

Section Sixth (written c. 1920? By a Titcomb? This is one story among several)

“Among the nice things I learned to do,” said our little Lad, “while a small boy was to run the carding machine.” The farmer with whom he was living owned such a machine which was in much demand for about 4 or 5 months of every year. As soon as the clipping season commenced, say in May there would be a great demand for the use of the carding machine. When the fleece was shorn from the sheep it was to be made into “rolls.” In large bundles it would be brought to the machine for this purpose. The machine was run by water power and required close attention in order to produce good results. The wool must be picked all to pieces and well oiled and softened. Then it would be spread out on the rolling board in front of the machine which when in motion would carry the wool in among several revolving cards and so come out in large beautiful fleecy sheets wound on to a large roller. Then it must be removed carefully by hand and spread out on another roller in another part of the machine, where it would undergo another process of refinement by a finer grade of cards, and finally come out in the form of rolls light and beautiful, ready for the spinner with her big wheel to transform them into yarn for the Loom. What would you think of trusting a boy 10 or 12 years old to have the charge and care of such a machine? Such a boy was at once put at work not only on the farm to drive oxen and do every thing beside, but also, he must learn to make nice rolls out of large bundles of wool that would be brought there for that purpose. So he began at the beginning and for weeks and day after day, all day long he would be picking over the wool and preparing it for the machine.

It was not long before he knew every thing about the use of the carding machine. Sometimes when business was driving he would for hours after dark, light up and run the machine, turning the wool into nice rolls, doing all himself while the owner of the machine would be asleep on some of the big bundles of wool. The season would be a busy one for awhile. The women would be waiting for their rolls. That is why the machine must keep at work night as well as day, and somebody who knew how and could be trusted must run it.

This was 75 or 80 years ago before such work was done by large Factory Companies. Then there were no such buildings as you will now see in Lowell and Lawrence where thousands of hands are employed instead of one or two as then in the manufacturing of cloth from wool and cotton.

Our Lad could tell you that when he was a boy every farmer’s wife who had a flock of sheep had her spinning wheel and loom and with her own hands would turn the rolls as they came to her from the carding machine into cloth with the wheel and loom and cut and make up all the garments worn by the family.

This change took place along in the “Thirties” and “Forties,” when the foreigners from Ireland and other countries first began to come to this country in large companies seeking employment. The old countries had become so filled up with the lower classes of ignorant people that could not find any thing to do and were literally starving that they were glad to find a home here in America where even with low wages they could be far more comfortable and happy than in the countries where they were born. So this enterprising people _____ formed companies and started these new enterprises. A great wonderful change this so the “carding” machine came in for awhile and finally introduced the present factory system of turning the wool and cotton in cloth.

This was how our Ladd the little hero of this story came into so important relation to the “carding” machine.