

The Seedless Apple Fraud

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE DENOUNCES
SCHEME AS HUMBAG

GUY ELLIOTT MITCHELL.

One of Uncle Sam's duties, and it is an extremely important one, is showing up, and where possible, stopping frauds and fakes and preventing the people from being misled by their savings. Through its issuance of "fraud orders" the Postoffice Department prevents millions of dollars every year from being squandered on worthless projects and fake schemes exploited through cunning advertisements. The vigilance of the Government against lottery concerns is another instance. So much is done now through clever advertising that officials have come to be very chary about giving their indorsement to any schemes which have not been pretty thoroughly tried out.

The Spencer "Seedless" Apple.

A case in point was the efforts of the Colorado seedless and coreless apple concern, headed by a Mr. Spencer, which attempted last year to secure the

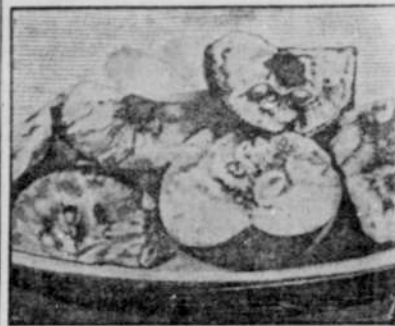
either paper stock or nursery stock, in New York State.

The attractive plan proposed by the parent Spencer company, as learned at the Department of Agriculture, is that these subsidiary or local seedless apple companies may be formed in the various States. The local company is to pay a cash bonus to the mother company and also issue it 51 per cent of its stock—a controlling interest. The public is to be let in on the remainder, 49 per cent. To facilitate the sale of this stock Assistant Pomologist W. A. Taylor says that the company sometime ago issued a statement to the effect that the retail price of trees will be held up to \$3 each, while the cost to the local company will not exceed 50 cents, and it is estimated that on a local investment of \$5,000, \$50,000 could be quickly rounded up.

"It seems," said Mr. Taylor, who in speaking of the matter appeared to be entirely convinced of the shadyness of

cern which this tremendous advertising is causing our principal competitors in the export apple trade. The Tasmanian government council has instituted an official inquiry whether this new development is likely to so revolutionize the character of the fruit which we export to Europe, and which is in competition with them, as to necessitate their securing and growing this seedless variety.

Colonel Brackett states that thus far no tree or scion of this alleged remarkable apple has been placed in the hands of any disinterested experimenter, and it is significant that there are not as yet any trees or scions for sale, although it is stated that several million



PHOTOGRAPH OF "SEEDLESS" APPLES
SOLD TO MESSRS. SHEARN FOR 30
SHILLINGS A PIECE.

trees are being grown in New York, Iowa, Utah and Colorado.

It is questionable whether the Fraud Order Office of the Postoffice Department will be able to bar the use of the mails to the company owing to the skillful preparation of its literature, though such action, it is stated, would be sustained by all reputable fruit men and nurserymen.

The wonder of the whole story is that in the face of such lamentable failures where the promoters have consented to exhibit their apples the work still goes forward of successfully fooling the people. It is not denied that there is an apple which may be called seedless and with an imperfectly developed core; but it is a freak and worthless, and, moreover, is thousands of years old. Wherever the Spencer apple has been exhibited it has been a fizzle. One claim made by the company is because the apple is bloomless it offers no opportunity for the codling moth to lay its eggs, that, therefore, the apple cannot be wormy. One of the apples reluctantly submitted by the Spencer people to Colonel Brackett, the Pomologist of the Department, contained, when cut, a good, fat codling moth worm, while all the apples sub-



THE "SEEDLESS" APPLE PRESENTED
TO KING EDWARD.

mitted to the Department and to the St. Louis Exposition apple judges contained either seeds or cores. The apples were, moreover, small and inferior; but the newspaper account of these events tell a different tale.

Farm Bulletins.

The great demand upon the Department of Agriculture for some of the Farmers' Bulletins, which are distributed free, has necessitated the reprinting of quite a list of these valuable little pamphlets. Among others of general interest which are available are:

- (No. 41) Fowls; Their Care and Feeding.
- (No. 44) Commercial Fertilizers; Their Composition and Use.
- (No. 63) Care of Milk on the Farm.
- (No. 64) Ducks and Geese; Standard Breeds and Management.
- (No. 113) The Apple and How to Grow It.

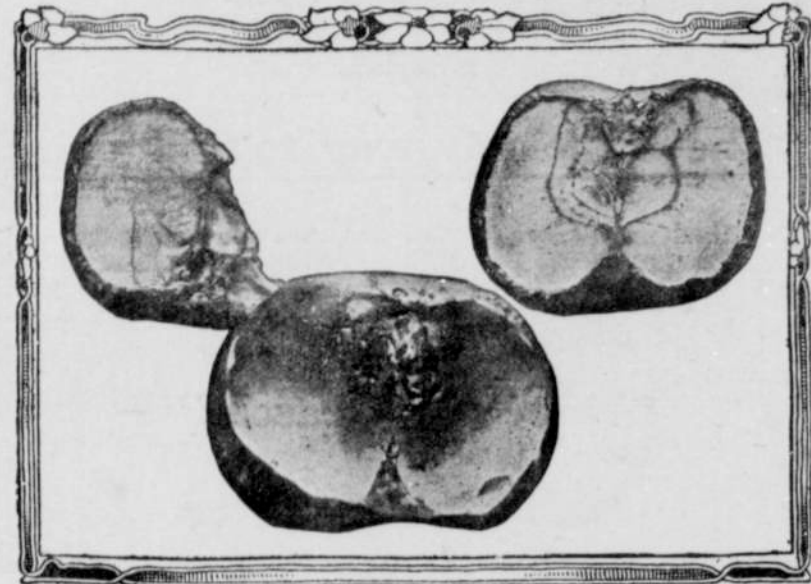
Reckless Statements

The company appears to be well organized and has apparently engaged excellent legal talent. "The statements in all the literature issued by the company are very skillfully worded," said Mr. Taylor, "the statements made through the public press, for which the company cannot be held accountable, and which are influencing the people, have been recklessly misleading and untrue." The shrewd method by which this apple was advertised in England and again readvertised in the United States shows that a master brain is engineering the promotion of the scheme. Having prepared the British public through numerous articles, for something startling, a specimen of the seedless apple was sent to King Edward, inclosed in a push-lined jewelry box. The English papers commented widely upon the occurrence and several additional apples were sold at public auction for enormous prices, and the specially well written encomium on this happening and on the value of the apple was innocently transmitted by the American Consul to our Department of Commerce and through its advance consular sheets distributed to every newspaper in the United States.

A feature of this incident was the ceremony connected with the cutting of two apples which brought the largest prices—namely, \$15. A number of distinguished British horticulturists were present, the apples were taken from cold storage cases, and everything was proceeding beautifully until the knife was applied, then it was found that the apples were neither seedless nor coreless, and the indignant purchasers, Messrs. Shearn, demanded their money back.

Must Make the Fakirs Smile.

A somewhat amusing feature, as related by Colonel Brackett, is the con-



PHOTOGRAPHS OF "SEEDLESS AND CORELESS" APPLES FURNISHED THE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE BY THE SPENCER COMPANY.

indorsement of the Fruit Division of the Department of Agriculture. The apple men of the Department were extremely doubtful of the claims made by Mr. Spencer that he had evolved a seedless apple which would revolutionize the apple industry of the country, and they were wise in refusing to give it indorsement. Colonel Brackett, the Pomologist of the Department, now states that the seedless and coreless apple propaganda is apparently one of the most carefully considered and intelligently worked out schemes for fooling and defrauding the public which has ever been attempted along agricultural lines. Taking advantage of the remarkable results of fruit and plant improvement made by Luther Burbank and other wizards of plant science, the statement was sprung upon an unsuspecting newspaper press and public that a wonderful seedless and coreless apple had been discovered. Hundreds of columns of newspaper descriptions of this fruit have since appeared in not only the daily and weekly



CROSS SECTION OF SPENCER SEEDLESS
APPLE, REPRODUCED FROM SPEN-
CER CATALOGUE.

Plans for Sinking Money.

It now turns out that the Spencer seedless apple, so far as its being a new and valuable production is concerned, is an entire fake, and it would appear that the plan is more of a stock and bond selling proposition than a nursery stock raising one. The seedless and coreless apple is almost as old as history. Pliny, the Roman naturalist, described it two thousand years ago. Hundreds of references appear in the books of horticulturists about this freak, the whole story having been described by Professor Bailey of Cornell about fifteen years ago. The bad faith of the Spencer apple people is shown in their circulating a partial quotation from Professor Bailey written about the seedless apple years ago, and having no reference to the so-called Spencer seedless apple.

The reason now appears for the careful educational work done among the newspapers last year. The Spencer Seedless Apple Company of New York has been organized with alleged nurseries in Niagara County, has issued a magnificent catalogue with a full colored lithograph of the "Spencer seedless apple," and also showing cross sections of the apple with no semblance of core or seed.

Newspapers Which Bit.

This catalogue contains numerous extracts from papers all over the country lauding the Spencer seedless apple almost to the skies. The truth is, that some of the most conservative papers were successfully roped in and unconsciously published articles specially written for them by the propagandists themselves, and these very papers are now quoted in the catalogues distributed by the company. Such eminent names appear as the New York Times, the Buffalo Inquirer, both of which had enthusiastic editorials, the American Inventor, the New York Farmer, the Scientific American, the Buffalo Commercial, the New York Herald, the National Nurseryman, the Denver Times and a score of others.

The Public to Pay the Profits

This New York apple company is but one of the subsidiary companies, with apparently the right to sell stock,



Courtesy Harper's Weekly.

THE BELLES OF THE SEASON.

- (No. 121) Beans, Peas and Other Legumes as Food.
- (No. 32) Silos and Silage.
- (No. 154) The Home Fruit Garden; Preparation and Care.
- (No. 33) Peach Growing for Market.
- (No. 34) Meats; Composition and Cooking.
- (No. 192) Barnyard Manure.
- (No. 200) Turkeys; Standard Varieties and Management.
- (No. 214) Beneficial Bacteria for Leguminous Crops.

Proper Seasoning of Farm Implementments.

It is full time that all mowing machines, harvesters, and other horse implements should be left out in the field to obtain the benefit of the fall weather. Plows and harrows will, of course, be needed yet, and these will be kept under cover for awhile, but can be left out later after the fall plowing. This practice of fall weathering of implements is quite general in many farming sections and is encouraged from year to year by a large class of farmers. It insures thorough weathering of the wood and produces in the metal parts of the machinery



a fine brown color. The practice is an entirely satisfactory one to the implement sellers as a class.

Pickles and Babies.

An exchange made an unfortunate error in its "Answers to Correspondents" recently.

"Fond Mother" wrote in to find out what she should do for her children who had the whooping cough. In the make up the compositor got some items transposed and the answer read: "If not too young, skin them thoroughly; immerse in scalding water, sprinkle plentifully with salt, and leave for a week in strong brine." Horrors! He misplaced the answer to "Anxious Housekeeper's" query for a pickled onion recipe.

Everything Was the Same.

A young Oxford student one day received an unexpected visit from his pretty sister, and was very indignant that she came without a chaperon. "Look here," said the young man, "I will not have any of the fellows see you in my rooms, so if anyone knocks at the door you just get behind that screen."

In a few minutes a knock was heard, and the girl ran behind the screen as her brother went to open the door. An old gentleman stood on the threshold, who, after profusely apologizing for his intrusion, said: "I am just home from Australia, and many years ago I occupied these rooms; would you allow me, sir, to look at them once again?" "Certainly," said the student, "come in." "Ah," exclaimed the old man, "everything is just the same. Same old table, same old fireplace, same old screen." Then, catching sight of the girl, "By jove, same old dodge." "Sir," exclaimed the student, "that is my sister." "Gad, sir," was the rejoinder, "same old story."

A Few Afterthoughts.

The Chinese women are being weaned from the old custom of binding their feet, and it is stated that the practice now obtains only among the American women.

There is no authority for the statement that the railroad companies would seriously object if Congress spends the entire session discussing the tariff and reciprocity.

"I reflect with sorrow over the justification of the claim you make of having lent me your constant support," says Lord Curzon, the viceroy of India, recently deposited at the instance of Premier Balfour. If the Premier understood just what Lord Curzon indicated, and had the nerve, he probably called back, "you're another."

The customs officials are alarmed at the apparent fact that there are more Havana cigars in the country than is warranted by the imports of Havana tobacco. They have probably omitted to calculate to include the hickory and cabbage-leaf crop.

The King of Spain is again touring the European courts, looking for somebody who will accept him.

The idea that the scarcity of servant girls is due to their all having become writers of novels, is probably suggested by the quality of current fiction.

Germany and France have reached an agreement over Morocco that is "entirely satisfactory to both parties." How about the feelings of the third party?

Helen Bertram has been up before a New York magistrate for failure to pay her debts. At the same time, her husband is playing in "The Prodigal Son."

A Trial by Telephone.

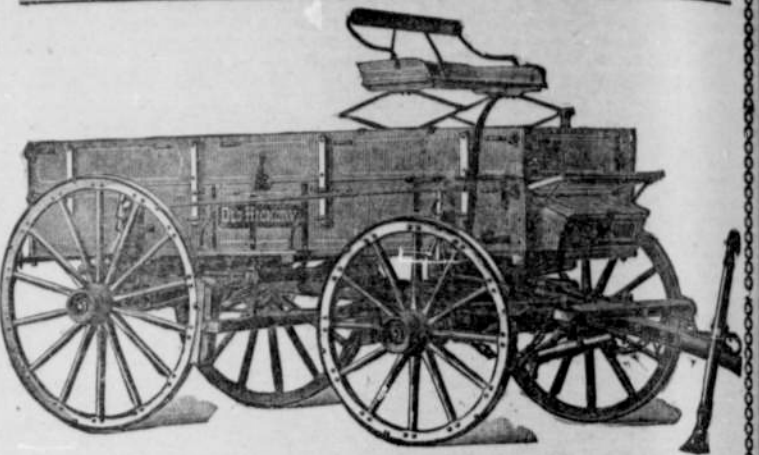
Robert Willard, a farmer living near Elkhart, in Logan county, Illinois, upon being arrested by Constable Pettit on a charge of intoxication and disorderly conduct, pleaded guilty by telephone. When he was informed of the \$14 fine by the justice in Lincoln, he agreed to send the amount by mail. The case is unique in central Illinois jurisprudence.

The constable found Willard busily engaged in a cornfield and read the warrant to him. Willard agreed that it was all right, but pointed to the work that he was doing and declared that he could not possibly lose a day or two by driving to Lincoln and waiting for trial. He suggested the use of the telephone, and when the constable somewhat dubiously acquiesced, the two repaired to the farmhouse. Finally they got connection with Justice Rudolph, in Lincoln, and over the wire the unique trial was held. The justice received a letter later with the fine enclosed.

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