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Raises Blueberries As Large as Grapes

New Jersey Girl, After Years of Intensive Cultivation, Evolves a Berry That Promises to Make Garden Spots of Swamp Land

Pioneering in New Jersey.

The winning out of a woman in competition with nature, unenthusiastic neighbors, and the hard conditions found in the deserted pine barrens that State.

Finally the development in one of the oldest and most effete States of the Union of a fruit that will be as new to the world as were tobacco, corn, potatoes, and cocoa when America was discovered.

These assertions seem unbelievable in the present decade, no matter how commonplace they may have seemed decades before the "winning of the West," when witches were still buried in Salem, or when Molly Pitcher took her gun and powder flask and went to the aid of the Continentals.

Yet here, without exaggeration, is the story of Miss Elizabeth C. White of Whitesbog, N. J., and the cultivation of a wild New Jersey fruit to the point at which it has produced a blueberry as large as a grape and in the way of growing larger. "Poof!" some may say. A pioneer growing blueberries!

nested in New England pies almost as soon as the Puritans hung out their first week's washing and had time to visit the woods and to pick them from the wild bushes in the swamps.

But the answer is, "Yes. A woman pioneer, working out a girlhood dream, has done this thing. The New Englanders, moreover, who had never successfully cultivated or improved the little berries of the swamps, are looking to the improvement of their deserted farm lands through the results of Miss White's efforts."

Conviction may be carried further by stating that the United States Department of Agriculture has seen a distinct vision to cooperate with Miss White. It is not only in New England but useless swamp lands in other parts of the country converted into commercially profitable fields. And something almost epic has grown up about the long struggle carried on in the pine belt of New Jersey, watched not only by the Government but by State agricultural stations in New Hampshire, Minnesota, New Jersey, and by agriculturists everywhere who have heard of the adventure.

The character of the sparsely populated countryside tended to discourage effort. It is in Burlington County, and in a district of sand, water, and scrubby pines, known for its cranberry bogs and its monotonous waste of rutted roads, uninhabited clearings—and always sand, pest, and more sand.

The inhabitants are few and far between. They live in little houses along the road or in hidden huts among the pines. They are called "Pineys," a silent, independent folk, knowing the waste stretches like a book. They are of the oldest English stock in the country.

"Hospitality" of the Pineys

generations? Steal the common possession of all the Pineys? Not by a whole lot!"

But Mr. Fenwick did not abandon his venture. He had his fences mended, and guards sufficiently well armed to give a good account of themselves in the straight-shooting backwoods patrolled the bogs day and night. As the years went on the condition was accepted under protest and Mr. Fenwick finally won out.

Now his granddaughter also is winning out. For finally she decided that, no matter what the difficulties, she owed it to the traditions of her family to bring one more fruit of the wastelands into cultivation.

Pineys edged her round as they did her grandfather, but she went personally to the natives first those who had worked in her father's cranberry bogs. She said she would pay them well if they would find, among the thousands of huckleberry bushes in the swamps, the very largest and best and lead her to them. They considered the reward and acted promptly. In the course of the next year or two, Miss White travelled hundreds of miles to Chatsworth, Retreat, back into the big cedar swamps, and finally had more than 100 bushes with which to start propagation experiments.

Meanwhile she had had laurel and cedar stumps cleared from several acres of land and prepared a place for their planting. She did not say much at that time. When Pineys took her money for finding bushes and smiled at her "folly," she affected not to notice. But inwardly her heart trembled. Would it be all waste?

Finally came the time for the first plantings. Bushes all of which had shown, in the swamps, a berry a half an inch across, were set out in the prepared field. All available information was used in making conditions just right. Miss White was back and forth to the fields a hundred times a day. It mattered little that three years must pass before any fruit would show on the bushes. Indomitable patience is a fundamental of pioneering.

Although the fruiting time was so long deferred, the growth of the bushes themselves had to be supervised and the conditions analyzed. This devotion kept almost all the plants alive until the testing time. In the third year the berries came.

Many of the Pineys have kept a suspicious eye on the venture they have not given any trouble. Some of them who now cultivate small cranberry bogs are beginning to play with the idea of cultivating blueberries themselves some day. The only deprecations are by "city folk," who affect to be unaware that the blueberries are cultivated and are private property. "What?" they ask. "Cultivated huckleberries? How funny!"

And few of them know they have crossed the trail of a woman pioneer who has laid a firm foundation for the culture of a plant that may be used in the home garden or as a crop that will mean redemption for certain agriculturists.

