

Lemonade and Seed Corn

A Rural Money-Grabber

by Alan Harris

HOW CLARENCE GOT INTO SEED CORN I'll never stop wonderin. But then, he always was a little uppity to Jack when he was helpin him there on the family farm. You know how a grown boy gets with his dad--sometimes they ain't much respect. Farm was never quite good enough for him. And you know how Jack is--hurt him, but he never said nothin. Clarence always was kind of a money-grabber whenever he thought he had some scheme that would work.

Like the time years ago when he was sellin lemonade out by the road with about three people a day drivin by. I saw him one day and stopped. Asked him what he was sellin, and he says lemonade and so I says I'll take one. God, it was warm as hog pee, but I drunk it down and said how good it was, like you do to kids. And I asked him, well, how much is it, and he says about a dollar.

Well, I says, how can you get a dollar for a glass of lemonade when the price of soybeans is down so for these farmers. Just kind of kiddin him, you know. And he says, well, he figures that's the only way he can come out ahead, cause he only sells about one glass every three days, and has to throw a lot of lemonade out on the grass.

So I give him a dollar and went on to town. Made me half sick, too. Warm lemonade at a dollar a glass. He'll be somewhere someday, I says to myself.

Now this year Clarence wanted to sell me this new type of seed corn that's supposed to have all the bug poison built right in it and grow faster than the weeds and all that, like all the seed corn salesmen will tell you. Since Clarence is one of Jack's, I felt kind of obliged to talk to him now that he's gotten into seed corn.

When he came here, we hashed over old times, and how he'd sold me that glass of lemonade for a dollar along the road one time years ago, and we laughed. Finally I says, okay, I'll buy seed corn from you this year, but if there's a blank hill of corn on the whole place, I'll have you in the county jail in no time. Laughin, you know. So he writes me up a ticket and I pays him in advance with a check.

That's the last I ever see of him. Several other farmers here had the same thing happen. Jack feels terrible about it, but you can't blame Jack, honest and broke as he is. He can't pay his son's money back. Jack's lucky to save out enough seed from one year's corn crop to get a crop in the next year.

Jack can't help all this. I don't blame him none. The county boys are lookin for Clarence now. He always was a money-grabber. Wonder if they'll serve him warm lemonade in the county jail.