. The nature which they beget will catch man in his sharp necessities, and mercilessly coerce him to the benefit of the strong and the spoiling of the weak. And it is the interest of the poor man, and the oppressed man, that there should be a Christianity that shall teach men to regard the whole animated kingdom below themselves as God's kingdom, and as having rights — minor and lower rights, but *rights* — before God and before man."

"You see, boys," continued Uncle Benny, "what this gentleman thinks and says on this subject, and I trust you will remember, hereafter, that all God's creatures have as perfect a right to live in his world as you have."

There was a peculiarity of Uncle Benny's mode of correcting the bad habits of the boys, — he was careful to avoid a continual fault-finding. His idea was that rebukes should always be couched in soft words, but fortified with hard arguments, and that, to make censure most effectual, it should be mixed with a little praise, whenever it was possible to smuggle it in.

Somebody has said that, "when a fault is discovered, it is well to look up a virtue to keep it company." This was Uncle Benny's view of things. In fact, he was generally as careful to express approbation of good behavior as disapprobation of that which was bad. He believed that any one could do a casual act of good-nature, but that a continuation of such acts showed good-nature to be a part of the temperament, and that even a temper or disposition which was naturally sweet and equable might be soured and made morose and petulant by incessant fault-finding.

Hence he never was guilty of a regular scolding, but preferred persuasion, with an effort to convince the judgment by argument, and illustrations drawn from facts so plain that they could not be denied. His practice was thus found to be so different from the discipline of their father's kitchen, that they bore any amount of the old man's pleading and argumentation without ever becoming ruffled in temper or tired of listening. But his frequent readings were probably the most popular part of the many discourses he felt called upon to deliver to them.

When this last one was finished, they all got down from the worm fence and continued their way. It had been an eventful afternoon for the boys. They were continually speaking of the novelties they had seen, and wondered how it happened they had never known of them until now, though living only two miles away, and resolved not only to go again, whenever they had time, but to get Uncle Benny to take them to some other farms in the neighborhood, that they might see what was going on there also. They felt that they had learned much from this single visit, and presumed that visiting in a wider circle would be equally instructive.

Uncle Benny said, in reply to this, that he was glad to see they were thinking so sensibly, and to find that their curiosity had been sharpened. He would gratify it as far as might be within his power. He told them the way to acquire knowledge was to go in search of it, as neither knowledge nor profit came to a man except as the result of some form of effort to obtain it. He explained to them that it was for the purpose of disseminating knowledge among farmers that agricultural fairs were annually held all over the country. They had never attended any, but he would tell them that they were great gatherings of farmers and others who had something to exhibit or to sell. Thousands of people attended these fairs, some for amusement only, but hundreds came to see if any new or

improved machine was on exhibition, or a better stock of cows, or sheep, or pigs, or fowls, or a fine horse, or any superior variety of fruit or vegetables. If they saw what pleased them, they were pretty sure to buy it. At any rate, they did not fail to learn something valuable, even if they made no purchase. They saw, gathered up in a small compass, what was going on in the farmer's world, and this within a single day or two. Thus they accumulated a fund of knowledge which they could not have acquired had they remained at home.

On the other hand, these county fairs were quite as advantageous to the parties who thus brought their machines, or stock, or vegetables to be exhibited. Many of them manufactured the machines to sell, and so brought them where they knew there would be a crowd of farmers in attendance. It was just so with other articles exhibited. There were customers for everything on the ground. Even those who came to make sales were benefited in other ways. They made new and profitable acquaintances. This gave them a knowledge of men which they could not have acquired had they not gone to the fair in search of it. Thus there was an extensive interchange of information and ideas between man and man, for no one could be expected to know everything. Hence such gatherings as these county fairs were highly beneficial to the farming and manufacturing community; and it might be set down as a good rule,

that a farmer who felt so little interest in his business as never to attend an agricultural fair would commonly be found far in the background as regarded progress and improvement.

"Could n't you take us to a fair, Uncle Benny?" inquired Tony.

"Certainly," replied the old man, "if we can get permission."

"And won't we take Nancy and the pigs?" demanded Bill.

"Yes," interrupted Tony; "somebody will buy them and give a good price."

"Sell Nancy?" demanded Bill, with a fire unusual to him. "You sha'n't do it. I won't have Nancy sold."

"Well, never mind Nancy," responded Tony, "we 'll take the pigs and the pigeons."

"Not all of them, anyhow," replied Bill, almost beginning to cry at the mere mention of letting Nancy go, while the dispute went on in so animated a style as to fairly startle the old man.

"Stop, boys," he interposed. "There is time enough for all this. There is no hurry about the matter. The fair will not be held for several months yet, and you don't know whether Mr. Spangler will let us go. Wait a little longer, and I will settle this thing for you."

The mere suggestion of their not being permitted to go

to the fair was an effectual check to this unusual effervescence, and the whole party relapsed into silence. But from this they were presently roused by the near approach of a traveller, whom they had noticed for some time in the road before them. No one appeared to recognize him; but when he came within hailing distance of the company he took off an old cap, waved it over his head, and shouted, "Hurrah! Uncle Benny! Back again to Jersey!"

The party were taken by surprise, but when the speaker came close up to them they saw who he was.

"Why, that 's Frank Smith, sure enough! I did n't know him," exclaimed Joe Spangler; and then there was a crowding up to him and a general recognition and shaking of hands.

"Why, Frank," said Uncle Benny, "we 're glad to see you. Did you say you 'd come back to Jersey? But what 's the matter? What 's brought you back?"

"Got enough of New York, — sick of the dirty place, and never want to see it again," he replied. "Put me among the Allens once more, and blame me if you ever catch me quitting the farm as long as *I* live. I 'm pretty near to it now. How nice it looks! Tony, don't you ever think of going to New York."

Here was a most unexpected conclusion to their afternoon's diversion. The boy before them, Frank Smith, was a lad of fifteen, an active, intelligent, ambitious fellow, an

orphan nephew of Mr. Allen, who had been taken by his uncle, when only ten years old, to be brought up as a farmer. He had been clothed and educated as his cousins, but for two or three years his mind had been bent on trying his fortune in the great city. No persuasion could wean him from his darling project, and becoming restless and dispirited under what he considered the monotonous routine of the farm, Mr. Allen finally yielded to his importunities, and permitted him, the Christmas previous, to try for himself how much better he could succeed in New York. He fitted him out respectably, paid his fare on the railroad, and gave him a little purse of money with which to keep him clear of actual suffering until some profitable employment should offer. Thus equipped, he plunged into the great city, having learned no trade but that of farming, with only a general idea of what he was to do, and without a solitary acquaintance among the thousands who were already fighting the battle of life within its densely crowded thoroughfares.

He had been gone for months; but in all that time he had written but one or two letters home, and they said nothing that was encouraging, though they contained no complaints. The last one did say, however, that he would n't mind being back on the farm. It was clear, thought Mr. Allen, that he had been disappointed, and was not doing much. But as Frank had been told, when leaving home, that he was welcome to return whenever he had enough

of the city, no pressing invitation was sent, in reply, for him to come back. It was thought best to let him sow all his wild oats at once. His pride being strong, he could not bring himself to the mortifying position of admitting, by turning about and coming home, that he had committed a grave mistake, until driven to it by absolute suffering. So he held out until holding out longer became dangerous, and there he stood in the highway, like a prodigal son returning to the parental household.

He went away with new clothes, clean linen, and a robust frame. He was now shabby, dirty, ragged, and his features indicated slender rations of food. It was this changed appearance that prevented the boys from recognizing their old friend until he was close upon them. He had travelled all the way from New York on foot, yet his step grew lighter and more elastic the nearer he came to his old home. Of course there was a world of questions as to how he liked New York, what he had been doing there, whether he made any money, why he came back, and every other conceivable topic of inquiry that could suddenly occur to the minds of three raw country boys.

Frank was in no hurry to leave his friends for home, as it was now in sight, and he felt himself already there. Neither did he seem at all unwilling to give them as much as he then could of his adventures in the city, and so replied to their numerous inquiries as fully as he was able to. He

was a frank, open-hearted fellow, without a particle of false pride about him, and so admitted from the beginning that he had made the greatest mistake of his life in insisting upon leaving the farm. He even called himself a great fool for having done so. But after all, he thought it might be a good thing that he had made the trial, as it taught him many things that he never would have believed possible unless he had gone through them for himself, and was a lesson that would be useful to him as long as he lived.

Though in reality he had but little to tell that would interest older folks, yet to the boys his story was particularly attractive. Going into a great city with no friends, but little money, and without a trade, he could find nothing but chance jobs to do. The merchants and shopkeepers refused to employ him, because he was a stranger, with none to recommend him for honesty. When they found he was fresh from a farm, some said at once he was not the boy for them, — they wanted one who knew something. Others advised him to go home as quickly as he could, but not one offered to help him. He occasionally picked up a shilling by working along the wharves, but it was among a low, vicious, and profane set of men and boys, with whom it was very hard for him to be compelled to associate. Then he tried being a newsboy, bought papers at the printing-offices and sold them about the streets and hotels, and other public places. But here he met with

so many rebuffs, and was so often caught with a pile of unsold papers on his hands, that he found the business paid him no certain profit. The city boys seemed sharper and quicker, and invariably did better, some of them even saving money, and helping to support their aged or sick parents.

He went through a variety of other experiences that were very trying to a boy of his spirit, but, though exerting himself to the utmost, he made no encouraging headway. One of his greatest trials was being compelled to associate with a low, swearing, drinking class of people, and to live in mean and comfortless boarding-houses because they were cheap. He never had a dollar to spare or to lay up. It required all he could make to keep him alive. As his clothes became worn and ragged, he was not able to obtain better ones. Still he was too proud to write home what he was undergoing, as he knew he had brought it on himself, and that it was exactly what his uncle had said would be likely to overtake him. Yet he was conscious of gradually becoming reconciled to the low and immoral set around him, so different from those among whom he had been brought up.

One day, when in company with some of his associates, newsboys and boot-blacks, Frank saw a gentleman drop his pocket-book on the pavement. He ran instantly and picked it up, and was about following the loser to restore it to him, when his comrades stopped him, telling him he should do no

such thing, — that they had a share in it, as they were with him, and he must divide the money with them. The bare

idea of stealing had never before crossed Frank's mind; but now that it was suggested, with the property of another actually in his hands, which he could appropriate without fear of discovery, he felt the temptation to steal it come over his thoughts. But it was only for a moment. The early teachings of a virtuous home were not to be thus suddenly forgotten. Breaking away from his dishonest companions, he ran

after the gentleman and restored him the pocket-book, and was soundly abused by the others for doing so.

But Frank was so thoroughly alarmed by feeling that he had thus been tempted to become a thief, and so fearful that, if he continued to associate with thieves he would soon become one, that he resolved not to stay another day in New York. Even if he had had a hard time there, his integrity was yet sound, his conscience clear, and he meant to keep it so. As he owned nothing but the old clothes in which he stood, it was an easy matter to leave the city; so the next morning he started for home, with a few crackers in one pocket and a huge sausage in the other, but with the light heart of youth, made lighter still by the consciousness that strength had been mercifully given him to overcome a strong temptation. It was a two days' tramp even for his active limbs, but he went on joyously, and was never in better spirits than when he encountered the Spangler party in the road.

"But would n't you have got rich if you had stayed longer?" inquired Tony. "A great many poor boys in New York have become rich men."

"I don't believe it, Tony King," replied Frank. "Where there 's one who gets rich, there are twenty that go to the dogs, — that get drunk, or lie and steal, or sleep in boxes and hogsheads in the streets, and turn out vagabonds. I thought just as you think, that *all* the poor boys make money, and would n't believe my uncle when he told me that life in the

city was the worst lottery in the world. But I 've found it just as he said, only enough worse. Now, Tony, you want to go to the city, I know you do: you and I talked it over before I went, and you want to go now. But if you don't stay where you are, you 're a bigger fool than I was. You 'll never catch me again leaving the farm to cry newspapers and black boots in the streets. I 'm made for something better than that."

With this sensible admonition Frank bade his friends good by, and started off on a half-run for his uncle's house, as if impatient for the surprise which he knew his sudden appearance would occasion among the family. Uncle Benny was not sorry that his three boys had received the full benefit of Frank's experience of city life, nor could he regret the tattered dress in which he had presented himself before them, as, if it were possible for eloquence to be found in rags, every one that hung about him became a persuasive witness to the truth of the experience he had related.

CHAPTER XI.

MISMANAGING A HORSE. — VALUE OF AN INCH OF RAIN. — PLANTING A TREE. — VALUE OF SHARP HOES. — A TREE-PEDLER. — HOW PLANTS GROW.

ONE of the striking results of the boys' visit to their neighbor's model farm was the change of conversation in the Spangler family. When they came in to their meals, they talked continually of what they had seen there, and when out at work there was no end to the references to what had somehow become a sort of standard for their imitation. Uncle Benny was therefore careful to encourage all the good resolutions which his pupils seemed insensibly to be making, as well as to answer the crowd of new questions that were put to him at every turn. The boys could not help making comparisons between the general neatness of the Allen farm and the squalid condition of their own; and they were not slow in endeavoring to copy their neighbors, though their opportunities for doing so were not very great.

Farmer Spangler was of necessity obliged to listen to numerous discussions, in which his neighbor's superior management was so highly extolled and his own so much condemned. Luckily for all, Spangler was a man of few words, and hence was a capital listener. He very seldom replied to any attack on his management, — as much because

of his habitual taciturnity as from a conviction that was insensibly taking possession of him, that there must be some truth in what was said. Generally, Uncle Benny was quite moderate in his depreciation of Spangler's style of farming, as he was unwilling to give offence. But there were occasions, such as when he witnessed some gross departure from good management, or some example that would be really injurious to the boys, and then he would explain himself for Spangler's especial benefit. But even then he talked at Spangler over the boys' shoulders; that is, though he addressed his words to them, he was really intending them for the father. In this way he could drop hints in much sharper language than if he had spoken to the man himself. Spangler took no offence at these side thrusts, and rarely made any reply.

On one occasion, when the latter was putting a young and skittish horse to the wagon, he threw the harness suddenly and with great violence on its back, instead of gently placing it there. The timid creature, not yet accustomed to being harnessed, shrunk back and became quite unmanageable, and ended by treading on the wagon-shaft, which he broke in two. Seeing this, Spangler became enraged, and gave the horse a violent kick in the side. Uncle Benny and the boys were standing by, and saw it all.

"That will never do," said the old man, addressing the boys, but loud enough for Spangler to hear. "A horse

should never be kicked, or even punished. It is gentle treatment alone that makes a horse valuable, and cruel treatment makes him worthless. We Americans abuse our horses more unfeelingly than any other people, and control them

through fear of us instead of love for us. Even the unchristianized Arabs never abuse their horses, nor do the Chinese ever punish theirs. 'As obstinate as a mule,' is a common expression; but a mule is not naturally obstinate, but is made so by being educated to bad treatment. The

mule, which, in the hands of most Americans, would be not only useless, but dangerous to all who came near him, would, in the hands of a Chinaman, become quiet as a lamb and tractable as a dog. A vicious, jibing, or runaway mule is almost unknown among the Chinese, because of the uniform gentleness with which they treat them. They educate all other domestic animals by the same rule, securing obedience through the agency of love instead of fear. Cattle, pigs, ducks, and birds are equally cared for. These dumb beasts have sensibilities and affections as well as ourselves. Never let me see a horse kicked by any of *you*. A hired man who should kick *my* horse, or beat him with a shovel, as is often done, should be turned off immediately."

"That must be the reason why our Nancy and the pigs like me so well," added Bill Spangler when the old man had concluded. "I curry them up, and never scold them, and they come to me just like a dog."

"Yes," replied Uncle Benny, "the law of kindness operates as strongly on the brute creation as it does on human hearts. The man who is truly merciful will always be merciful to the dumb, dependent creatures around him."

This accident to the wagon-shaft delayed Spangler a whole hour in starting for Trenton, because, as he had but one wagon, the damage must in some way be repaired. It was so broken that nailing would not answer; so they tied the shaft round with a small horse-blanket, and kept that in its

place by ropes and straps, and with this unsightly contrivance Spangler drove off for Trenton. There was no real necessity for his going, even before the breakdown ; but then there was to be a vendue, or auction sale, of household goods and farming utensils, and though he had no occasion to purchase any of them, yet he thought it would be well for him to be there, "just to see how they sold." There are some people in this world who have a passion for attending funerals, and one of Spangler's fancies was for attending vendues, no matter how much home business he might neglect by going.

All this happened just after dinner, in the month of June, when there were strong indications of a thunder-gust. But off Spangler went, and, as Uncle Benny had expected, the gust broke upon him while he was on the road, and gave him a complete drenching. Of course it drove all hands into their usual refuge, — the barn ; and there they sat while the rain poured down in torrents. It was the first good rain there had been for two weeks, and was much wanted by the farming community. It poured down so heavily, and continued so long, that Uncle Benny observed, "There must be at least an inch of this rain."

"What is an inch of rain?" inquired Joe Spangler, looking through a knot-hole in the side of the barn, over a great pond that had been suddenly filled by the shower. "I should say it was a foot."

"Well, boys," replied the old man, "an inch of rain don't mean the water that is collected in puddles where the ground happens to be full of holes, but that which falls on a level all over the land. Now, when this shower is over, look into the bucket out by the pump, — I remember it was empty when the rain began, — and whatever depth of water you may find in it will be the extent of the rain-fall. This is what we call a rain-gauge; and it is by having so simple a contrivance at all times in use that observing men, who watch the clouds and the weather, have been able to prove that about as much rain falls in one year as in another. Thus, if we have long spells of dry weather, they are succeeded by heavy rains, and thus very extraordinary rains are followed by long dry spells, making the rain-fall of many years average about the same."

"But an inch of rain don't sound much, though it looks to be a great deal," exclaimed Tony King.

"Why, Tony," replied Uncle Benny, "an inch of rain weighs more than a hundred tons to the acre, and is equal to nearly twenty-three thousand gallons. A watering-pot must have a big nozzle to discharge that quantity in an hour, as the clouds often do for us. This rain will be worth a great many thousands of dollars to the farmers about here, especially if it should be followed by really fine weather.

"Fine weather," he continued, "is a wonderful thing for the farmer! — next among his blessings to the Divine

promise that seed-time and harvest should never fail. A single day of sunshine is considered worth ten millions of dollars to the farming interest of England in a season of doubtful harvests. There is said, in Europe at least, to be more war in a day's rain than in the ill-temper of the most quarrelsome monarch, and more peace in a morning's sunshine than even in a treaty of commerce; because people, having their time occupied and their stomachs full, have neither leisure nor disposition to quarrel."

"What can be the use of so much rain, Uncle Benny?"

"Use?" returned the old man; "it has a thousand uses. Water is the great nourishment and stimulant of vegetation. Some plants will seem to live on water alone, neither needing nor receiving manure beyond what nature enables them to gather from the water below and the air above. Take one of your corn-hills as an illustration. The cornstalk stands exactly where it grew. It spreads its roots all around, but does not change its place. As it cannot travel about in search of food, such as it may need must therefore be brought to it. Who is to do this? Not you, because you supposed you had done all that was necessary when you planted the grain. It is water, the rain-water, that performs this important office of bringing to the plant the food which has been deposited in the soil. A mere sprinkle will not do this; it must be just such a soaking shower as we are now having. Besides, water dissolves many substances which

exist in the air as food for plants, — so graciously has Heaven provided, — and then, when these are brought into the soil by rains, they there come in contact with another set of substances which the plants require also, and the whole being thus combined and liquefied with water, they constitute the very food by which vegetation lives and grows. The water, thus saturated with vegetable food, travels along under ground, feeding the plants which Providence requires to remain stationary. This is one of the great uses of so much rain."

The next morning being bright and sunny, the old man piloted the boys into the two-acre cornfield they had planted. On the way thither they passed under a fine Mayduke cherry-tree, then loaded with delicious fruit. The rain and wind had shaken off quantities of cherries, which lay upon the ground. These the boys stopped to gather and eat, spitting out the stones in every direction. Noticing their actions, Uncle Benny spoke up: "Boys, when I was in Spain, I learned a proverb which has been in use in that country for centuries, — 'He who plants trees loves others beside himself.' It means, that, as it takes nearly a lifetime for many trees to grow and produce fruit, the chance is that he who plants the tree will hardly live long enough to eat the product, and that he must therefore love those who are to come after him, or he would not plant trees of whose fruits they are more likely to partake than he. Now, when-

ever a Spaniard eats a peach, a cherry, or a pear by the roadside, he works out a little hole in the ground with his foot, and plants the stone; he thinks of those who are to come after him, — he loves others beside himself. It is a thank-offering to the memory of the kind soul by whom the tree was planted from which he has just eaten. Hence the roadsides throughout that beautiful country are lined with abundance of the most tempting fruits, all free to every one. Boys, not one of you has ever planted a tree. It is time for you to begin. I shall never live to gather the fruit, but all of you may be spared to do so. It is our duty to leave the world as good at least as we found it, — better if we can. I have no good opinion of the fellow who is content to snore under the shadow of a noble shade-tree without planting another for the next generation to enjoy, or to eat the fruit from trees which others have planted, without at some time imitating their example. The sooner one sows, the sooner will he reap. There, boys, right along the fence, two or three for each of you."

Each boy struck his heel into the soft ground, made a slight hole, dropped into it a couple of cherry-stones, covered them over, and pressed down the earth with his foot. It was certainly a very small affair, but it was nevertheless something for the boys. Each one could not help feeling that he had done a good deed, for he had planted a tree.

"O," exclaimed the old man, "what a country this would be if every owner of a farm would go and do likewise! The roadsides would everywhere be lined with noble trees, glorious to look upon, grateful in their shadiness, and affording bountiful harvests of delightful fruit, free to the passing traveller, and yielding a profusion even to the birds. There would be plenty of fruit for all. Even the thieves who now prey upon the fruit-grower would have no further inducement to steal."

Finding the ground too wet for hoeing, they deferred that operation for a week, when Tony ran twice over the cornfield with the cultivator, to mellow up the ground and cut off the weeds. Then all hands turned in with hoes to clean up the rows and give the corn its first hilling. Before undertaking this, Uncle Benny had brought a large file from his tool-chest, with which he had sharpened up the boys' hoes to such an edge as had never before been seen on Spangler's farm. The hoes were great, clumsy things, unfit for the hands of a small boy; but they shaved off the weeds with so much ease that the excessive weight of the tool was forgotten in the sharpness of the edge. Instead of two or three chops being required to cut up a stout weed, a single clip went clean through it. There could be no doubt that the trifling work of filing enabled the boys to get over two or three times as much ground as if they had been working with dull hoes. There was a

real economy of time in thus beginning right, besides comfort, and a thorough execution done upon the weeds.

The whole party worked together, each taking a row. Uncle Benny, having an old back, which he knew would very soon begin to ache if he should stoop much, had provided himself with a long-handled hoe. This enabling him to work without stooping, he flourished it about among the weeds so actively as to surprise the boys, who observed, moreover, that the old man contrived somehow to keep a little ahead of them all. Between the sharp hoes and the full force of hoers, the weeds had a poor chance of surviving that day.

Presently the youngest boy, Bill, while chopping vigorously at a thistle, struck his hoe violently against a stone. He was about repeating the blow, when the old man called out to him to stop and examine his hoe. Bill did so, and found a great indentation had been made in the edge. The other boys of course came round to see what was the matter, and they too saw how the keen edge of the tool had been turned by the blow against the stone.

"Now, Bill," said Uncle Benny, "pick up the stone, put it in your pocket, and when you get to the end of the row we 'll put it under the fence, where you may be sure it will not be likely to dull your hoe a second time. All of you must do the same with the stones or broken bricks or oyster-shells you meet with, as I won't have anything on

this ground big enough to dull a hoe. If you calculate on having sharp tools, you must keep the ground clear."

Such careful management was new to the boys, but they had equally been strangers to the luxury of a sharp hoe. Dull hoes, and plenty of brickbats to strike against, were regular incidents of their early agricultural education, and they now thought this new lesson of Uncle Benny was one of the queerest he had taught them. But they soon discovered there was something to be gained, for, on coming out at the end of his row, each boy found that he had three or four shells or stones in his pocket, all which were carefully placed under the bottom rail of the fence.

As all farm laborers have an hour allowed them for dinner, there was time, after that meal, for Uncle Benny to sharpen their hoes again. The morning's experience had made each boy a full convert to the new doctrine. Indeed, as they were taking up the line of march for the cornfield, for the afternoon's work, Tony inquired of the old man if it would n't be a good thing to put the file in his pocket and bring it along; — the hoes might want sharpening again before night. During the afternoon's work there was a good deal of slashing among the stones, and an occasional demand for the file to retouch the hoes, which quite pleased the old man.

Well, after worrying through some rows that were much fouler than the others, the parties drew up to the fence,

and Uncle Benny proceeded to file up the hoes for the second time that afternoon. He could see no actual necessity for doing so, but thought it could do no harm to gratify the boys. While thus engaged, with his hoe resting on the fence, which ran along the public road, a stranger stepped up, and inquired if he would like to buy some trees or grape-vines. At the same moment he opened a large book which he carried in his hand, and, resting it on the top rail of the fence, displayed a highly colored picture of a bunch of grapes, larger and finer in appearance than had ever been seen by any of the party. They all gathered round the book, as the man ran over the leaves with just enough deliberation to afford a full view of the magnificent specimens it contained. There were great bunches of peaches, apples, plums, cherries, currants, and other fruits, colored up and set off in just such a style as would be likely to tempt every one who examined them to become a purchaser.

Uncle Benny took the book in his hand, and made a long examination, during which the stranger was very lavish of his praise of each specimen as it fell under the old man's eye. Then addressing the stranger, he inquired, "Did you raise all these trees?"

"O no," was the reply, "my business is to sell them."

"Where were they grown?" inquired Uncle Benny.

"Well, a good way off," answered the stranger.

"But don't you tell us where they were cultivated, and who is the nurseryman?" continued Uncle Benny.

"Well, not often," was the answer.

"No," rejoined the shrewd old man; "I don't think we want to buy anything from a nurseryman who is ashamed of his name."

He closed the book, returned it to the stranger, and resumed his business of touching up the hoes. When the stranger was fairly out of hearing, the old man addressed the boys: "This man is what is known as a tree-pedler. Now, Tony, if ever you get a farm of your own, take care how you buy anything from a tree-pedler. Things sold by these fellows are generally considered cheap because the price is low. But what is thus called a cheap tree or vine is the very dearest thing you can buy. You can't get a really valuable article without paying for it a fair price. Plants that are sold at an excessively low price should be avoided, as they invariably have some defect about them. They have either been badly grown, or been stunted, or have a poor supply of roots, or they are the refuse of a nursery which has been bought up by a pedler, to be worked off among the farmers. Especially you should never touch a plant, even as a gift, when the seller refuses to tell you where or by whom it was grown."

"But that was nice fruit that he showed in his book," interrupted Tony.

"O yes," replied Uncle Benny, "they looked very well on paper, like many other impositions. They sounded very cheap also, — peach-trees at three dollars a hundred, when the price is usually ten or twelve. Now, suppose I were to set out a hundred of these trees, saving five or six dollars in the price, and, after cultivating them two or three years, should then discover that, instead of their producing the fine fruit that was promised, it was scarcely good enough for the pigs? There would be the loss of at least two years' time and labor, and all the money I had paid, besides the vexation which every one feels on discovering that he has been cheated. It would be even worse in the case of pear-trees, for there one has to wait longer for them to come into bearing. By saving ten cents in the purchase of a tree, he may find that, instead of the Bartlett he bargained for, he has been cheated into the purchase and cultivation of a choke-pear. It is the poorest sort of economy to buy cheap trees; and it is sometimes dangerous to get them, even at full prices, from persons in whose character you do not have full confidence. But there are others who think just as I do on this subject, as I will show you."

Taking from his pocket a number of "The Country Gentleman," he read to them the following article: —

"No man can obtain anything valuable without paying its full price. If he makes a purchase of a fine horse for a small

sum, he will probably find that the horse has some hidden disease, — heaves, founder, spavin, ringbone, — or else that he has obtained the name of a cheating horse-dealer, which is still more undesirable. If he attempts to build a house at a lower contract price than the builder can afford it, he will ultimately discover that a good deal of bad material has been used, or that he has a long string of extras, which, by dexterous contrivance, have been thrust in. It is so in buying fruit-trees. If a purchaser finds a lot offered at low retail prices, he will probably discover them to have been badly cultivated, neglected, moss-covered, or to have been carelessly dug up, with chopped roots, — or to consist of some unsalable varieties, or to have been poorly packed, or the roots left exposed till they have become dry and good for nothing.

"Now, suppose a purchase is made of one of these trees at five cents below the regular market price among the best nurserymen. The owner congratulates himself on having effected a saving of the sum of five cents. Let us see how much he is likely to lose. If the tree is stunted, it will be at least three years before it can attain the vigor of its thrifty compeer. In other words, he sells three years of growth, three years of attention, if it gets any, three years of occupancy of the ground, and three years of delayed expectation, for the sum of five cents. Or suppose the tree has been purchased below price because it is the last in a pedler's wagon, and has been dried or frozen. The owner pays for the tree, digs a hole, and sets it out; it will probably die, — in which case he loses only what he has paid, the

labor expended, and one year of lost time and expectation. He has gained nothing. If the tree lives, the former estimate will then apply. Or, again, suppose that he buys a tree, and saves five cents, as aforesaid, because the quality, or the sort, or the honesty of the dealer, as to its genuineness, may be questionable. After several years of waiting and labor, it turns out to be a poor sort, and the tree continues to bear this poor fruit for thirty years to come. The fruit, being unsalable, will probably bring no more than ten cents a bushel. In thirty years the average annual crop will be about three bushels, or ninety bushels in all, equal to nine dollars total value. But if, instead of this miserable specimen, the purchaser procures a tree at full price, and one of the most productive and marketable varieties, the crop will always sell in market at twenty-five, and sometimes fifty, cents a bushel; and for the whole thirty years will average at least eight bushels annually, — sixty dollars for the thirty years, at the lowest computation. There is a loss of fifty-one dollars made by purchasing the cheap tree, all for the sake of saving five cents."

While the hoeing of this cornfield was going on, there was continual opportunity for observing the difference in growth of that end of the rows which received the drainage from the barn-yard. The plants were double the height of the others, and there was a deep, rank green that was nowhere else perceptible. Here too the weeds grew taller and stouter, as well as more abundantly. Uncle Benny had

always taught the boys that the greatness of a farmer's crop was not to be measured by the number of his acres, but by the thoroughness with which he enriched his land and the care bestowed upon the crop. His theory was to put a large amount of labor on a small amount of land. The two-acre cornfield was an excellent illustration of his theories. The boys saw for themselves that in that portion which received the washing from the barn-yard they would have a far greater crop than from the other portion, because of the full supply of manure which it received. Whenever he came to a remarkably fine hill of corn, the old man would tell them that the earth was really of no great use except to afford a standing-place for plants while the farmer was feeding them, and that money laid out in manure must not be considered as money lost, because it always reproduced itself in the crop. He rarely gave chemical reasons, or used scientific terms, as the boys had had no knowledge of them.

But he explained how it was that plants acquired their growth. The earth kept them in an upright position, but they grew by feeding on the fertilizing materials added to the soil from water, and from the air which surrounded them. Both air and water were indispensable; hence the necessity for rain, and for the continued stirring up of the soil by harrowing the surface, so that the air should penetrate to the roots, and the water, in a heavy shower, should soak

into the ground, instead of running off and wetting only the surface. Thus, if the day's hoeing was useful to the growing crop, it was made equally instructive to the minds of the boys, for a practical lecture was delivered on the spot, with fact and illustration united. Lessons thus learned are usually the most instructive, as well as most likely to be remembered.

When the day's work was done, the old man sat down upon the stump of an apple-tree to rest, the boys gathering about him, and Tony asked, "Uncle Benny, how much money can an acre of ground be made to produce?"

"Ah," replied the old man, "you ask me too much. It would require a great book to answer that question, and even then it would be only half answered. I do not think the capacity of an acre of ground has ever been ascertained. You do not put the question in the right way. It is not the *acre* that produces the crop, but the *man* who cultivates the acre. All agricultural history is full of instances of this being the case. There are families who starve on fifty acres, while there are others who live comfortably on one or two. But another time we'll look a little further into this question, for it is one that a farmer's boy should have answered as promptly as possible. There are grown-up people, too, who would be benefited by examining the subject more closely than they have been in the habit of doing."

CHAPTER XII.

A GREAT BRIER-PATCH. — PUTTING IT TO GOOD USE. — AMAZING THE NEIGHBORS.

ON Spangler's unwieldy farm of a hundred acres there was a large piece of neglected land, which had long been known as the "old field." For many years it had been grown up with common wild blackberries, which so completely occupied the ground that almost every other kind of plant was smothered out. There were a few straggling grape-vines among the dense mass of briers, but these could not have survived had they not been able to climb to the top of the blackberries, and so get up into air and sunshine. Neither man nor boy had ever been able to traverse this immense thicket. Hence it was selected by the birds for building their nests in summer, and by rabbits as a hiding-place in winter. It was therefore a choice neighborhood for the boys to set their traps and snares, and many a fine stew for dinner did they secure by thus trapping its timid inhabitants.

One day in July, Uncle Benny and the boys were walking on the outside of this great brier-patch, and wondering at the immense crop of berries it was producing. The tall canes had shot away up above their heads, and were bending

down with a heavy load of fruit, forming, with the old canes, a tangled mass of dead and living wood, into which no one could force his way. They could reach the fruit on the outside of the patch, and here they stopped, and began to pick and eat. This the boys and girls of Spangler's family had been in the habit of doing as long as they could remember, without any thought of turning the great crop upon the "old field" to any other use.

"Boys," said Uncle Benny, "there is a good deal of money in this brier-patch, if you only knew it, all of which is now going to waste."

"What do you mean, Uncle Benny?" inquired Tony King.

"Why," rejoined the old man, "have them picked, and sent to Trenton market."

Here was a new idea for the boys to entertain; for they had all their lives seen the great annual crop going to waste. But they followed the matter up, and talked it over, until they finally determined to take the old man's advice. The thing had to be made a partnership affair, in which all the boys and girls of the family were to be equally interested; so the Spangler girls were enlisted in the cause, they agreeing to assist in picking the berries, if the boys would see to having them taken to market. As these young people very rarely had any spending-money in their pockets, the prospect of making a dollar or two apiece was a great

stimulant to exertion. If the boys wanted to buy any little notion, the girls were just as anxious to have some bits of finery for themselves.

The whole party were therefore up every morning by daybreak, picking blackberries. It was a rather scratchy

kind of work, as the briers upon the untrimmed bushes lacerated their hands, and tore a good many holes in frocks and aprons. Each picker strove to push himself into the patch as far as possible, anxious to reach the fruit; but the farther he pushed in the worse it was for him.

Bill Spangler, the youngest boy, as well as the smallest and most adventurous, had a particular ambition for creeping into certain openings among the bushes, and thus succeeded in securing more berries than the others. But on one of these adventures the briers unfortunately laid hold of the hinder part of his thin summer pantaloons, and maintained so firm a grip, that, in tearing himself loose, and getting fairly outside among the others, his sister Nancy told him that his covering was so ragged that she was ashamed of him. Even Uncle Benny, whenever Bill was looking another way, could n't help pointing with his cane at the fellow's rags, and laughing quite out; and as the others enjoyed the joke as fully as he did, they had a merry time over Bill's misfortune. The plain truth was, that several inches of Bill's shirt had escaped through a huge rent, and, abandoning its proper place of confinement, was dangling out of doors.

They secured, nevertheless, a large quantity of berries, as the "old field" covered full six acres, and it was a long stretch to go round it. Then they were able to do this three days during every week that the fruit was ripening. But it was very trying work, much more so than if the canes had been planted in regular rows, and trimmed and kept snug.

Uncle Benny had promised them he would see to taking the berries to market, and having them sold. This he did

faithfully, as he was anxious to do all he could to train up these young people, girls as well as boys, in habits of industry and thrift. The very first week's picking produced a sum so large that every one of the party had over two dollars to his share. Then the next week did even better.

It was curious to see how this unexpected acquisition of a little money affected these young people. It filled a great gap in the longing heart of Tony King. They were so unused to having any, that they scarcely knew what to do with it, and appeared to think the only use for money was to spend it. A dozen different schemes were formed as to spending, as the idea of saving had not entered the mind of any one of them. But Uncle Benny cautioned them not to be in a hurry, and to hold on to their cash, at least until they had done picking. Some had desired him to buy one thing or another in Trenton, and bring it home to them, but he never did so. He thought that, if they could be got through the first feverish excitement of success, they would be more manageable in future.

The great fruit-growers of our country, who cultivate from ten to twenty acres of the most valuable varieties of the blackberry, may smile at this small beginning of the Spanglers on a patch of common wild ones. But they must remember that the public never had a taste of these improved varieties until within a few years, and that, until they did come into notice, everybody was satisfied with

the uncultivated fruit that sprung up along neglected hedge-rows, or in such old fields as had been abandoned to them. These children were only doing in one place what hundreds of others were doing in many other places where a market was within reach. The consumers, as well as the pickers, were satisfied with this coarse fruit. Being thus a good bargain for both parties, the trade was kept up wherever the common blackberry was near enough to market.

There are sections of our country in which this business of gathering wild fruit is an important item toward the maintenance of many families. They look to the blackberry harvest as a certain income. Entire households, men as well as women, abandon all other employments, and take to picking berries. They need not carry them to the cities to find purchasers, but meet with wholesale city buyers at every railroad station. These pay cash to the industrious pickers, and forward the fruit to market, where it is retailed at a higher price. They have their profit, of course, but the pickers have a better one, because the fruit costs nothing beyond the labor of gathering it; and this division of labor and profit is sufficiently remunerative to keep the business going from year to year, notwithstanding the extensive introduction of superior varieties. If it were not for this division, it is probable that the great cities would be compelled to do without much of the fruit they now consume.

But this gathering up of wild fruit by poor families is not confined to the blackberry. The woods of New Jersey are annually ransacked for the huckleberry, of which astonishing quantities are collected and sent to market, producing very serviceable amounts of money to the industrious pickers. The wild cranberry is also gathered in large quantities by the same class of people. These successive harvests, which Providence bountifully prepares for those who dwell in huts and shanties on the borders of civilization, are as much depended on as are the wheat and corn crops of the most extensive farmer.

Uncle Benny knew all about these things, and was determined to make them contribute to what he considered a praiseworthy ambition of the Spanglers to make a little money for themselves. Some of the boys wanted books, and tools, and other juvenile notions, while the girls had a dozen matters of their own to be supplied with. He thought this "old field" might be turned to great account, and hence his recommendation that the boys should not be in a hurry to spend their money, as he had a plan of his own in relation to making the "old field" a really profitable affair to them. He was satisfied there was a fair chance by which to make the very beginning they had all been striving after.

When the blackberry crop had all been picked and sold, everybody on the farm was surprised at hearing that it footed

up sixty dollars, clear of all expenses. It was really so much money found; for though the "old field" had ripened probably fifty crops, not a cent's worth had ever been turned into cash. What the family had not picked for their own use had been taken by the birds or wasps, or perished on the bushes. Philip Spangler was particularly astonished at the result. He said it would pay a half-year's interest on his mortgage.

"Yes," observed Uncle Benny in reply, "I can make this brier-patch pay interest and principal too, if you will only allow me to do what I please with it."

Spangler readily agreed that he should do as he desired, and a regular bargain was made between them on the subject. Uncle Benny was to have entire control of the blackberry field; he was to get what he could from it, and, after retaining three fourths of the profit for the boys, the other fourth was to be paid to Spangler, who pledged himself that it should be applied to paying off the mortgage on the farm.

The history of this "old field" of six acres is so remarkable that it may as well be related now. It will be remembered that it was only from the edges or outskirts that any fruit had been gathered. All the interior of the field was filled with bushes nearly as productive as those upon the margin, but it was impossible to reach them. Uncle Benny made a calculation as to how many rows of canes he could make by cutting away open spaces ten feet wide from one side of the field to the other. He then compared the result with the length of

margin from which they had been picking, and satisfied himself, that, if that had produced sixty dollars, he could get a sufficient length of picking surface to make the "old field" pay almost as good a profit as was made on half of the entire farm. There was the ground already planted with bearing canes, and nothing more was needed than to transform it from a field of wild blackberries into a cultivated one.

He was satisfied that he knew how to make the change. He was sure there would be all the fruit he wanted, and that cultivation would cause the berries to grow larger and look nicer, and therefore to bring a higher price. Besides, he had quietly consulted the market-men in Trenton about what he intended to do, for he was a little in doubt as to their being willing to buy the immense quantity of berries he expected to have another year. He was somewhat uncertain as to there being mouths enough to consume his crop. But they all smiled at the idea of his being able to raise more than they could sell, and told him to go ahead, as they would take twice as large a crop as he could turn in. It seems that one of them was concerned in a great canning establishment, where thousands of quarts were preserved in glass jars for distribution over the country, and he was assured that this concern alone could take all that he might be able to produce.

This fear of glutting the fruit market is a very common one with people who know nothing of the business; but it never troubles those who have been a lifetime engaged in it.

Where to find a market occasions them no distress. Their only concern is how to produce the fruit, as it may be said to be all sold even before it has been grown ; that is, when one is located near a great market. Uncle Benny's doubts being thus dispelled, he went to work immediately by hiring two men for the job, who began as soon as the leaves had fallen.

As before said, this immense brier-patch covered six acres of ground, about twice as long as it was wide. He directed the men to make openings ten feet wide clear across the width, leaving a narrow row of canes. They went in with sharp brier scythes, and rapidly cut down everything before them ; though it was tearing and scratching work for hands and clothes, as many years' growth of dead and hard wood had to come away. Then the trimmings were piled on a cart, and brought out, and thrown into an immense heap, where they were burned. Then all the dead wood was cut out from the rows thus left standing, and the new canes were shortened wherever they had grown too high. This trash was also carted away and burned. When this thorough cleaning up and trimming had been completed, every row looked as nice and snug as any of the great fields of the improved kinds of blackberries which are now so common. Where vacant places occurred in the rows, they were filled by setting in new roots. The spaces between the rows were then gone over with a double plough, which tore up thousands of old roots, and this being several times followed by a two-horse harrow, it

loosened and released a multitude of others, — so many, indeed, as to require the mass to be raked up and carted away.

But when these several operations had been as carefully carried out as Uncle Benny required them to be, the whole field looked more like a garden than any spot on the farm. It was really beautiful to see how perfectly straight the rows of canes stretched across the field, and how mellow was the soil between them, not a root or weed being visible. It was with immense satisfaction that the old man viewed the complete realization of his plans. It took some weeks to carry out this regenerating process, besides costing considerable money, — all which he cheerfully advanced, on the credit of the next crop.

But he declared that the satisfaction he enjoyed at seeing a wilderness converted into a fruit field was compensation enough. It was a greater pleasure to him to spend money in improvements of this description than it could possibly be to others to hoard it.

Spangler had seen the operation going on, but said little, except dropping a remark occasionally about how much money it was costing. Improvement was altogether out of his line. But one day when Uncle Benny happened to be contemplating, by himself, this triumph of his ideas, he was suddenly accosted with :

" Well, well, what a spot of work this is ! "

Looking round, he discovered their neighbor, Mr. Allen,

who, until that moment, had seen nothing of Uncle Benny's operations on the brier-patch. He seemed confounded with the spectacle before him.

"Why, Uncle Benny, you beat me all to pieces! This is the completest piece of workmanship ever done in the country. I give you credit for your good judgment, as well as for your courage, and, what is more, this thing is going to pay. It is a big job, I know; but the more of it the better for you."

Spangler came up while Mr. Allen was thus speaking, but made no remark, though Mr. Allen's emphatic indorsement of Uncle Benny's work had its effect upon his generally slow perceptions.

"What a mass of manure you have in the bottom of this brier-patch!" he continued. "I have known it thirty years, exactly as it was before you reclaimed it. Thirty or more crops of wood and leaves have fallen and decayed on this ground, perhaps fifty; and, now that you have so thinned out the plants as to have only one to feed where there used to be fifty, you will need no manure for years to come."

But the fame of this undertaking spread all over the neighborhood, it being an unheard-of thing among the owners of brier-patches. Many persons came to see it, and various opinions were expressed as to what was likely to be the end of it. The principal anxiety was as to how much it cost. They could all understand about that, but

not one of them could see that the money expended could ever be made to come back. As to investing money in new undertakings upon faith, that was not in their line. Generally, they knew too much about blackberries; so that Uncle Benny never had the satisfaction of hearing that any one had pluck enough to follow his example.

But that absence of encouragement was of no importance to him. He had a mind and a will of his own; he did n't pin his faith on any man's judgment; he knew what he was about; he had a little money to invest, and it was of no consequence whether other folks approved of his doings or not. How far he was correct will be set forth in a future chapter.

CHAPTER XIII.

How the Pets succeeded. — Going to the Fair. — A Young Horse-Race. — Trying for a Premium.

IT must not be supposed that, during all this period, from spring to fall, the boys had neglected giving their pigs and pigeons whatever care they needed. The pigeons had long been released from their prison in the loft, and now went and came as they pleased. They flew away over the farm, picking up the seeds of weeds, and, so far as could be discovered, were doing no injury to the crops. Not one of the neighbors had complained of them. Even Farmer Spangler could find no fault, though he had so stubbornly resisted their introduction on the premises. On the contrary, he began to think they were very convenient things to have about; for as they had hatched out and reared several pairs of squabs, Uncle Benny had been shrewd enough to have the boys present a couple of them to Mrs. Spangler, who served them up in a pie for her husband's dinner.

This little stroke of the old man had a prodigious effect on Spangler's opinions as to the value of pigeons on a farm, as many of his seemed to be formed in his stomach instead of in his brain. Moreover, he was particularly fond of pot-pie. Uncle Benny being aware of this weakness, and know-

ing also that the most direct way to a man's good opinion is in the direction of his stomach, he thought the offering of one or two pairs of squabs on the altar of Spangler's appetite would be about the cheapest form of conciliation

he could adopt. But Uncle Benny is not the first person who has discovered the power of a good dinner in carrying a favorite point.

The boys kept their pigeon-loft as clean as possible, and

stored up a considerable quantity of manure that was almost equal to guano. The floor was constantly supplied with gravel, lumps of clay, or common soil, and salt. These were not needed for the older birds, which ranged over the farm, as they could find all such materials for themselves, except the salt. But such articles are indispensable to the health of a pigeon, hence it is better to provide them where they can be handy. In a pigeon-loft there are always some young birds called *squeakers*. These are such as have outgrown the condition of *squabs*, and, having all their feathers, have left the nest to run about the loft, without as yet having courage enough to use their wings out of doors. Such must be carefully looked after until able to fly out and shift for themselves.

Pigeons living a reasonable distance from the ocean, or from salt marshes, obtain salt by drinking freely of the briny water. They have been known to swallow snails for the sake of the materials contained in the shells. In chalky countries they pick up the chalk as it lies on the ground They are also very fond of certain fragrant matters, such as lavender, which they often break off, and carry to their nests. When these necessaries are not provided for them, they can be easily enticed off to some other home where such luxuries are kept on hand.

It is a well-known trick of pigeon fanciers to draw to their premises their neighbors' birds by keeping a good

supply of what they call "salt cat." This is made by taking a barrel full of loam, and converting it into mud by mixing up old brine in which meat has been pickled. Then a gallon of coarse sand, a peck of salt, and a little saltpetre. If some cummin seed or lavender is worked in it will be better; in fact, anything to give the compound a pretty strong smell, so much the more will it be relished. Then keep it under cover, and no birds can be enticed away to other roosts. Various preparations of "salt cat" are in use. some of which are very far from being as fragrant as an orange blossom or a rose. On the contrary, experience has proved that the worse they smell the better the birds like them.

So far the boys found it the easiest thing in the world to raise pigeons, as the rearing of the young gave them no trouble. Plenty to eat and drink, with constant cleanliness, was all that was needed. At six months old the new broods began to go in pairs, each laying a couple of eggs. In eighteen days after the laying of the second egg, the young were hatched. Thus their flock went on increasing, until it made a very respectable show when its members came down from their perches to take part in the several distributions of corn among the poultry; but they would have to wait another year before having any to sell.

It was not quite so encouraging with Nancy and the pigs. The whole brood, excepting three that died, increased pro-

digiously in size, as they were well taken care of, Bill continuing to curry them daily. To perform this now extensive duty more easily, he mounted an old curry-comb on the end of a long stick; and, taking both hands to it, he was able to do a great amount of currying in a very short time. It was laughable to witness the movements of the pigs the moment Bill showed himself and his currying-stick alongside of the pen. They ran, grunting, to where he stood, lay down on their sides, and waited patiently for him to begin operations. It was much easier to tire out Bill than it was to tire out them, for they never had too much of it. Every one who saw the pigs, even their neighbors the Allens, declared they had never seen such silken-coated animals as these, all occasioned by clean keep and regular currying. Uncle Benny one day told the boys that, if Bill continued to push them forward at that rate, he did n't know but he should think of taking them to the county fair, and enter them as candidates for the premium.

But the pen in which the boys had begun this operation of pig-raising was now found to be too small. So, as they had considerable money laid by from the blackberries, Uncle Benny told them they must use a portion of it in putting up a new pen. It was partly for this purpose that he had urged them to save it. It is true that he had given way to their importunities so far as to buy something for each, — one wanted a cap, another a whip, and the third would have a

parcel of books. He insisted on being the general cash-keeper, but required each one to have a regular account of how much he was entitled to, and how it was laid out. Thus, in addition to teaching them the importance of economy, he taught them the first lessons in book-keeping.

A quantity of boards being purchased, the boys quickly constructed a new and much larger pen. The old man had consented to their joining funds and buying a very complete set of tools; and, by help of these and his instructions, they succeeded in getting up as handsome a pen as any of the neighboring farmers could boast of, even before it had been well whitewashed. There was a covered sleeping-place provided, so that in wet weather the pigs could keep themselves dry; and a door, through which Bill could get in without climbing over the fence. Then the old hogshead was removed, the ugly patchwork fence taken down, and a thorough clearing up made of the ground. This resulted in a great collection of manure, which was added to a very respectable pile from the same prolific manufactory.

"Nothing like pigs!" exclaimed Uncle Benny to the boys, as he surveyed the huge compost heap. "They earn their living without knowing it. I must have some of this on our blackberries, — at least one row must be supplied with it, just to show you the difference between high culture and only half culture."

It turned out that Uncle Benny's remark about taking

some of the pigs to the fair had some meaning in it, for he now made up his mind that he would do so. He looked over the printed list of premiums for different animals, and found that whoever should exhibit the four best pigs of a certain age should have a premium of three dollars. Now, the amount was very small, and really not worth the trouble and cost of taking four pigs some ten miles to the fair, even if one succeeded in securing it. But the old man explained to the boys that there would be a great deal of honor gained by taking the premium. That was worth much more than the money. Besides, a premium animal always attracted great notice from those who attended, and it generally sold at a high price. Many persons went to such gatherings on purpose to buy fine animals; and, even if they failed of securing the premium, they still might get a good price for the pigs.

Well, as it had been already determined that the boys should go that fall to the fair, it was resolved to compete for the premium. So the four best pigs were put in a pen by themselves, and then began a course of high feeding that had never been practised on Spangler's farm. Uncle Benny bought from the Trenton butcher, about once a week, a barrelful of bones having considerable meat left on them, sheeps' heads and cows' heels, with now and then a pluck; and, in fact, whatever offal the butcher made. These he had boiled up into soup, with a sprinkling of corn-meal and mill-

feed, and served it out warm, three times a day; giving just as much as the pigs wanted, but no more. It was amazing what an effect this meat-soup diet produced. The pigs grew so rapidly as to confound Farmer Spangler, who had always been a poor sort of provider. They became fairly round with fat; and, when the proper time arrived, they were put into a wagon and taken to the fair, where the committee placed them in a pen by themselves, with this label, written in large letters, directly in front:—

CHESTER-COUNTY WHITES.

FOUR PIGS FROM THE SAME LITTER, — FIVE MONTHS OLD.

RAISED BY JOSEPH AND WILLIAM SPANGLER,

AND ANTHONY KING.

When thus disposed of, Uncle Benny and the boys strolled leisurely around the enclosure to see what other folks had brought. They naturally looked into the pig department first, but could find nothing that came anywhere up to theirs, though a large number had been entered for the prize. Uncle Benny declared that he began to think there might be a chance for their getting it. Then they wandered all over the grounds, examining the multitude of animals, of implements, vegetables, fruits, and other useful and ornamental things that were on exhibition. Uncle Benny pointed out to them the useful novelties, as well as the improved agricultural implements, and explained how they

operated, and why they were better than those they had at home.

The older boys were deeply interested in all they saw; but Bill Spangler broke away every half-hour, to run off and see the pigs. Every time he came back he reported to Uncle Benny that there was a considerable crowd gathered round the pen, some of whom were inquiring where Mr. Spangler and Mr. King could be found. These repeated announcements excited even Uncle Benny's curiosity; so he gradually edged round toward the pen, and, sure enough, there was a real crowd of people admiring the pigs! In the centre of the group he observed two or three fussy, important-looking men, with paper and pencil in their hands. These were the judges, who were just then going the rounds of the fair to decide as to who were to have the different premiums, but that important announcement would not be made until the next morning.

In the course of their wanderings over the fair grounds they came suddenly to a great open space, — a huge circle, surrounded by a low fence. On the outside of this fence an immense number of men and women were collected, all crowding upon each other to get a view of at least a dozen persons, in light sulkies, who were trotting horses at the top of their speed around the circle. It was a fine gravel road, made expressly for fast driving.

The boys looked on with the utmost enjoyment. They

had never seen such fast driving before, except when a horse was running away. Then they were in continual fear lest one sulky would run into another and cause a smash-up, they came so near together. Every now and then there was a shout and a hurrah from the spectators; and at the same time the women waved their handkerchiefs as if somebody had done something wonderful. Bill Spangler suddenly turned round to the old man, and inquired, —

"Why, Uncle Benny, ain't this a horse-race?"

"Well," replied Uncle Benny, "this is what the society calls 'a trial of speed.' Don't call it a horse-race, or some of the managers might hear you. I know these fairs would be dull things if no fast horses were to be exhibited, and I am afraid they are becoming mere excuses for horse-racing. But everybody seems to expect it. Look at the number of people who stand round this fence, gaping for hours together at nothing more than a parcel of trotting-horses, driven as fast as they can be made to go. At least one half of the spectators are women; and, taken all together, there are three times as many people now round this fence, enjoying the races, as there are on the rest of the ground. I think the managers should change the name of their shows, and call them the annual county horse-race."

But the boys soon tired of a display that had so little to

interest them; and, as it was now drawing toward sundown, they turned away, and started for home. It had been a somewhat tiresome day, as well as very hot and dusty, as fair-days generally are. Still, they had enjoyed it greatly, as boys, when bent on pleasure, do not seem to care whether it rains or snows, or whether the day be fair or hot or dusty, — all is about the same to them.

The next morning they returned, and found a crowd even greater than on the preceding day. The first place they visited was the pig department; for, as their treasures were there, so did their hearts yearn toward it. As they approached the pen where their pets had been deposited they found quite a number of persons gathered in front of it, some of whom were reading a paper which had been stuck on the post, and which read thus: —

FIRST PREMIUM, — CHESTER WHITES.

The boys hardly knew what to make of it, but Uncle Benny explained to them that they had really taken the first premium. Their surprise and gratification knew no bounds, while Uncle Benny himself did not fail to experience a degree of pleasure which fully rewarded him for all the care and trouble he had given to the undertaking from the beginning.

"Where is Mr. Spangler, the owner of these pigs?" inquired a well-dressed gentleman in the crowd. "I want to see him."

"Here he is," replied Uncle Benny, taking Bill Spangler by the arm, and bringing him forward, very much to his confusion.

"What, my lad, did you raise these fine pigs?" inquired the gentleman.

"Well, I helped to, sir," replied Bill.

"I want to buy them, and will give you ten dollars apiece," added the gentleman.

Bill was more confused than ever, and turned to Uncle Benny for relief, as the other boys had nothing to say, none of them being used to making bargains.

"You can have them, sir," said Uncle Benny.

"And cheap enough, my boys," added a voice in the crowd, which they recognized as that of their neighbor, Mr. Allen. "You deserve great praise for what you have done. I never saw finer pigs in my life. Do equally well another year, and you will get your names up."

The gentleman counted out forty dollars into Uncle Benny's hand, which he folded up, and put into his pocket. But if the taking of the premium had surprised the boys, the getting of so large a price really astonished them. But the old man afterwards explained to them that anything on which a great amount of care had been bestowed was generally sure to bring with it a good reward. He had no doubt it would be so with their cornfield, their blackberry patch, and, in fact, with everything else to which they might

devote their utmost care and attention. It was the painstaking boy or girl who went ahead, while the lazy and the slattern fell behind.

When the party reached home, and told Farmer Spangler that their pigs had taken the prize, and been sold for forty dollars, he was even more astonished than themselves. Uncle Benny was afterwards satisfied that from that very day he could see a change in Spangler's conduct and disposition. The success of the boys had been so decided that he could not help acknowledging it, and on every proper occasion showed a much greater willingness to take the old man's advice as to how things ought to be done on the farm.

But this was not the last of these surprises. The next day several persons called at Farmer Spangler's to buy pigs. They had seen the four prize ones at the fair, and wanted to have the same breed. So it continued for a week or two, — people were continually coming who wanted to buy. The whole stock could have been disposed of, even Nancy herself, but Uncle Benny declined selling. He told the boys that, now their name was up, they must go in for raising more.

CHAPTER XIV.

HARVESTING CORN. — TAKING CARE OF BLACKBERRIES. — WINTER SPORTS AND WINTER EVENINGS. — PLANTING STRAWBERRIES AND RASPBERRIES. — GETTING THE BEST TOOLS.

IT was manifest that this lucky pork speculation had the happiest effect on Farmer Spangler's temper. Heretofore he had merely consented to the various jobs which Uncle Benny had laid out for his party to do, and had never entered kindly into their plans, but had rather objected, more or less strongly, to their being carried out. But the result of their good management, carried on directly under his own notice, where he had a daily view of its progress, and turned to golden account, could not be overlooked, even by one who was so firmly set in the neglectful habits of a lifetime. Thus when Uncle Benny and the boys started off to begin husking, Farmer Spangler volunteered to turn in and help. With so strong a force as they now had, they made short work of a two-acre field.

But Uncle Benny made use of the occasion to point out to Spangler the prominent features of the crop; how that portion of the ground which had received the wash of the barnyard was of unrivalled excellence. The stalks that grew there had produced more ears, and of better size. Spangler had to admit that it was the best two-acre crop ever raised on

the farm. It measured up a little over one hundred bushels of shelled corn, — an amount that satisfied him the boys would be able to pay back all they had borrowed. Besides, it had been cut and stacked in the right time, so as to make the best quality of winter fodder.

This corn crop was, of course, a comparatively small thing on a large farm. But it was really something realized out of nothing, — that is, it was a grain crop produced where nothing

but a weed crop had been allowed to grow. It was really so much corn found. If Uncle Benny had not been about, there would have been weeds instead of grain. Its principal value consisted in the lessons of care, economy, clean tillage, and manuring which its cultivation had been the means of teaching the boys, to which may be added the powerful spur it gave to their ambition to do something for themselves. It was one of several subjects to occupy their minds, to think of, and to fill up spare hours agreeably, all having the character of home employments.

Uncle Benny's theory was, as before mentioned, that if a boy's home on the farm were only made attractive, he could never be induced to wander off to the city, or to other equally undesirable locations. He considered the hope of making a little pocket money was one of the greatest home attractions that could be invented, and he was desirous of proving that it could be realized in the country as certainly as in the city. Young people being naturally active, as well as unsettled in their views, must be provided with something to do, something useful, honorable, and profitable.

Spangler continued to assist until the corn was safe in the crib, and the fodder stacked about the barn.

"I don't know what you won't make of these boys, Uncle Benny," he observed, when the job had been completed.

"Why, Mr. Spangler," replied the old man, "these are men in embryo. I want boys to be boys, not old or wise too soon,

but giving evidence of being true to themselves and to the wishes of their friends. I like a rough-and-tumble boy, full of fun and spirit. But all such can be trained and taught to become, not only little gentlemen, but to be capable of taking care of themselves. These boys already show the coming manhood in their behavior, and if you do your duty toward them, they may live to be a great comfort to you. If you will let me have my own way with them, at least in some things, I think another year will make a far better show than even this one has done."

"Well, Uncle Benny, I begin to believe it," he replied. "I guess you 'd better keep on, and do as you like."

There were several little jobs about the farm which Uncle Benny wanted done before winter set in, as then the boys would be resuming their places at school. One of these was manuring a portion of the great blackberry-patch. He considered the clearing and cultivation of that patch as really a serious undertaking, something a little out of his line, and rather an experiment. He felt, also, that his character as a teacher of sound doctrine was somewhat at stake, and that on no account must he make a failure. The whole neighborhood was aware of what he had done, and expected to have a good laugh over the bad luck they had promised him ; for he well knew that most persons take especial delight in ridiculing whatever looks like a failure.

As to the bushes, he was sure they would produce a large

crop, as the blackberry may be said to be an unfailing bearer. But, in addition to securing that, he was desirous of ascertaining whether the wild berry could n't be very much improved in size by extra manuring. He thought it could ; and if that were so, his idea was that the increased price which the improved fruit would command in market would more than refund the cost of manure. It was so with other plants, and ought to be the same with any wild berry.

The boys readily entered into these views, taking it for granted that the old man was right. But Farmer Spangler thought very differently, and concluded it would be a shameful waste of manure. He did n't believe that taking so much pains with wild blackberries would ever come to anything.

But Uncle Benny carried out his project. Two rows received a heavy dressing from the pig-pen ; two others were copiously dressed with the green sand-marl which has achieved such wonders for every part of New Jersey where that cheap fertilizer has been freely used ; and two more rows were dressed with a mixture from the pig-pen combined with Baugh's Rawbone Superphosphate, — about a barrel of the Rawbone to three or four cart-loads of manure.

This Rawbone Superphosphate was an artificial fertilizer of which Uncle Benny had heard great things said. Mr. Allen had used it for several years with the best results, and gave it the highest character. All the other really good farmers in the neighborhood considered it indispen-

sable to success. It originated in Philadelphia, where it is still manufactured in immense quantities, and is made of raw bones, that is, bones which have not been deprived of their gristle, meat, or marrow by boiling. They are dissolved, or softened, in acid, and then ground up into a fine powder. Their powerful effects on most crops had been so thoroughly proved that Uncle Benny was determined to treat his wild blackberries to a good dose. He knew enough of agricultural chemistry to feel sure that a fertilizer of this character must necessarily be extremely serviceable to any kind of crop, whether wild or tame.

That winter the boys spent at school. In addition to all the ordinary topics of conversation which one generation of boys inherits from another, these had a variety of entirely new ones. Uncle Benny had allowed them to buy sundry things which few of their schoolmates had been able to obtain. Each one had a first-rate pocket-knife, containing several blades. Then they had beautiful modern skates, and a fine gun which was owned in common, with shot-pouch, powder-horn, and game-bag. They also had a variety of books, most of them full of handsome pictures; and then Uncle Benny had induced each of his three pupils to subscribe to an agricultural paper.

All these matters, except the gun, they frequently took with them to school, where, during the recess for dinner, they felt proud to exhibit them to their wondering school-

fellows, many of whom envied them the possession of so many nice things. They also had long stories to tell about their pigs, their pigeons, their corn, how many dollars Uncle Benny had saved up for them, what they intended doing with the money, and what a great profit they were going to have from their blackberries. When setting forth these things to their schoolmates, as they stood round the stove at dinner-time, especially when telling how much money they had saved, they were often interrupted with the remark, "I wish I lived with Uncle Benny," or "I wish we had Uncle Benny on *our* farm." These new ingredients toward boyish happiness made that the pleasantest winter they had ever known.

But their new materials for happiness did not cause them to be less attentive to their studies. Though they now and then shot rabbits in the woods, or hawks in the open fields, or spent a half-day in skating on the creek, or catching fish by stunning them with a smart blow upon the clear ice above them, they still kept up with their classes. In the long winter evenings Uncle Benny went over with them the lessons of the day, ascertaining how they progressed, whether they understood what they were learning, and explaining to them the difficult points.

This outside instruction from the old man was a wonderful help, and gave them confidence for their next day's appearance in school. Spangler's daughters shared in the

advantages of these evening lectures, while even their father would occasionally put in a word of inquiry touching some uncertain point. This mode of spending their evenings was a great change from what it had been before Uncle Benny took up his residence on the farm. Then it was all dulness and dozing, — now, it was all life and improvement.

Among the articles which Uncle Benny had permitted the boys to purchase was a set of chessmen. He taught them the game; and they, in turn, taught the girls. So fond did they all become of chess, that the board was in very general demand. To relieve this, he made a fox-and-goose board, and added checkers. When the lessons had all been rehearsed, and the difficult points cleared up, then the whole family devoted themselves to reading or to amusements. An abundance of nuts had been gathered by the boys for winter use; and these, with cider, sometimes terribly hard, were regularly served up. Reading aloud was frequent, both boys and girls being encouraged to improve themselves by practice. Then the long winter evenings were never considered dull.

Uncle Benny had insensibly remodelled the mental habits of the entire family. The girls had procured photographs of themselves, of their parents, and even of Uncle Benny. They had purchased some books, and obtained others from the Trenton library. The boys, too, had been

allowed to have their pictures taken. All these innocent gratifications came from the trifling fund which their industry on the pigs and blackberries had produced. But, cheap and unpretending though they were, yet they made home bright and cheerful. It was one of Uncle Benny's ways of making farm life and farm labor attractive.

A distinguished American writer says: "The training and improvement of the physical, intellectual, social, and moral powers and sentiments of the youth of our country require something more than the school-house, academy, college, and university. The young mind should receive judicious training in the field, in the garden, in the barn, in the workshop, in the parlor, in the kitchen, — in a word, around the hearthstone at *home*. Whatever intellectual attainments your son may have acquired, he is unfit to go forth into society, if he has not had thrown around him the genial and purifying influences of parents, sisters, brothers, and the *man-saving* influence of the family government. The nation must look for virtue, wisdom, and strength to the education that controls and shapes the *home policy* of the family circle. There can be no love of country where there is no love of home. Patriotism, true and genuine, the only kind worthy of the name, derives its mighty strength from fountains that gush out around the hearthstone; and those who forget to cherish the household interests will soon learn to look with indifference upon

the interests of their common country. We must cultivate the roots, — not the tops. We must make the *family government*, the school, the farm, the church, the shop, the agricultural fairs, the laboratories of our future greatness. We must educate our sons to be farmers, artisans, architects, engineers, geologists, botanists, chemists, — in a word, practical men. Their eyes must be turned from Washington to their States, counties, townships, districts, *homes*."

But though the winter was passing with them more pleasantly than ever before, yet it was with renewed satisfaction that the boys beheld the first indications of returning spring. Their pigeons had prospered, their corn crop held out famously, their stock of pigs had been augmented by a new litter of ten, and all had been kept so watchfully that they came through the cold weather in the best possible condition. The boys were thus in high spirits over what the future was to bring forth; their rainbow of hope being gorgeous in its tints, and stretching from horizon to horizon.

Their claim to the two-acre cornfield being undisputed, Uncle Benny had it ploughed up very early in March, as the frost had long since disappeared. Luckily enough for the old man's projects, Spangler was accustomed to keep on the farm so many more horses than he needed, that the former could generally have the use of a team whenever his little jobs required the running of a plough. He first ran it along

the corn rows, and loosened the roots; whereupon all hands turned in and gathered them into a cart, and then threw them into a pile in a by-place. They were afterwards composted with sods, by which the decaying process was started, under the operation of which a single year would crumble the whole mass into a heap of good manure, to which marl was afterwards added.

These unsightly corn roots being out of the way, Tony King was able to do the subsequent ploughing very handsomely. Starting with a perfectly straight furrow, he turned over the succeeding ones with beautiful regularity. As most of this section of New Jersey possesses a fine loamy soil, without rocks or stones, a smart and careful boy of his age can do as much work as a man. The field was then harrowed ready for the coming crop.

"What 's to go in now, Uncle Benny?" inquired Spangler. "Cabbages, I suppose?"

"Not exactly," replied the old man. "I can't afford to raise cabbages. A bushel of them is worth only half a dollar, sometimes not even that; but a bushel of strawberries, even at wholesale, will be worth six dollars, — twelve times as much. We go in for what will pay best."

"But we never raised strawberries here," rejoined Spangler.

"So much the worse for you. It is high time for some of us to begin," replied the old man.

So Uncle Benny had determined to plant strawberries and raspberries, an acre of each. Money enough had been saved to buy the plants; so they were purchased, and the ground planted. For the strawberries deep furrows were opened, five feet apart, which the boys filled from the great pile of manure they had saved, the value of which they were now able to understand. On this they scattered great quantities of the Rawbone Superphosphate before mentioned, until the surface looked as if there had been a young snow-storm. Then the manure was covered over by turning a furrow from each side; after which the original furrow was re-opened. This repeated working completely mixed up the manure and the Rawbone with the soil. The boys thought it more labor than was necessary, and Spangler thought Uncle Benny would never be done getting ready. But he warned them all, that the first condition for success in fruit-growing must be the proper preparation of the ground, and plenty of manure well mixed through the soil.

The plants were then set out by the boys, about twenty inches apart in the rows, Uncle Benny directing. He was too old and rheumatic to do this work himself, but he did the looking on very faithfully until the job had been completed. Afterwards, he had a single grain of the best sugar corn planted between every two strawberry hills, as is the universal custom in this part of New Jersey when a strawberry field is first set out. When the ground has been properly

enriched, it is considered a good practice, as the shade created by the growing corn is useful in protecting the young plants from the hot sun in a dry season, while the corn crop will enable the owner to realize a good sum of money at the same time that his strawberries are being established. A crop of sugar corn, thus managed, will more than pay the expense of getting the strawberries under way. This sugar corn produces a very short stalk, which is cut off and taken away about the time the runners begin to put out, then leaving the strawberries in full possession of the ground.

The other acre was treated exactly in the same way for raspberries, except that the rows were made six feet apart, and the roots set four feet asunder in the rows. The tops were also cut off to within six inches of the ground. Then sugar corn was planted all through the rows, the same as among the strawberries. This arrangement would secure, the very first season, a cash crop from the whole field, at the same time that the ground was being stocked with plants that would pay a much better profit the next season.

As may be supposed, the cost of plants for these two acres made quite a hole in the money saved from the pigs and blackberries. But the boys did not regret this. Their reasonable wants had all been gratified, and under Uncle Benny's exhortations they had lost most of their first itching for immediately spending their money. They had already begun to understand a little of the importance of saving. Besides,

when talking over this matter among themselves, Uncle Benny was particular to explain to them that this expenditure for plants, and for the indispensable Rawbone, must not be regarded as an *expense*, but only as an *investment*, — that is, something laid out this year to be returned with a great increase in a future one. He showed them that, if they had put out a hundred dollars at interest, they would receive only seven dollars increase at the year's end; but that if they invested it in plants and manure, as they had now done, they would be pretty certain to get the whole amount back in little more than the same period, and still have their plants, as well as the increase, and that this return would no doubt be realized every year thereafter.

Spangler heard this lecture, and observed, —

"Then you think the more money a man spends for manure, the better it is for him? Why, if I were to manure my farm as you do these two acres, the sheriff would sell me out."

"No, Mr. Spangler, he will be more likely to sell you out if you do not," replied Uncle Benny. "You will never get your farm out of debt until you make and buy a great deal more than you do. You are now trying the very worst experiment a farmer can, that is, trying to see how little manure you can get along with. If you would sell half your farm, and invest the money in enriching the other half, you would be much more likely to get along."

But Spangler was not to be moved in his old-time opinions by any exhortations of this kind. It was a greater satisfaction to him to think that he was the owner of a hundred acres of poor land, than to be cut down to only fifty, even if the profit were really more.

As this business of berry culture was a new one on the Spangler farm, and would require the frequent use of hoes, Uncle Benny was thoughtful enough to provide an assortment of new ones of the best quality, with nice, light handles, such as a young boy could labor with and not be tired out under their mere weight. They were fully equal to those Mr. Allen had provided for his boys. He also furnished each with a short, flat file, having a smooth handle and a broad end, which could be safely carried in the pocket, so that there never need be a dull hoe in the field.

When the strawberries and raspberries had recovered from the shock of being transplanted, and were growing finely, the weeds, as if determined not to be outdone, began to do their share of growing also. But the light, keen hoes which the boys flourished about among them made quick and thorough work whenever they poked up their unwelcome heads. The strawberries blossomed finely. Uncle Benny wanted all the bloom clipped off, as he said the plants, not having yet acquired new roots, would have too much to do to recover themselves and bear a crop of fruit also. But Mrs. Spangler and the girls pleaded so strongly

with him to let the blossoms remain, so that they could have a little fruit that summer, that he gave way and let them alone. But he was satisfied it would be much better for the plants to be prevented from bearing the first season. As it turned out, there was only a moderate yield of fruit, but yet quite enough to gratify the wishes of the girls. The truth was, that the old man relished his share of the supply about as much as any of the family.

CHAPTER XV.

THE OLD FIELD AGAIN. — POVERTY A GOOD THING. — GATHERING THE CROP. — A GREAT PROFIT. — STOPPING THE CROAKERS. — THE SECRET OF SUCCESS.

WHILE these events were transpiring on the two acres, a very different state of things was exhibited on the blackberry field. The plough and cultivator had been several times run over the ground between the rows, making everything clean and mellow, all which had been done by the boys; and now the rows were covered with an astonishing profusion of blossoms. From the long branches, which had been shortened in the fall, a multitude of shoots had grown out, and were now white with bloom. It was a really magnificent display, such as the "old field" in its former days had never presented. One side of it came up to the road fence, so that every one who passed by could look down the rows, and have a full view of how nicely the ground was kept, and of the great promise it gave of a bountiful crop.

Until this season the "old field" had been an eyesore to the neighborhood, giving token of the most slovenly kind of farming. But now it was directly the reverse. Still, of those who saw and admired the change, almost every one had a few words of joking for Uncle Benny and the

boys when they saw them cultivating or hoeing in it. The only neighbors who encouraged them to persevere were Mr. Allen and his sons. But such is generally the reward of agricultural effort in any direction different from the old routine. There are plenty to laugh at the pioneer, and few to encourage him.

One day when the party came up to the fence, at the end of a row they had just been cleaning, they were accosted in a very coarse way by a neighbor who was known to be the laziest and worst-mannered fellow in the township. He had mounted the top rail, and there sat until they came up to him.

"Well, blackberry farmers!" said he, "you begin poor, you'll keep poor, and you'll die poor!"

"You're a fool!" replied Tony King, with an energy that showed how strongly he resented the rude speech of the loafer.

"Hush, Tony!" interrupted Uncle Benny; "let him have his own idle way, and let us pursue ours. We shall see which of us will first go to the poor-house. Come, boys!"

Then starting on another row, they left the rude fellow to his own thoughts. After getting away down the row, clear out of sight and hearing, Uncle Benny halted the boys from their work, and drew a small book from his pocket. He had been all the time thinking of the sneer which the loafer had made at the boys being poor, as if poverty

were the worst thing in the world that could happen to them; and he was desirous of correcting any wrong impression that even this worthless fellow might have made upon their minds.

"Now, boys," he said, as each leaned upon his hoe, "this fellow you left on the fence seems to think the worst lot for a boy is to be born poor."

"Well, it's pretty bad," replied Tony King.

"But it is not so," rejoined the old man. "Let me read you what is said by a man who knows probably as much as all of us together. His name is Titcomb, and he has written a great many lively and sensible books. Now listen," and he read as follows:—

"If there is anything in the world that a young man should be more thankful for than another, it is the poverty which necessitates his starting in life under very great disadvantages. Poverty is one of the best tests of human quality in existence. A triumph over it is like graduating with honor from West Point. It demonstrates stuff and stamina. It is a certificate of worthy labor creditably performed. A young man who cannot stand the test is not worth anything. He can never rise above a drudge or a pauper. A young man who cannot feel his will harden as the yoke of poverty presses upon him, and his pluck rise with every difficulty poverty throws in his way, may as well retire into some corner and hide himself. Poverty saves a thousand times more than it ruins; for it only ruins those who are not particularly worth saving, while it saves multitudes

of those whom wealth would have ruined. If any young man who reads this is so unfortunate as to be rich, I give him my pity. I pity you, my rich young friend, because you are in danger. You lack one stimulus to effort and excellence which your poor companion possesses. You will be very apt, if you have a soft spot in your head, to think yourself above him ; and that sort of thing makes you mean, and injures you. With full pockets and full stomach, and fine linen and broadcloth on your back, your heart and soul plethoric, in the race of life you will find yourself surpassed by all the poor boys around you before you know it.

" No, my boy, if you are poor, thank God, and take courage ; for he intends to give you a chance to make something of yourself. If you had plenty of money, ten chances to one it would spoil you for all useful purposes. Do you lack education? Have you been cut short in your text-book? Remember that education, like some other things, does not consist in the multitude of things a man possesses.

" What can you do? That is the question that settles the business for you. Do you know your business? Do you know men, and how to deal with them? Has your mind, by any means whatsoever, received that discipline which gives to its action power and facility? If so, then you are more of a man and a thousand times better educated than the fellow who graduates from college with his brains full of stuff that he cannot apply to the practical business of life, — stuff, the acquisition of which has been in no sense a disciplinary process as far as he is concerned."

" Well," observed Tony, when the reading was over, " that

does me good. I think I feel better for it," and, in fact, there was a general expression in favor of Mr. Titcomb's views, which was continued at intervals during the remainder of that day's work. On the whole, Uncle Benny thought the rude taunt of the loafer had proved rather an advantage than otherwise.

But every seed-time has its harvest. So this care on the blackberries was now about to be rewarded. In July the berries had turned black, and were beginning to ripen. Uncle Benny had carefully watched the gradual swelling of the fruit as it approached its full size, anxious to know whether the cultivated berry would be any larger and better than the wild one. In these examinations he called in the critical eyes of the boys to know if they could discover any improvement over old times. The unanimous conclusion was that there could be no mistake about the matter, and that the berries were certainly larger and better.

Then as to the different manures they had applied. The two rows dressed with marl were excellent, as marl is well known throughout New Jersey as a valuable fertilizer, though not so quickly showing its effects as some other manures. Those dressed from the pig-pen were much better, while the two which had received a mixed dressing of manure and Baugh's Rawbone far exceeded all the others. The berries were fuller in size, and Uncle Benny thought they ripened a day or two in advance. These different manures having

been applied in the fall, the winter and spring rains had carried their fertilizing juices down to the roots, thus producing an immediate result.

A great many small boxes were procured, each holding a quart, and these were placed in chests or crates which contained some thirty of them. In this condition the fruit was to be sent to market.

It was really a fine sight to behold this blackberry field when it was fully ripe for the pickers. Both boys and girls turned in with hearty good-will at picking ; and to these were added a dozen other children about the same age, some even quitting school to secure the high wages that a smart picker can always earn upon a good crop. The price for picking being two cents a quart, it was an easy thing for the smart hands to earn from a dollar to a dollar and a half per day. Such pay, in all the berry neighborhoods, is a most important help to multitudes of poor families. During the fruit season the younger members quit all other employments and turn out as pickers, so that there is never any scarcity of help. In fact, Uncle Benny was astonished at the number that applied for employment. They seemed to spring out of the ground, and he was obliged to turn many away.

The old man acted as boss, or foreman ; that is, he gave out the empty boxes to the pickers, who filled and returned them to him at his head-quarters under the shade of a tree. Here he examined the contents, to see that no green fruit had been

gathered, and that each box was full, whereupon he gave the picker a ticket for every box; and these tickets being handed in to him when the day's work was done, each picker's account was quickly calculated. They all received their money, and went home rejoicing.

The boxes, when found to be all right, were placed in the chests, and, the lid being secured, they were ready for market. Having previously agreed with a fruit-dealer in Trenton to receive and sell his crop, nothing more was necessary than to drive a few miles, and the chests were in the hands of the agent. This gentleman charged a commission for the trouble of selling, and returned the net proceeds once a week.

Though only the common wild blackberry, yet, being put up in clean boxes, they brought a better price than such as came to market in dirty old tin pans and wooden buckets. Probably one lot tasted as good as the other; but the superior style in which Uncle Benny presented his to purchasers made them sell quickly, as well as bring more than enough advance in price to pay him for his extra care. It is pretty much the same way with all the fruit that goes to market; the careful man gets paid for his care, and a profit besides.

The crop produced nearly four hundred dollars clear of all expenses of picking and taking to market and selling. This result almost confounded Farmer Spangler, who had never dreamed of having such a gold mine in the "old field." He half regretted having given it up to its present management.

The news soon spread round the neighborhood, among those who had ridiculed Uncle Benny and the boys about their blackberry patch; for the old man took pains to let all the particulars be known, and the boys boasted of it wherever they went. They completely turned the laugh against the croakers. Some of the latter became so envious of their success as to wish that they owned the patch, or had one like it on their own land.

But though this large profit had been made, yet a considerable sum had to be refunded to Uncle Benny for expenses incurred by him in clearing up the wilderness of bushes into rows, as well as in providing boxes and chests. But these last were only an investment, not a mere expense. They would all be wanted another year for the same crop, and also for the other berries, and if the boys ever gave up the business, they could sell them for probably three fourths of the cost. And when these drafts on the sum total of profit had been deducted, there was still about two hundred and fifty dollars left. This Uncle Benny divided into four equal sums, one for Spangler, and one for each of the boys. He then took the latter to Trenton, where there was a savings-bank, and deposited every one's share in his own name. The boys went along, that they might learn how such things were done, as Tony said he did n't know but they might be wanting to make more deposits before long. They were all quite set up with the idea of having money at interest.

It was not of much consequence, in Uncle Benny's opinion, how small the sum was to each. What he valued most was the fact that he had succeeded in teaching the boys how to farm profitably, to save their profits, and to make a beginning in the science of thriving and economizing. He had allowed them to spend enough to gratify all their moderate wants, such as, when gratified, would make them entirely happy. It was simply the surplus that he wanted them to save, well knowing that, if not put beyond the reach of every-day temptation, it would soon be gone.

Now, Spangler's girls had made quite a snug little sum at picking, far more than they had ever had a chance of earning; for the young people on that farm had very few encouraging opportunities until Uncle Benny appeared among them. He did not undertake to interfere with the girls' money. But he observed that Nancy Spangler, the eldest, invested most of hers in dry goods of different kinds; and that the larger portion of her time was occupied in making up sheets, bedquilts, pillow-cases and rag-carpet, as if she soon expected to have use for them. He had noticed that a smart young farmer, who lived near by, came very frequently to see Nancy; and, putting those visits and Nancy's sheets and bedquilts together, he let in an idea that there must be something going on between the young people which would some day make a house as desirable as anything that dry goods could be turned into. Hence he did not venture to financier for Nancy. He

thought she was doing well enough, and that her beau could do what financiering she needed.

There was no denying it that Tony King was prodigiously set up about his share of the general profit; and it was noticed that, in talking to other boys about his good luck, he put on some strange airs of superiority, evidently showing that he began to think himself a little great man among those who had not been so fortunate. Uncle Benny once overheard him at this, and soon put a stop to it.

"I must tell you, Tony," said he, "that great men never swell. Mr. Titcomb says: —

"'It is only your three-cent individuals, who are salaried at the rate of two hundred dollars a year, and dine on potatoes and dried herring, who put on airs and flashy waistcoats, swell, blow, and endeavor to give themselves a consequential appearance. No discriminating person need ever mistake the spurious for the genuine article. The difference between the two is as great as that between a barrel of vinegar and a bottle of the pure juice of the grape.'"

Then on another occasion Tony wanted Uncle Benny to go in and have their brier-patch made three times as large, and they would make three times as much money. But the old man said he did n't know about that; he thought they had as much now, of different things, as they could well manage. They were only beginners, and must move ahead cautiously. He told him that judicious improvement or

enlargement must progress step by step, and not by great double leaps as he proposed. They must not undertake too much. If he had n't enough to do, the best way for him to occupy his spare time and thought would be to build up more compost heaps, as having abundance of them would be found equivalent to having twice as much land in berries.

"The fact is, Tony," said the old man, "you are like most others, — you want to undertake too much land. It has been long ago ascertained that one acre, under an intelligent and enlightened system of cultivation, will yield as much clear profit as five or six acres tilled in an ignorant and slovenly manner. Look at the farm you are living on. Why, our six acres of berries have paid a greater profit than any twenty of Mr. Spangler's. Wait until you grow stronger, that is, until you have acquired some capital of your own; and by that time I hope you will have learned to understand these matters better, and when you do go ahead, to go with moderation."

"Then can't we have a peach-orchard?" rejoined Tony.

"Not yet," replied the old man; "you have your hands full now."

"Then," added Tony with great emphasis, at the same time slapping his hands together, "I'll have a farm of my own!"

"Ah, now you 're getting on the right track," rejoined Uncle Benny. "Go on as you are doing at present, and I

have no doubt in good time you will have one. What is more, show yourself to be steady, industrious, honest, and obliging, and friends will spring up to give you a lift when you don't look for them."

It must not be supposed that, while these interesting incidents were occurring, the plants in the two acres devoted to berries were standing still, or that they had required no attention. On the contrary, they needed even more care than when the field had been planted exclusively in corn. Soon after the blackberries had ripened, the corn was cut and taken to market, where it sold for more than enough money to pay for the plants which had been purchased. Then in August the strawberries began to send out a profusion of runners. The Rawbone had evidently imparted an extraordinary vigor to the plants, as was shown by this ability to produce so vast a quantity of runners. Uncle Benny employed the girls to clip them off with scissors as fast as they appeared. This job had to be done once a week, during the growing season; but the old man had it done thoroughly. It cost a few dollars, but then it enabled the girls to earn a little pocket-money; besides, the old man felt satisfied it would be a good investment on the small field he was overseeing.

One day when Spangler was about beginning to husk out his corn crop, he came up to where Uncle Benny and the boys were standing, with an expression of considerable

anxiety on his countenance, and inquired of the old man how they expected to feed their pigs and pigeons the next winter.

"Last year you had corn," said he, "but now you 've got nothing but berries."

"Why," replied the old man, "we shall feed them on yours. We can't afford to raise corn. It is cheaper for us to buy corn than to raise it. I will take my one acre of strawberries, and next season will get as much money from it as will pay for all the corn you can raise on ten acres. You never yet had over thirty-five bushels to the acre, at a dollar a bushel; but I shall have at least eighty bushels of strawberries, and will clear five dollars a bushel from them. Now, how can we afford to raise corn? Do you think that *you* can afford to do so, when you are within reach of a great city market? You see, Mr. Spangler, everybody raises corn, but only a few persons raise fruit."

Spangler stood with his hands in his pockets, but said nothing, and Uncle Benny continued his lecture to an appreciative audience of four.

"You see, Mr. Spangler, it is not the quantity of land a man has, but the use to which he puts it, that makes him rich or keeps him poor. There is your 'Old Field,' which you put to growing briers, but which we put to growing berries, and you know the result. I told you it could be made to pay off your mortgage. If we had had an improved variety of

blackberry, such as the Lawton, our receipts would have been three or four times as much as they were. It costs no more to raise the best than it does to produce the poorest. But we took what we could get, and what no one else would have. Still, this shows what may be accomplished when a man is determined to make the best of circumstances. It proves, moreover, that there is sometimes great value in things which careless people neglect as worthless.

"Now," continued the old man, "if you were to sell half your land, pay off your debts, invest the remainder of your money in labor and manure, and change from all grass and grain to about twenty acres in fruits, you would only have half as much land to work over, and could save money every year."

"What! buy a thousand dollars' worth of manure?" inquired Spangler, drawing his hands from his pockets, and utterly amazed at the idea. "It would ruin me!"

"But the ruin will come if you do not," rejoined Uncle Benny.

CHAPTER XVI.

PLAY AS WELL AS WORK. — FISHING AND A FISH-POND. — A BAD ACCIDENT. — TAMING A CROW. — DON'T KILL THE TOADS.

THOUGH the boys worked faithfully in assisting their father, yet they had a full share of sport and recreation throughout the entire year. It was very far from being all work and no play. They were great hands at fishing with pole and line, and spent many a half-day on the banks of the creeks and ditches in the neighborhood, catching sunfish and catties, with now and then a good-sized snapper. They knew all the deep and shaded holes along the ditches into which the fish delight to seek refuge from the glare of an August sun, and hence were able to bring home many a dozen at a time. Though catching the fish was fine sport, yet there was the unpleasant drawback of being made to clean them. This was a dirty job, which Mrs. Spangler and the girls declared they would not do for them, but, if they *would* go a-fishing, they should clean all they caught.

Over at their neighbor Allen's, the boys on that farm had contrived to make a net long enough to stretch clear across the widest ditch. It was rare sport to go over and help the Allen boys to fish with this net. Sometimes, when the water in the creek was low, they would make long sweeps against

the stream, and haul up an immense number of fish. At other times, two or three of the party would keep the net extended across the creek, while others would get into the water a considerable distance off, and with great sticks would

thrash the surface as they waded up toward the net, making all the turmoil and commotion they could. This immense hue and cry would frighten the fish from their hiding-places, and start them off on a run. As the boys approached nearer and nearer to the net, the water was seen to be alive

with fish, — some leaping out to escape the net ahead and the boys behind, while some dashed back between the boys' legs and escaped, and others saved themselves by jumping clear over the net, now and then even touching the faces of those who held it. Though large numbers of fish were penned up in this way, yet the fishermen generally made light hauls. By the time they got the net up, the greater portion had made themselves scarce, and then the operation was to be repeated. But even if there was plenty of mud and a small amount of fish, still there was a great deal of fun.

They never did much at gunning, as Uncle Benny was too good a friend of the birds to encourage his boys at killing anything but hawks. On the contrary, he had induced them to imitate the Allens, and to make a number of small boxes for the birds to build in, which he had nailed up against the barn and about the house. It is true, they were rather rough affairs to look at; but the birds appeared to think them extremely convenient, for all of them had regular tenants. Then in the nearest trees they hung up a number of crook-necked squashes, with a hole in the lower end, and these also were all tenanted. To complete the assortment, Tony King one day nailed up a deplorably old straw hat against the side of the barn, and in a very short time a pair of wrens were found in possession. It was a much more homely thing to look at than either boxes or squashes; but is seems the birds cared nothing for looks, but a good deal for comfort.

It was cool and airy in hot weather, and hence was in constant demand.

Among other amusements, in the way of keeping pets, the boys established a little fish-pond by scooping out a wide surface of low ground through which there was a lively brook, and by raising a dam at the lower end. This made the water some two feet deep. They had seen in one of the shop windows, at Trenton, a glass globe containing gold-fish, and were so struck with the beauty of the sight, that they resolved to have gold-fish of their own, and therefore went to work and prepared the pond. On going to buy the fish, they found the price was three dollars a pair. But, high as it was, they made the purchase, and placed them in the pond.

It was astonishing to see how rapidly they multiplied; for in a large warm-water pond like this they breed much faster than in cold, deep water. The boys noticed that their gold-fish changed color three times, — the young ones being black, then gradually turning to a crimson gold color, then becoming white or pearl-color, and, lastly, becoming white all over. Some, however, did not change at all, but retained their original black. They proved themselves to be extremely hardy, living and multiplying whether the water became very warm in summer, or whether frozen over in winter. In process of time the pond fairly swarmed with them, until the boys enlarged its dimensions by scooping it

out to twice the original size. They frequently amused themselves with feeding them, until the fish became perfectly tame. Bill Spangler, who seemed to be more fond of pets than the others, taught them to rise to the surface of the water by drumming on a piece of board. On such occasions their great broad sides, on a bright summer day, could be seen glistening in the sun all over the pond. They took food readily as it was thrown to them, such as crumbs of bread or crackers, dough, worms, or grasshoppers.

Their pond of gold-fish became so great a curiosity that the neighbors came from far and near to see it, though it never was a source of much profit. Uncle Benny considered it a recreation as well as a study, and about the cheapest amusement that could have been devised. It cost only a little labor to establish it, and was a permanent object of interest.

But their amusements were not always exempt from accidents. One day when the boys were waiting near the barn for the first music of the dinner-horn, Bill Spangler thought he would amuse himself a few minutes, by way of filling up time, with currying up the pigs. Taking up his long stick with the old curry-comb on one end of it, he reached over the side of the pen to begin operations. But he had scarcely begun to scratch among his pets, when his eye lighted on a strange animal squatting down in a corner of the pen. Bill had never before seen such a creature, and

did not know what it was. He thought it a beautiful little thing, — about a foot long, of dark color, with whitish stripes running down its back, a bushy tail, and short legs. Bill gazed and wondered, and stopped currying the pigs. It presently occurred to him that he would stir up the strange animal with his curry-comb, to learn a little more about what it was. So, reaching over to where it lay, he began poking at it quite vigorously.

The beautiful little stranger was very far from relishing this unceremonious kind of treatment, and, making a sudden jump round, presented his tail to Bill instead of his head. This so amused Bill that he poked a little harder, expecting another equally funny movement. But, in place of anything to laugh at, the animal suddenly discharged at Bill a stream of something worse than any brimstone he had ever smelt. It seemed to have taken direct aim at his face. The poor boy was half stifled. He thought, at the moment, that at some time or other he had encountered all kinds of loud smells, but was now satisfied that this was the loudest and most terrible of all. Everything around him seemed to turn blue, — his eyes were half blinded, and he began to feel like vomiting. What became of the animal he neither knew nor cared, having worse things to think of. In his terrible distress he set off for the house. The horn had blown for dinner, but Bill had not heard it; and, as to appetite, it had vanished.

He entered the door with his hands over his face, sobbing and crying, and found the family at dinner. Instantly every one dropped his knife, and began snuffing. Then a sudden puff of wind came in at the door, and the whole dinner-party started up as if they also had had brimstone put under their noses, at the same time uttering all sorts of cries. The girls ran out of doors with their aprons over their faces, and Mrs. Spangler screamed out,—

"Where have you been? What 's the matter with you?"

"O, I don't know," replied Bill, crying louder than before.

"Get out of the house!" exclaimed his mother. "What on earth ails you?"

"Not much, I guess," replied the father, quietly. "Fighting with something, I reckon."

"Yes," added Uncle Benny, "fighting a skunk!" and the old man, in spite of the smothering atmosphere that now filled all that part of the house, sat down, and laughed so heartily as to rouse the anger of Mrs. Spangler even to telling him he had better clear out also.

The fact was, every one was glad to get out into the open air without waiting to be told. It was also too true that Bill had been amusing himself with that most dangerous rural plaything, a skunk, and had suffered the terrible baptism which invariably follows the indulgence of such a recreation. Severe as it is, it somehow never fails to draw forth the ridicule of all witnesses, while it but rarely excites the sympathy of any.

But an onslaught of this kind is experienced by many country boys at some period of their lives. Those who courageously creep under barns in search of eggs are often driven out upon the double quick, feet foremost, by attacks of this kind, getting so much more than they bargained for as never to have pluck enough to risk a second skirmish with such an enemy. Then at night, when walking along a narrow path, or in the open yard around the house, the unseen enemy lies in wait, and instead of getting out of the way, as a civilly disposed skunk should, he spitefully bespatters the wayfarer with a sort of voluntary malignancy, and then takes to his heels, — an example which his mortified victim is certain to imitate.

Uncle Benny, undismayed in the midst of the general family stampede, made out to rally the two boys to poor Bill's rescue. They made him strip off his clothes and squat down under the pump, where they gave him a copious shower-bath. Then, getting him into a tub of water, he underwent a thorough scrubbing with soap, especially his hair, which seemed to have received a large portion of the disagreeable shock. These ablutions did some good, of course, in the way of purification; but they were far from fully repairing damages. As to his clothes, his father said the only thing to be done with them was to bury them in the ground for at least two weeks, and this he did. He professed to know all about skunks, and so the clothes went two feet under ground.

Not one of the family could eat a mouthful during the remainder of that day, as there was a general complaint of being sick at the stomach. Even in their sleep that night several of them dreamed of smelling brimstone. Some neighbors who dropped in a few days afterwards wondered whether the family had n't been dining on the worst kind of sour-crout. As to poor Bill, every one gave him a wide berth for weeks, and many were the jokes at his expense. He kept exceedingly shy of the pigpen, as it was now dangerous ground, and called up the most unpleasant memories.

"I'll kill him the next time!" exclaimed Bill a day or two after his shower-bath under the pump.

"Ah," replied Uncle Benny, "nobody seems to have a good word for the skunk. Every man's hand is against him, just as it is against the snakes, and now he has grown to be a scarce article all over the country. It is true that none of us want so dangerous a playfellow, but, then, even the skunk was not created in vain. He has a mission in this world, like ourselves. He is one of the many friends the farmer has without knowing it. He devours beetles, crickets, grasshoppers, mice, and other vermin. I know that he occasionally snaps up a chicken, but very rarely. Let him alone, and he will keep the garden tolerably clear of destructive insects, and charge you nothing for it. If you do not trouble him, he will seldom trouble you."

"I don't think so, Uncle Benny," replied Bill, drawing a long breath.

"Well," added the old man, "when next you meet one, don't offer to shake hands with him, and you will be safe."

But this little accident taught Bill Spangler caution; and ever afterwards, when going about the premises, he could not help keeping a sharp lookout for essence-pedlers in the shape of suspicious animals with pretty white stripes down the back.

Besides the gold-fish there was another curious pet upon the farm. This was a young crow, which one day fell near the kitchen door, having its wing wounded by a shot. The general spite against the crow would have led most young persons to kill it on the spot; but in this case the girls took charge of it, and coddled it up with extreme care until the wing had healed, by which time it had become almost as tame as the cat, and showed no disposition to fly away. It was a queer sight to observe the crow stalking about the yard among the chickens and pigeons, claiming his share of the good things going round. The pigeons were prodigiously afraid of him, and generally kept at a respectful distance. But though the chickens did not seem to fear him, yet they evidently considered him an intruder, and picked off a feather or two whenever he came within striking distance.

If no great ornament to the premises, yet he proved really

useful. He would stalk into the garden, with daily regularity, and took upon himself the whole business of exterminating the squash-bugs, beetles, grubs, and other destructive insects, until all had disappeared. The family never raised such abundant crops of cucumbers and melons as they did while the crow thus stood sentinel over the garden. To the small birds about the premises he was a regular scarecrow; all except the kingbird being very much afraid of him, though he never condescended to attack them. But the kingbird seemed to have an unconquerable spite against him, and would often pounce down upon his back, attacking him so vigorously as to compel him to fly off and hide under a currant-bush in the garden, or in the tall grass around the fish-pond. With both boys and girls he was wonderfully intimate. In warm weather he generally roosted under the wood-shed, and in winter the girls brought him into the kitchen, where he had a regular roost in the chimney corner; and he would walk up and mount upon it with a quiet gravity that every one was amused at witnessing. The two house-cats invariably got up and moved off to another corner, whenever they saw the crow marching up to his roost. But such is the character of our common crow. He is naturally a most intelligent bird, and, when kindly treated, can be domesticated without any difficulty.

This taming of the wounded crow was one of Uncle Benny's devices for cultivating the affections, and teaching

the boys a habit of kindness towards inferior creatures. He was always on the lookout for opportunities for impressing upon them the duty of forbearance from cruelty or violence to such. He one day caught Tony throwing stones at a couple of toads in the garden, and forthwith ordered him to stop. But Tony replied that they were of no use, and ought to be killed, — he did n't like them. The old man, sitting down on the frame of a hotbed that was close at hand, and telling Tony to take a seat beside him, drew a paper from his pocket, and read to him the following brief lecture, though he did not know the author's name: —

"It is idle to talk about useless animals. All are useful, and many that we despise are necessary to man. Even the common house-flies should be ranked among the best friends of man. All dead and decaying matter, which is most abundant in the hottest weather, is detrimental to human health and life. Swarms of flies rapidly convert this matter into living, healthy substance, and thus purify the atmosphere, and make our dwellings habitable. These ever-busy workers are actually essential, particularly in the dirtiest portions of cities. They destroy immense quantities of pestilence-breeding impurities. Their busy motions pertain to life. With death come foul odors, which flies consume and convert to life and motion. They are the real sanitary inspectors of our dwellings, and abaters of nuisance. They are under-estimated, and so are all reptiles. The despised toad is one of our most useful domestic animals, — one of the farmer's and gardener's best friends. We

should all learn lessons of useful instruction of the toad, and teach our children and servants never to injure them. They delight in well-cultivated grounds, and live long in the same locality, occupying the same nests for many years. Their natural food is bugs and flies which are injurious to the garden. They catch their prey with wonderful facility, by the power they have of shooting out their tongues to the length of six or eight inches, striking with lightning quickness whatever comes within the focus of their two prominent eyes. If one eye is destroyed, they lose the power of striking their prey. The tongue is covered with a glutinous substance, which holds every insect it strikes. Night is the toad's time to work. We have accounts of monster toads in Surinam, with mouths like a hog.

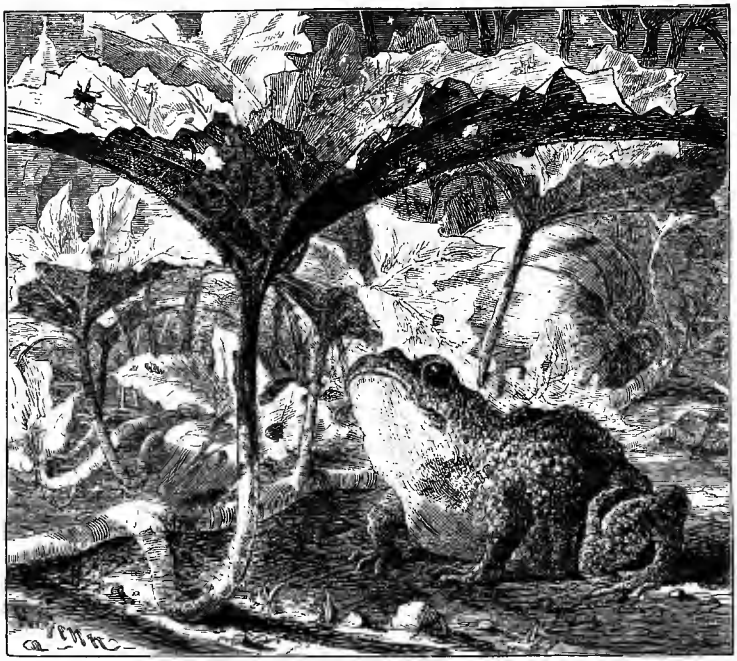
"All toads and frogs are insect-eaters, and the numbers they destroy can hardly be over-estimated. They seem to have been predestined for the great work of destroying bugs and insects generally; and as the natural habitat of toads is with man in his cultivated grounds, they are there his most useful coworkers. If not already in the garden, man should collect and carry them there. A few toads in a vine-patch soon rid it of its worst enemies, the bugs. The young of frogs, while in the tadpole age, breathe by gills, under water. After they lose their tails, and become perfect frogs, they are air-breathing animals, and not amphibious. If they dive, it is only suspended inspiration. They must come to the surface to breathe. In spite of all that Shakespeare has said to sustain the prejudice against toads, they are not poisonous, nor hateful. Our antipathy all comes from faulty

education. We should teach our children not to hate, but to protect toads. We should also try to overcome the prejudice against eating frogs. They should be the cheap and plenty food of the poor, instead of, as now, the choice dainties of the rich. They might as well be grown for food as chickens. Frogs would only need a fit place to live in. They would need no food nor care. If the idea of cultivating frogs is thought absurd, it is not more so than the idea of sending ice to the tropics was thought to be a few years ago. It was made to pay; and a frog-pond as well as the ice-pond may, and frogs should be an article of food in every market."

Then, turning over to another page, he read the following:—

"Our ugly friend, the toad, affects gardens as much as the lord of creation. You will find him in a hole in the wall, in the strawberry patch, under the squash-vines, or among the cucumbers. He is not handsome, but serene and dignified as a judge. He executes judgment upon all bugs, worms, snails, and pests of the garden in the most summary way. See what a capacious maw he has, occupying the whole space from his forelegs to his haunches. He is the very incarnation of stomach, and his gastronomic feats would do credit to an alderman. He tucks away bugs and all kindred flesh as an epicure would turtle and pudding. He is never full. That maw stretches like caoutchouc, and he is nearer to having an endless gullet than any other reptile. He is altogether too useful to be without enemies. All the serpent tribe hate him, and devour him when they can. Even man slanders him. He misses a few

strawberries from his patch, and lays it to the toad, who stands like a sentinel guarding his treasures. It was the snail who did the mischief before the toad took up his station; fortunately, he is now where he will spoil no more ruddy fruit. Or it was the robin who



slyly snapped up the berries, and flew off into the neighboring tree, leaving the poor toad to bear his sins. But you see by the look of his honest face that he is guiltless. Those lustrous eyes are above stealing. One fat bug would give him more pleasure than all the fruit in your garden.

"Cultivate the friendship of toads, for they take the insects that the birds are apt to overlook. They inspect the ground closely, peer under the leaves of strawberries, under the growing vines, and nab every creeping thing in sight. They are as easily domesticated as birds, never sing when you do not want them to, are quiet and unobtrusive, and, if not worth five hundred dollars apiece, are still profitable pets and fellow-helpers. Birch the boy that teases toads."

CHAPTER XVII.

ALL WEATHER GOOD. — A DISAPPOINTMENT. — MAKING MONEY. — CITY AND COUNTRY LIFE. — WEALTH AND ITS USES. — CONTRAST BETWEEN OLD TIMES AND THE PRESENT.

"WHAT a miserable spring we have, miserably rainy," said Joe Spangler one day in the succeeding April, when Uncle Benny and the boys were walking over their strawberry field, looking at the beautiful white blossoms that were unfolding on every side. "I wish we could have some good weather."

"Ah," replied the old man, "all weather is good, though we may not be able to see it at the time"; and, unfolding a paper which he carried in his hand, he read the following extract from a speech of Mr. Everett to an English audience, many of whom had previously expressed to him their regret at having so wet a day for their meeting: —

"It is a good day, notwithstanding the rain. The weather is good; all weather is good; sunshine is good; rain is good. Not good weather, sir? Ask the farmer, in whose grains and roots there yet remains some of its moisture, to be driven out by to-morrow's sun. Ask the boatman, who is waiting for his raft to go over the rapids. Ask the dairyman and grazier if the rain, even at this season of the year, is not good. Ask the lover of nature if it is not good weather when it rains. Sir, one may see in Europe artificial

water-works, cascades constructed by the skill of man at enormous expense, — at Chatsworth, at Hesse Cassel, and the remains of magnificent water-works at Marly, where Louis XIV. lavished uncounted millions of gold, and thus, according to some writers, laid the foundation of those depletions of the treasury which brought on the French Revolution. The traveller thinks it a great thing to see these artificial water-works, where a little water is pumped up by creaking machinery or a panting steam-engine, to be scattered in frothy spray; and we talk of its not being a good day when God's great engine is exhibited to us. His imperial water-works sending up the mist and vapors to the clouds, to be rained down again in comfort and beauty and plenty upon grateful and thirsty man! Sir, as a mere gratification of the taste, I know nothing in nature more sublime, more beautiful, than these rains, descending in abundance and salubrity from the skies."

But out came the sun at last, and more blossoms with it, and then a hot day, with a young thunder-gust in the afternoon, and a hail-storm, the night clearing up so cold that a white frost was visible in many places the next morning. It was quite an unusual thing for that portion of New Jersey. But farming is not all profit, and crops are subject to many casualties, — some from excessive moisture, some from excessive dryness, others from heat, and others from premature cold. The first blossoms of the strawberries, which the boys had been so recently admiring, were blasted by this untimely frost, and the expected crop diminished by at least a third.

It would have been a sore grief to the boys, this prospect of a great loss. But Uncle Benny assured them the case was not a distressing one; he had seen cases far worse than this. He explained to them that there were several distinct sets of blossoms, which unfolded themselves one after the other, not all at once. The first set of theirs had opened, while the second had only half exposed the white flowers. But both were blasted. Hence, there was reasonable hope that from the yet undeveloped blossoms they would gather a plentiful crop, as none of them had been injured. Besides, he said there was little doubt of their getting very nearly as much money. The frost did not fall on their field alone; it must have blasted many others; and the diminished quantity of fruit would be made up by the increased price which the half or quarter crop would command.

When Uncle Benny began his course of training, his idea was that, as the hope of reward was everywhere admitted to be the great sweetener of toil, so, if the boys could be put in the way of accumulating a little money for themselves as the result of their own labor, it would be a powerful stimulant to exertion. His experience with them proved that his idea was the correct one. Their anxiety was now beginning to outgrow even his. Their ambition was increasing, — one wanted twice as many blackberries, another wanted a great peach-orchard, and Bill Spangler insisted that he must have more pigs, as there were not half as many as he could sell. He

said there was no more need of taking Nancy's progeny to the fair in order to obtain customers, as they came to the farm for the young Chester Whites in greater numbers than he could supply, and if one Nancy did so well, he wanted to have six or seven more of the same sort.

Some writer has observed that

"A slight knowledge of human nature will show that, when a man gets on a little in the world, he is desirous of getting on a little farther. Such is the growth of provident habits, that it has been said that, if a journeyman lays by the first dollar, he is on the high road to fortune. It has been remarked by one who has paid great attention to the state of the laboring poor, that he never knew an instance of a man who had saved money having afterwards to depend on public bounty."

It was so with the boys. Their experience had shown them that farm labor and farm employments, when rightly directed, could be made very profitable, while they had already begun to save money. The getting thus far ahead stimulated them to get and to save more. But this stimulant, in Uncle Benny's opinion, was getting too strong, and he was constantly obliged to impose restraints on their ambitious projects for expansion. As to Tony King, the orphan boy, he had long since abandoned all idea of giving up the farm for a city life. Hence, he was now turning his attention to how and when he should have a farm of his own. Knowing

himself to be friendless, with none to aid him, it was natural enough for him to be casting about for an enlargement of the moderate profits which two years under Uncle Benny's instructions had enabled him to make and save.

Uncle Benny had been with the Spanglers some three years, and Tony was now a well-grown lad of nineteen. His manners were remarkably pleasing, his appearance was manly, and, wherever he happened to make acquaintances, he quickly became a favorite. It was no wonder, then, that, as years increased upon him, he became thoughtful of his future. The Spanglers had parents, and the parents had a farm, on which their children would always have a home. But it was very different with Tony King. He was to carve out his own fortune, and that by the labor of his hands, not by help of any friendly purse. His good character and moderate education were all the capital he possessed. But, if young men only knew it, such capital, carefully preserved, will gather round it all other desirable forms of wealth.

An incident had occurred in the neighborhood some years previously, the results of which had made a strong impression upon Tony's thoughtful mind. He was now old enough to appreciate them in all their bearings. One Tracey, a farmer, had married a farmer's daughter, whose misfortune it was to dislike a rural life. She desired her husband to seek some other employment, anything but that of farming, and was ever ready to commend the superior charms of a life

in the city. She held out the same idea for her daughters, and hoped that, when they married, it would not be to become farmers' wives. Her oldest, Jessie, at nineteen was the belle of the township, — the life of every picnic, the charm of every quilting-party, a picture of rural beauty, and perfectly happy in her modest home.

Between Jessie and the son of a neighboring farmer there sprung up an attachment which was fast ripening into an engagement of marriage. They were not only well paired, but suitably matched. He was every way deserving of her, and his prospects for life were quite as promising as hers. But he was only a farmer, — the very occupation which Jessie's mother had hoped might never fall to the lot of her daughters. He could offer no dazzling future, no fortune, no display, only the reasonable promise of a genuine domestic happiness. The unsatisfied and exacting mother wanted more.

Meantime the summer vacation brought into the neighborhood a spruce young shopkeeper from New York, a Mr. Dimity, whose business was that of measuring out lace and ribbons behind the counter of a Canal Street store. But though a perfect obscurity in the great city, he set up for a flourishing merchant when in the country. He talked extensively of his brilliant prospects, glibly enough to impose upon the weakness of Jessie's mother. His dress was elegant, his manners easy, and his attentions to Jessie soon became very decided. But, while courting the daughter, he first won the

mother to his side. The former should have her brown-stone mansion in one of the avenues, her carriage, her servants, and then there would be operas, and theatres, and concerts. Life in the great city should be one round of pleasure, to which the dull quietness of a farmer's sitting-room would be mere barbarism.

Jessie's mother was readily won over by these specious foreshadowings of what might never be realized, and then Jessie herself gave way. The next winter she became Mrs. Dimity, and took up her abode in New York. There she saw all the heart-scalding phases of city life. Ten years of ups and downs were hers. Dimity was fortunate, and then, in turn, unfortunate, — rich to-day, but poor to-morrow. The mansion in the avenue, and the carriage with it, took wings and flew away. If her life were gayer in the city than in the farm-house, it was far less happy; and often did she sigh for the soft quiet of the rural home which her mother had urged her to abandon. Dimity died bankrupt, and his once blooming Jessie returned to the old parental homestead, a faded and disheartened widow.

Her history was known throughout the neighborhood, and was many times referred to in the hearing of Tony King as another illustration of the danger of leaving a happy country home for an unhappy one in the city. It made him thoughtful and wise, and served to confirm him in his new determination of never abandoning the farm.

This conclusion of Tony was encouraged by Uncle Benny whenever an opportunity presented; nor did he fail to enter into all his various plans for achieving his praiseworthy ambition of getting a little farm for himself. Time was passing rapidly away, and Tony was fast becoming a man. Their success in fruit-growing had been so decided that every year added to the little savings the boys had accumulated. It afforded convincing evidence to Tony's mind that fruit could be made more profitable than grain, and that a few acres, worked as they ought to be, would pay far better than a great farm only half cultivated.

"You see," said Uncle Benny, "from what you have been doing, that all wealth is the result of well-directed labor, and that fortune is not chance work. Money is the evidence that somebody has been at work, — working either with his hands or head. All that you have in the savings-bank is the result of work done on these few acres of ground. It is, moreover, a positive assurance that, if you continue to do more work, you will accumulate more money. Besides, money thus acquired is much more likely to be kept than when made by fraud or speculation. That which comes easy generally goes easy. But after all, Tony, money is not everything in this world. Its possession has many times been known to be a great misfortune. But with good health, a virtuous family, moderate desires, a generous heart, and a life here which ever keeps in view the immortal one to come, it may

be considered a great blessing. Without these, the rich man is a miserable being."

"But what," inquired Tony, "would you consider the best way for a poor fellow like me to get up in the world?"

"Well," replied the old man, "the way to wealth is about as plain as the way to market, and is open to all who are industrious and frugal, both of time and money. It has been well said that time well employed is certain to bring money, as money well spent is certain of gaining more. Acquire habits of punctuality, and you establish a character for accuracy which will give you credit; and credit is the prize which all aim at, but which too few preserve. Everybody respects a punctual man. He is sure to thrive, as punctuality implies industry and foresight. Next comes justice in all your dealings.

"Now," he continued, "you have a hundred facilities for carrying on farming successfully of which the first settlers of this country had no knowledge. Look at the splendid implements we saw at the fair, the improved animals, the low prices at which they were sold, and the vast abundance of them all. These are so many helps to success."

Then, unfolding a newspaper, he read the following article, but was ignorant of the author's name: —

"Our New England fathers pursued farming under difficulties of which we have little conception. The country from which they

emigrated was farther advanced in civilization, and better tilled than any then on the globe; and this they exchanged for one entirely new to them, and for a soil and climate unlike those of which they had before some experience. Thrown into a savage wilderness, their knowledge of farming on the smooth plains of the old country would avail them but little. Almost everything must be learned anew, and their knowledge of farming in America must be acquired by slow and painful experience. Who will wonder, then, that their progress was slow? Rather let us wonder that they did not succumb to the difficulties and hardships.

"The early settlers had no beasts of burden for many months after their arrival. And, when at length a few cows were sent over, being poorly fed on coarse meadow hay, many of them drooped and died, and others, surviving this, were killed by the wolves or the Indians. Besides, the difficulty and cost of importation were then so great as to raise their price above the means of ordinary farmers. In the year 1636 cows sold from twenty-five to thirty pounds sterling, $125 to $150, and oxen at forty pounds a pair. The cattle, too, were greatly inferior to those of the present day. The ox was small and ill-shaped, and the horse very unlike the noble dray-horses of Boston and Baltimore of the present day, and the sheep were inferior, both in size and form, and in the fineness of the wool. In 1638 there were no horses in the Plymouth colony; and history tells us that one John Alden, the rival suitor of Miles Standish, carried home his bride on the back of a bull, which he had covered with a piece of handsome broadcloth, he leading the ungainly animal by a rope fastened to a ring in its nose.

"Agricultural implements could then be imported from the mother-country, but all persons could not afford to obtain them in this way. A farmer of the present day would not think the best of them worth much, they were so rudely made, so heavy and unwieldy. Many of their tools were made from bog-ore, the only metal then to be had, and were very brittle and easily destroyed.

"Twelve years after the landing at Plymouth, the farmers of the colony had no ploughs, and were obliged to prepare their lands for seed with the hoe. As late as 1637 there were only thirty-six ploughs in the whole of Massachusetts. For a long period after this the State paid a bounty to any one who should buy and keep a plough in repair, making it his sole business to go from farm to farm breaking up land. This must have been a real plough-man!

It was a great advantage, surely, to the first settlers, to acquire the use of the several new plants employed by the natives for food. Yet it took some time to learn how to cultivate them, and hardly less how to relish them. Indian corn was one of these plants; and pumpkins, squashes, potatoes, and tobacco were almost equally strangers to them. It is said that the potato was so rare in England, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, as to be used only in the smallest quantities. It was sold at two shillings a pound for the Queen's table, and was used as a fruit, baked into pies, seasoned with spices and wine, and sometimes eaten with sugar.

"The colonists adopted, to a great extent, the Indian mode of cultivating the plants above named; and, as the times then were, it answered a good purpose. For example, like the natives, they planted their corn four feet apart; and those living near the sea-

coast, manured their plants in the hill with horse-shoe crabs; those living on streams in the interior used fishes for the same purpose. They planted beans among their corn, that the former might be supported by the latter. They hilled their corn about two feet high, supposing it necessary to sustain the stalks."

"Now compare all that you can everywhere see with this picture of destitution and hardship. You," added the old man, "have no such privations to encounter. These forgotten heroes of the soil have cleared away the forests, leaving to us the pleasing duty of giving to it the highest cultivation."

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHANGES ON THE FARM. — THE BOYS BECOMING MEN. — TONY AND HIS PROSPECTS. — GOING INTO THE ARMY. — A GREAT DISCOVERY. — UNCLE BENNY'S TRIUMPH. — TONY KING MADE HAPPY.

THE three boys had now grown up to be young men, and counted as full hands on the farm. Tony King was receiving wages, and proud enough he felt when Spangler paid him the first twenty dollars he had ever earned. Every part of the farm was therefore showing the good effects of Uncle Benny's advice and exhortation to Spangler on the management of his land, and of the increased efficiency of the boys. Spangler had become quite willing to abandon many of his old neglectful ways, the result of which was seen in the improved appearance of everything about the premises. All the foul old hedge-rows that skirted the fences had been cleared up. He took far better care of his fodder. His buildings had been repaired, even to the extent of painting the house. Then he had reformed his ways about the barn-yard. Having received new ideas touching the value of manure, he had fallen into most of Uncle Benny's plans for increasing the supply.

The consequence of all this was an immense increase in his crops, thus producing more money, and enabling him to meet the interest on his mortgage the very day it came due. His

corn crops were now nearly equal to the best of his neighbors. He had also quit raising his old razor-back breed of hogs, and confined himself exclusively to the Chester Whites. More than all this, he began to believe in the superior value of fruit culture, and had gone so far as to plant a thousand peach-trees. He even thought of setting out an acre or two of the improved blackberries, and as many more of other small fruits. Uncle Benny had thus proved himself a radical reformer of a multitude of abuses.

It was interesting to the old man to note how much the comfort of Mrs. Spangler and the family was increased by this improvement in the management of the farm. Many little conveniences were now purchased which Spangler always used to say he could n't afford to buy, because of that periodical scarecrow, the interest on his mortgage. Sundry articles of new furniture were made to supplant the rickety affairs about the house and kitchen. Mrs. Spangler and her daughters had new frocks and bonnets much oftener than before Uncle Benny's appearance among them. Then Spangler being one day at a neighboring vendue, bought a neat little family carriage, which was probably the greatest affair of all. In every other domestic arrangement there was a manifest improvement, the whole change being the result of Uncle Benny's personal effort, during some six years, to teach Spangler and his boys a better mode of farming.

The two young Spanglers had no other prospect but that

of remaining to assist their father. He had more land than enough for all, even when divided up into two or three shares. As they became of age, their father paid them wages, and continued to let them have a large share in the profits of the Chester County Whites and the pigeons. Their pig enterprise had proved a most profitable one, as the fact of their having taken a premium at the county fair did not seem to be forgotten over a wide stretch of country. Hence there was an extensive demand for young pigs at far better prices than for the common breeds, it having been satisfactorily proved that the Chester Whites will grow larger on less food than any other kind. For this reason they commanded a much higher price; and as a multitude of farmers wanted to have the best, so the demand continued. Uncle Benny had repeatedly told the boys that it cost less to raise the best breed than to raise the poorest. Others thought so too, and hence the calls at the Spangler farm for Chester County Whites were so constant that a great enlargement of the pig department took place, much to the profit of the proprietors.

But the case of Tony King was different from that of the Spanglers. He must shift for himself. It was known in the family that he intended to leave as soon as an opening turned up for him to buy or rent a farm for himself. They frequently talked the matter over among themselves, — where he had better locate, how much land to get, and what sort of farming he would carry on, — but no light came to guide him.

He had saved a few hundred dollars to begin with, sufficient to purchase implements, but he had none with which to buy land. As to working for years at the small wages that Spangler was willing to pay, he could not bring his mind to think of it.

The fact was now evident that Uncle Benny's exhortations for him to look upward, to aspire, had had their effect, and made him ambitious to strike out on his own land. One point, however, had been settled in his mind, — he was determined to have a fruit farm near some great market. He knew it would be difficult to hire such an establishment, and much more difficult for him to purchase. He must therefore create it, and while his fruits were coming into bearing, he would cultivate the common crops, but would drop the latter as soon as the former became productive. Though his plans were thus clearly determined on, the great difficulty was to carry them into effect.

Uncle Benny had listened to the poor but brave fellow, sympathized with his longings, and counselled courage and patience, assuring him that all would yet come out right. Moreover, the old man entertained a strong affection for Tony, and was extremely anxious to see his favorite pupil established on some desirable spot that he might call his own, feeling sure that he would succeed. They often talked the matter over, sometimes when at work in the fields, and oftener when with the family at home.

While waiting, in this way, for some prospect to present itself, Tony one day picked up a newspaper as he rose from the breakfast table, and, running his eye carelessly over it, fell upon an advertisement offering large bounties for volunteers.

"Six hundred dollars' bounty for a volunteer!" he called out aloud. "Think of that, Uncle Benny!" he cried. "Won't that be a help to me? I'll go to Trenton and enlist!"

The family were struck with amazement at this unexpected announcement. But none except the youngest children could say a word in discouragement of his intention. These knew too little of the rebellion, its wicked object, and still more wicked cause, to estimate the mighty results to religion and humanity all the world over which hung suspended in the balance of its success or failure. They knew only that they loved Tony, and could not think of parting with him, — they said he should not volunteer.

What could Uncle Benny say to this determination of Tony? The old man was running over with patriotic horror at the bloody efforts of the slaveholder's rebellion to destroy the national life, and could utter no word that might discourage even one brave heart from entering the glorious army which was then battling for the national integrity. He realized the loss which Tony's absence would be to him, and the dangers which the brave fellow would encounter in the smoke and carnage of the battle-field. Never, until that

moment, had he known the extent of his affection for Tony, or the terrible domestic desolation which that unrighteous rebellion was everywhere producing. But while praising his determination, he bade him think well before he acted, and if bent on entering the ranks, to let love for his country form some portion of his motive, and not allow the offer of a large bounty to be the only inducement.

"But I shall go," rejoined Tony. "Six hundred dollars will make me up; and who knows but I may come back an officer?"

"Yes," added Mrs. Spangler, "but suppose you *never* come back. Of what use will be your bounty then?"

But if the thought of enlisting were a sudden one, so was the determination inflexible. No persuasion could alter it; for Tony, without being either obstinate or stubborn, had always had a mind of his own, and he was now master of his time, either to enter the army or to remain upon the farm.

Next morning, sure enough, he started for the recruiting office at Trenton, where he learned that the demand for men was urgent, and that six hundred dollars' bounty was given to each. A great crowd was in and around the office, and he saw the money counted out to each volunteer as he was mustered in. He looked at it, and thought a like sum would go a great way toward procuring such a farm as he would have to be contented with.

In the evening he returned home to make preparation for his departure. But that was quickly done, for his wardrobe was scanty, and he had no accounts to settle. His last evening with the family was sad enough, — sad for himself, and sad for all others. There was a profusion of hopes and regrets, and a burden of kind injunctions. Mrs. Spangler and the girls cried at the prospect of letting him go. Uncle Benny exhorted him, however and wherever he might be situated, to do his whole duty, keeping a clear conscience, and never forgetting his Creator.

After breakfast the next morning, Tony was ready to set off on his perilous enterprise. Uncle Benny was to drive him to Trenton, where he would see that he received his full bounty money, and deposit it for him in the saving-fund. Tony and his venerable protector had seated themselves in the carriage, and the family had shaken hands with him for the last time, when a man of very genteel appearance, and past middle age, presented himself among them. He had entered the gate and walked up to the carriage without being noticed, so entirely was every one's attention occupied by poor Tony's departure.

The stranger saw at a glance that something unusual was going on. There were Mrs. Spangler and the girls wiping their eyes, while the countenance of even Farmer Spangler had lost its usual hard expression, and now gave token of a profound regret. Breaking silence, however, he inquired, —

"What does all this mean, my friends? Has any misfortune overtaken this family?"

"Going into the army, sir," replied Tony, in a firm voice; "and I'm just bidding them good by."

The strange gentleman looked at him attentively, then cast his eyes around the party, and then again turning to Tony, inquired, —

"But what may be your name, young man?"

"Tony King, sir," was the reply.

"Anthony King!" he exclaimed. "The Lord be praised for bringing me here!" And instantly he mounted into the carriage, seized Tony's hand, and embraced him with the warmest affection.

"You do not know me," he resumed. "You were only a child when you last saw your Uncle Alfred, but I am he, and after a long search I have at last discovered you. No going into the army to-day! I have a great deal to say to you. Come out, Tony, and let us become better acquainted with each other."

Here was the greatest surprise that could have happened to every one who witnessed it. True enough, Tony, when a mere child, remembered having seen his Uncle Alfred. He knew also that he had disappeared from among his relatives, and gone no one knew whither. No tidings of him having been received, he was given up for dead. Tony, knowing so little of him, had altogether forgotten that such a relative existed. But it was most extraordinary that his reappearance should happen at the critical moment of Tony's departure from Mr. Spangler's, and that it should lead to the breaking up of all Tony's plans for entering the army.

The horse was quickly taken out of the carriage, Tony's little bundle was replaced in his chamber, the girls dried up their tears of sorrow, but wept fresh ones of joy, the boys recovered their spirits, and even Uncle Benny's heart was made lighter by the prospect of Tony's still remaining among

them. It was one of those sudden transitions from general grief to general joy which sometimes occur in human experience. Tony was less affected than the others. He had obeyed his uncle's command without exactly understanding the object, or what was to be the end of it.

But Alfred King had mingled with his fellow-men all over the world, and, being able to make himself at home wherever he might happen to be, soon brought his new acquaintances to an understanding of his character and intentions. Leaving home poor and friendless, he had fought out for himself, in a remote section of the country, the great battle of life, and had now returned to his native State, not overburdened with riches, but with moderate fortune, — not enough for many of *us*, but sufficient for *him*. The disposition to be satisfied with what he had acquired, in reality made him rich, — for riches come of a contented mind, not of an overflowing purse.

He had now returned to settle somewhere near the spot where he was born. He had been searching for his relatives, but, in an absence of many years, all but Tony had been swept away by death. Him he sought long and anxiously, and by the merest accident learned of his being with the Spanglers. By the singular coincidence just related, he reached that farm-house just as the object of his search was about departing to enroll himself in the army of his country. One hour's delay in arriving there would have seen Tony beyond the reach of his affectionate intentions.

A genial intimacy soon sprung up between Mr. King and Uncle Benny. The latter gave him a connected history of his nephew, how well he had behaved himself, how worthy he was of his love and protection, and how ardently he desired to strike out for himself as the owner of a farm. It was natural that Mr. King should concentrate upon his only surviving relative his whole affections. He had enough of this world's goods for both of them, and he avowed to Uncle Benny his intention of establishing for himself and Tony such a home as the deserving boy was longing after.

Now, it had always been insisted on by Uncle Benny, in his arguments with Spangler, that the latter was farming too much land; and that he would thrive better, make more money, and have less work to do, if he would sell one half. Some men might drive a hundred acres to great advantage, but Spangler was not one of them. Organized as he was, he could do better with a half than with the whole. Spangler had uniformly resisted this doctrine. But latterly, however, the truth as proclaimed by Uncle Benny had been slowly working its way into his mind. He did not resist so stubbornly as at first. True, no one had ever offered to buy any portion of the farm, hence he had never been tried by the test of opportunity.

But the temptation to divide his hundred acres was now to be held out to him. Tony King's ambition extended only to thirty acres. He explained to his uncle what he intended to

do with such a tract. He had made a rude sketch on paper of his plans. There was to be a great peach-orchard, a pear-orchard, and twenty acres were to be stocked with berries, leaving room for all vegetables for domestic use, and pasture for a cow.

There were thirty acres at one end of Spangler's farm which would exactly suit him. They embraced the famous brier-patch, from which so many hundred dollars had been annually realized ; besides, it would produce them an immediate income. If his uncle would only buy this thirty-acre lot, and put up a small house, he would work the farm to his entire satisfaction. When urging the matter on his attention, the boy's enthusiasm became unbounded. He grew eloquent as he counted up the profit from his fruits, and finally infused into his uncle's mind some portion of his own sanguine fervor.

The contemplated purchase was of course no secret in Spangler's family. Under Uncle Benny's urgency, Spangler at last consented to sell ; but though satisfied it was probably best for him, he gave up to it with stubborn reluctance, — it was hard to part with his land. Then it went hardest of all to give up the great brier-patch. The "old field," which, in the face of Spangler's ridicule and prophecies of failure, Uncle Benny had converted into a gold mine, he now prized as the most valuable part of his farm. But Tony refused to buy unless he could secure the brier-patch. This controversy was

finally adjusted by Mr. King consenting to give three prices for what was once known as the "old field."

"Now," said Uncle Benny to Spangler, when the bargain had been concluded, "take this money and pay off your mortgage. When you laughed at me for undertaking the 'old field,' did n't I tell you it could be made to pay your mortgage, and has it not turned out even better than I said?"

What reply could Spangler make to so searching a question? He did manage to smile, but said nothing.

No happier young farmer lives in New Jersey than Tony King. His thirty acres are all that he covets, and all that he now thinks he shall ever want. Setting out with moderate views, the hope is that moderation will continue to be his rule. His farm is fast becoming a pattern for his neighbors to imitate. But it was no light task to clear up and make good the long neglect of his predecessor. As all reformers, whether of land or of something else, have difficulties to overcome, so had Tony a full share; but then one half of them would never occur again. It is only the beginners who really have the hard work. His smaller fruits were planted even before the dwelling-house had been put up. Then followed his peach, and pear, and apple, and cherry trees. One crop of strawberries has already been marketed, and whoever drives by his peach-orchard about the last of any April, will discover it to be a wilderness of blossoms.

There are folks in this world who do not know what is a

good thing, even when they see it. Tony was not one of these. He had seen, and tried, and proved the Chester County Whites, and knew them to be the best breed of swine that could be had. Hence he obtained from the Spanglers a very respectable number to begin with, and bought others elsewhere, so as to secure a proper mixture. Though his pens are far more capacious and stylish than the Spanglers', yet the latter feel no envy, nor do they look upon Tony as a rival; but these three young farmers continue in constant and intimate intercourse with each other. The Spanglers are never too weary to walk over of an evening to see Tony, and hear him tell of what he is doing, and what he intends to do next. His uncle is so indulgent that Tony is able to branch out in a way that far surpasses all the Spanglers could afford. But being principally in little things, the cost is moderate, while the comfort and gratification are very great. Bill Spangler was so struck with two or three little notions which Tony crowded on his attention, that he once declared he did n't know whether it was not better for a boy to have only an uncle instead of a father.

Tony longs for nothing of the great city beyond its daily newspaper. He sighs after no brown-stone mansion, no city luxuries, no city fortune; and, coveting none of these, he is happily beyond the reach of those countless vicissitudes which make city life so wearing to the heart; of the temptations which are so prone to overcome the moral susceptibilities, and

of those ups and downs of fortune from which no foresight seems able to protect the most acute observer. Thus, if not likely to become suddenly rich, he runs no hazard of becoming poor.

Uncle Benny's mission has been accomplished. As years accumulate upon him, his joints stiffen, and his activity diminishes. But even though thus disabled in body, he continues to be unto the boys their "guide, philosopher, and friend."

How vast a field there is among us for farming by the *Men!* But an equally extensive one exists for farming by the *Boys.* If it be generously and kindly thrown open to them, thousands will gladly enter, and will grow up better and happier men than if reared in the hot-bed of a great city.

THE END.

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