HARVESTING THE APPLE CROP.

GUY ELLIOTT MITCHELL.

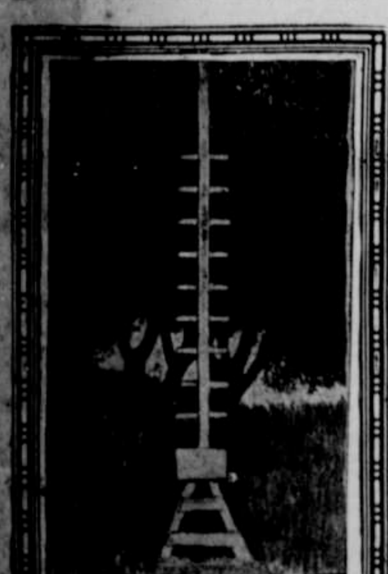
It is an easy matter to go out into the orchard, shake or pick the apples off the trees and throw or drop them into barrels for hauling to the town or cross roads grocery where the fruit may be exchanged for a bolt of muslin or calico, or something else needed in the house. But this is not very profitable. The progressive farmer has found that it pays to give strict attention to the sorting and packing of his crop in order that it may bring for him a much larger amount of money.

Just when to pick is one of the secrets of the trade which all orchardists do not appreciate. The time of picking red apples is commonly guaged by their color and that of yellow apples by the color of the seeds. The latter is the only reliable test of ripeness, for an apple picked just as the seeds have turned a light brown, and before they become dark around the edges, will be found to have not only full flavor, but the best keeping quality. But red apples are often left for some time after the seeds indicate maturity to allow them to put on more color, which they do rapidly under the influence of the bright days and frosty nights of autumn; and indeed this is the only way of obtaining color on fruit in the shady portions of the tree. Growers should bear in mind, however, that to defer picking after the seeds indicate ripeness, invites watercore and shortens the life of the fruit in storage, often to a serious extent with the midwinter varities.

TOO LATE PICKING

Much of the complaint recently lodged against the Jonathan because of rotting at the core, according to a report of the Idaho Experiment Station, is believed to be attributable to late picking. Unless this trouble is corrected the sale of this valuable variety is sure to be hurt. The purchaser is completely deceived by the perfect appearance of the fruit, not a sign of decay being visible until it is cut open, when the flesh for some distance about the core is discovered to be brown, radiating in narrow rays towards the skin, which, however, it seldom reaches. It is worse than a worm hole, for that can be cut out. A box containing even a few such specimens makes the consumer distrustful of the variety, while half or more sickens even the most enthusiastic friend of "Brother Jonathan."

Few farmers are considered capable of packing their own apples, as the statement is made that, as regards seeing worm holes, their eye-sight is deficient. Where there is a fruit union, the Idaho bulletin suggests that a rule should be adopted forbidding any members thereof from doing their own picking, but, they should profit by the employment of the same body of trained pickers successively at the various orchards. Even the isolated growers should endeavor to have a group of expert pickers, and employ the same ones, as far as possible, year after year. This is the way to build up a reputation that has a great cash value.



SINGLE RAIL LADDER.
A Very Light Form for the Orchard.

PACKING IN BARRELS

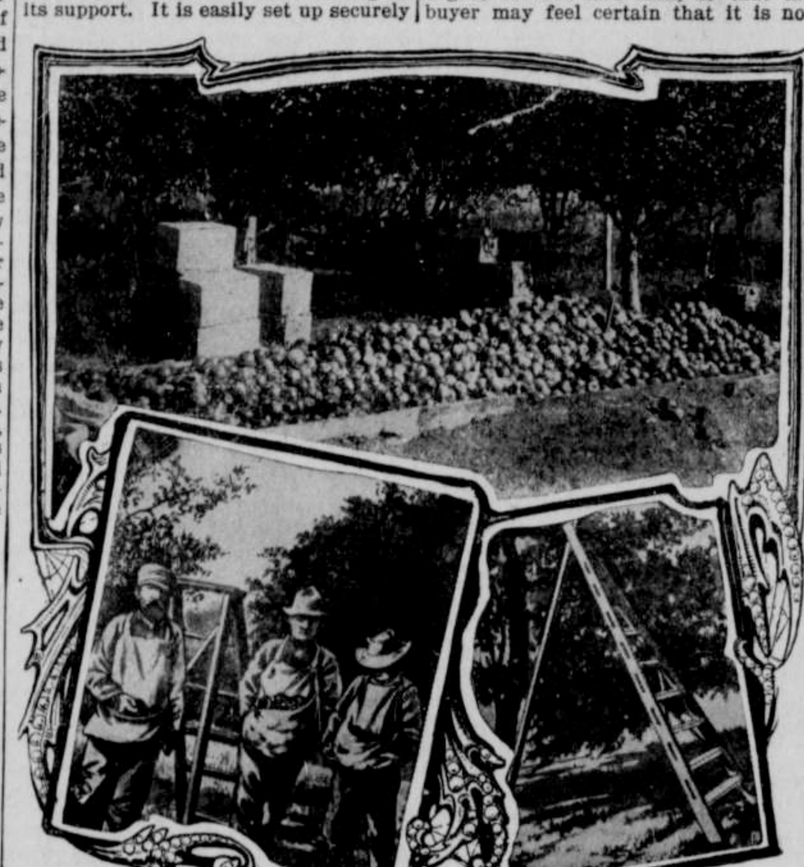
While the simplest method of packing apples is the old barrel of the east in which the bottom and top are faced, the apples in the middle being simply poured in, this is a slovenly, not to say deceitful method, for it requires no grading expert to sort out the best ones for facing. The Western box method, on the other hand, is more desirable, especially in cases where one wishes to cater to the fancy trade. One of the pretty points about the box package is that the exact number of apples contained therein is always known, and if stamped on the box as it should be, gives information much appreciated by the buyer. Of course this only applies where the packer adopts one particular method of placing the apples in the box.

A prominent orchardist made the statement that it costs money to step on a ladder in an orchard. This orchard owner finds that there is a waste of time in climbing up in order to reach the uppermost branches of the tree, so that it is considered advisable that effort should be made through pruning to start the head of the tree low and keep it low in order that the most profitable investment can be made out of the trees. It should be possible for several years to gather a large percentage of the crop from the ground or with a very low ladder. Nevertheless you can scarcely make a dwarf tree by any amount of pruning, and in every apple orchard ladders of some kind soon become a necessity.

(A 50)

HANDY TYPES OF LADDERS

Of all the numerous styles of ladders, some form of step ladder is best adapted to the orchard, whether the welfare of the tree is considered or the comfort of the picker. Any ladder which must be set against the tree is a constant menace to it. Probably the best type of tall step ladders is one having three legs, two comprising the legs of the ladder proper and the third acting as its support. It is easily set up securely on uneven ground and the wide spread of legs at the bottom makes it especially stable. For work on tall trees the Japanese style of ladder, in which the steps converge to a point at the top is easy to manipulate. Lightest of all the tall ladders is a single rail with pegs projecting from the sides, but it is least safe and comfortable for the user, and is not liable to become widely used.



APPLE SCENES IN IDAHO.
Picking Aprons and Ladders Designed by the Idaho Experiment Station.

Every picker has his own opinion as to the best style of receptacle in which to place the freshly picked fruits. Buckets, baskets and bags have their devotees, and some even go so far as to provide the pickers with coal scuttles. The latter, however, too strongly suggest pouring and such rough treatment is not to be thought of with apples any more so than with eggs. Where bags are used, as is commonly the case, they should be lined with burlap though this should not cause any relaxation of care in placing fruit in them. Bags are open to the objection that the fruit in them is easily bruised where the bag brushes against a limb or ladder. The usual form of packing does not admit of removing the fruit except by pouring, and this is objectionable. The bottomless sack overcomes this difficulty as it allows the fruit to roll from the bottom when the chain is released. Such treatment might do with oranges, but with apples—never. The average picker could never withstand the temptation to let them shoot from the bag the moment the foreman's back was turned.

THE IDEAL PICKING BAG

Perhaps the best picking bag is the apron bag. It is cheap, being easily made of a heavy grain sack, hangs in the most convenient position for filling and leaves both hands free. It is so shallow that the first apples can be conveniently laid in it without dropping, and yet it holds all the wearer can carry, and finally cannot be emptied by pouring, unless the picker stands on his head. Clean boxes will help to bring better prices for apples, so that it is considered absolutely essential that the packer should use only boxes that are freshly made up of material that is white and clean. No man who takes pride in his business or cares for his reputation will pack fruit in old or soiled boxes. When these are hauled to market they should always be covered with a tarpaulin to keep off rain or dust. If box material is carried over from one year to another it should be carefully housed and covered to keep it clean and bright.

A SUBSTANTIAL THREE-LEGGER.

HONESTY THE BEST POLICY

Two essentials of a perfect packing of apples are honesty and uniformity—that is the apples in the middle or bottom of the pack, whether it be a box or barrel, should be just as good as those on top and all perfect; all of an even size and properly colored and every package packed with the same degree of care and skill, so that the buyer may feel certain that it is not a case of sight unseen. Attractive labels add much to the appearance of the boxes, and are a valuable means of advertising and building up a special trade. Whether labelled or not, however, the box should be marked on the end with the name of the variety and number of apples contained, and the grade, especially if the latter is anything but firsts.

HE SECURED TOP PRICES

That careful packing is as essential as good fruit may be gathered from a story of a potato grower in Colorado a few years ago, when the crop of potatoes in the east was immense. Colorado had, as usual, raised many thousands of sacks, but found the price so low that it scarcely covered the freight charges. In the emergency "The Man of the Hour" appeared in the person of a grower who washed his potatoes carefully, put them up in neat 10-pound sacks with attractive labels and sent them on to Chicago. A very fancy price was asked, but the potatoes went off with a rush and netted the grower the highest returns he had ever received. Cases similar to this are known to most farmers. Very often the manner in which fruit and vegetables are put up has more influence on the price than quality itself.

SCENE IN AN IDAHO APPLE ORCHARD.
Drawn from a Photograph in Bulletin of Idaho Experiment Station.

Barnyard Manure.

For garden crops there is no fertilizer that will compare with good, well-rotted barnyard manure. In localities where a supply of such manure cannot be secured it will be necessary to depend upon commercial fertilizers, but the results are rarely so satisfactory. In selecting manure for the garden, care should be taken that it does not contain any element that will be injurious to the soil. An excess of sawdust or shavings used as bedding will have a tendency to produce sourness in the soil. Chicken, pigeon, and sheep manures rank high as fertilizers, their value being somewhat greater than ordinary barnyard manures, and almost as great as some of the lower grades of commercial fertilizers. The manure from fowls is especially adapted for dropping in the hills or rows of plants.

IMPROVEMENTS IN THE VILLAGE.

THE SCHOOL HOUSE WITH NO TREES AND NO PLANTS IS AN ECONOMIC MISTAKE.

Government Bureau of Forestry Has Issued an Attractive, Illustrated Free Bulletin on School and Home Tree Planting.

Thousands of school houses entirely lack the simple surroundings that would insure beauty and contentment. We mean by this not a paucity in architectural design, but in the simple matter of beautification through planting, which, in many cases, can be attained by arousing the interest of the scholars themselves. Some city schools have no space for planting at all, although some contain a good arrangement of flower beds and shade trees. In the towns and villages, also, it is possible to point out many examples showing great care and attention. It is in the country, however, that the improved school ground is rarely found.

The ideal school ground, which should really be as much a part of the building itself, and where the pupils can be shown the wonderful operations of nature, serves two distinct purposes.

First, it becomes a technical laboratory, where the intelligent teacher can point out the marvelous chemical changes which occur with each appearance of the seasons—the starting of plant life, with the warm days of spring, the fuller growth of summer with its blossoms and fruit and the matured wood growth, when the leaves drop in the fall—a cycle in the plant's history and

Second, the influence that such study has upon the growing mind. With a reasonable amount of this sort of education, coupled with the three R's, the child will never develop the tendency to rip to pieces the shrubbery of his own home or dig out and trample under foot the young plants in the garden. Furthermore, he will likely take his school garden for his ideal, and use his influence to make the home yard its equal in appearance, if not its superior.

The object, too, of school yard planting is strictly utilitarian. School house, some of them splendid brick structures as well as sod house buildings, can be found which are absolutely devoid of tree or shrub planting. Both the winter winds and the summer heat operate upon them with unchecked violence. Why not plant trees and inaugurate the assistance of the pupils in so doing, which will not only act as wind breaks, but afford shade?

In connection with this subject the Bureau of Forestry of the Department of Agriculture has issued a Farmer's Bulletin (No. 134) on Tree Planting for Rural School Gardens. This can be obtained without cost, by writing either Gifford Pinchot, Forester, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., or to your U. S. senator or member of Congress. It contains much information which is useful and outlines several practical plans for not only the beautification of barren schoolgrounds but for a primary study of forestry—tree planting and tree growth.

USE AND INFLUENCE OF TREES.

What a tremendous influence for good in every town, it would be, if every school boy and school girl should become interested in tree planting and shrub planting. Arbor Day has become a great institution. Its observance has resulted in the planting of millions of trees every spring. Suppose that it were universal, and that every child in every town should become as enthusiastic over the planting of a tree each year, and watching and attending to it, as he is over the observance of the Fourth of July, what a wonderful change, in a few years, would result in the appearance of most of our towns and villages.

Much can be done in the school toward making tree planting a success with the children. It is not enough that when Arbor Day rolls around a tree should be planted by each juvenile member of the family. Unless the youngsters realize that considerable care is required the first year or two, the trees will die, and unless they have been taught how to care for their trees, dead and dying specimens—failures—will distress and discourage the youthful mind, possibly beyond redemption. But with reasonable attention the poorest and the rockiest soils can be made to produce good trees.

A SCHOOL TREE NURSERY.

Certainly there could be nothing more fascinating than the starting of a tree nursery, of several good varieties, in each school ground. These nurseries could be started from the actual seed, acorns, beech nuts, hickory nuts, chestnuts, seeds from fir cones, and the seeds of other trees thriving in the locality, and all these could be gathered by the children, and brought in and planted by them. Then after they had reached the proper age for transplanting, say two years, the class would, in an afternoon, visit a dozen homes, and participate in the transplanting of the seedlings, into their permanent locations. There is an inherent love for such things in the American youth. It is a wonderful thing, when you think about it, to take a bit of a seed, put it in moist soil, see it sprout, and then watch it through the progress of years come forth a tender shoot, grow into a sturdy sapling, and finally become a great tree, leaving forth each year and affording shade and comfort for the occupants of the home. If the young mind grows up among such scenes and amid such environment, it will prove a mighty factor in the material prosperity of the community.

THE COUNTRY HOME.

Lecturer Advocates Small Independent Homes, Each on a Acre of Land

An address on "The Significance of the Country Home" was delivered by Edward H. Chandler, secretary of the Twentieth Century Club at the recent graduating exercises of the School of Domestic Science of the Boston Young Women's Christian Association. In advocating a deliberate system of training nature study by means of school gardens, he said: Most important of all is the beginning of a national movement for the making of "homecrofts" or small independent homes with perhaps an acre to enable each family to find out the true values of rural life. It would be an absurd error to suppose that such homes are now lacking. There are multitudes throughout the land. What is new is that these homes are coming at last to their own. Instead of continuing to be the insignificant haunts of one's childhood, of which one who has risen to distinction is expected to be a little ashamed, they are being sought out as typical of the best in home life and as models to be reproduced in essentials with some adaptations to the new needs of the times.

FLOWERS AND BIRDS.

To grow up, Mr. Chandler said, with the flowers and shrubs and trees and to learn to care for the birds, squirrels, rabbits and domestic animals is a training whose influence on character can never be over-estimated. An acre of ground is enough for Nature's purposes if he who lives on it wishes to be her pupil and helper. The country home makes possible the simplicity of living and fosters true democracy. It is both noteworthy and somewhat pathetic that hosts of city dwellers should rush to welcome and listen to the prophet of the simple life who came to us from France. Yet he had no other message than that of the country home. Live among the real things of life in contact with elementary forces. Live above conventionality. Learn to be simple in your tastes and straightforward in your motives. Be a good neighbor and a true friend. This is the life which the country home fosters. There you may not have so much money to handle, but you do not need it. Ostentatious display kills the spirit of such a home. Democracy is talked of in the city but it is felt in the country. A town meeting is the highest type of democracy yet attained. There is a common interest which binds all country dwellers together. But who are so far separated and indifferent to each others' needs as the various tenants of a city tenement or apartment house?

THE STRENGTH OF NATIONS.

Not all who live in the country realize its significance. Here and there is a decadent home and a degenerate family. But all over the world the strength of nations is found among those who have been fostered near to nature and have become free beings by working together in honest labor. This is a home ideal to be placed among the highest. There is little danger of its over emphasis. No matter what one's work or how heavily the burden of the city presses the determination to live on the home acre in the country may easily become almost the most powerful influence in making a successful life!"

Parking for the Town.

The town parks, or the town or village square are the lungs of its citizens.

If the town is growing, it is none too soon to start a movement to provide for the securing of ample town parking. The land is increasing; when the town has doubled and has become a small city, it will not be so easy to secure sites, readily accessible to the people, without paying an exorbitant price. Secure first the land; it is not important that a large amount of money should be at once expended upon its beautification, possibly it needs but little, since nature may have made it more beautiful than can man. It is not necessary that it should be transformed into carpet beds of flowers and trimly kept lawns. If it affords sunlight and a green relief of grass and trees for the eye, it becomes a civilizer and an equalizer, for the poor as well as the wealthy, a resting place where a man may forget, for the time, some of his struggles and his anxieties in a contemplation of what God has made.

The park should be kept, in fact, as natural as is consistent with its use as such. It is never too early, however, to secure its site, with a view to the building up of the community, when land values will necessarily increase.

Distribution of Immigrants the Solution.

If there were only some practicable way of distributing immigration more equally among all the ports of the country the congestion and segragation phases of this problem would be nearer solution. It can be accomplished in but a small degree, since it will only be done if answering an economic demand, as in the case of the Galveston-Bremen service. Wise and well organized effort to induce immigrants to pass through the large ports by finding and insuring them employment in the interior and by informing them of opportunities elsewhere, will do much to improve conditions. The self-interest of states, many of which maintain immigration agencies, might also be brought more generally into play to attract the industrious and ambitious new comers to their farms and smaller towns.

Improving School Grounds.

In Rochester, N. Y., the authorities grade and sod the yards, while the shrubbery and planting is by private effort in junction with the school. Ample land is furnished for playground purposes, and most lary results have been obtained.

Poor Chance in the Cities.

Life in a metropolis makes children sharp, but not clever; it destroys their chance of ever clever, for it hastens the develop of the brain unnaturally; it them superficial, alert, but not ant; excitable, but without one of enthusiasm; they are apt to blase, fickle, discontented; they more things than the country child, but not such interesting and they do not properly see thing, for they have neither the nor capacity to get at the root of the bewildering objects that themselves into their little lives.

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