

Cyrus had heard his father say it a hundred times. “There ought to be some better way to harvest grain. A man shouldn’t have to slave all his life like this. We should have a machine to do the harvesting.”

But no such machine had yet been invented. And so every fall Cyrus and his father did the backbreaking work by hand. Every winter they tried to make a harvesting machine. And every winter they failed.

After his father died, Cyrus kept on with the work. Finally he thought that he had made the machine he wanted. It was a large frame that could be pulled through the field by a horse. As the horse walked, four blades turned round and round, cutting the standing grain.

Probably Cyrus spent all his time on this invention. At any rate, it seems that he had neglected to plant his own fields. For when the machine was ready, he asked a neighbor named Ruff if he could harvest his grain. Ruff was willing. After all, why not get the harvesting done free?

“But be careful,” he told Cyrus. “I want that harvesting done right.”

Early one summer morning Cyrus drove out into Ruff’s grain field. The wheat stood straight and strong in the early light. He started the horse, and the great blades of the machine began to revolve.

Suddenly Farmer Ruff came running out into the field. “Stop! Stop!” he cried. “You’re ruining my crop. Look at it! Just look at it!”

Cyrus stopped the horse and jumped off the machine. He looked down at the path the blades had cut. Sure enough, the grain on

the ground was chewed and bitten.

“It’s ruined, ruined!” the farmer kept shouting.

And so that first test was a failure. The group of farmers who had come to watch it grinned knowingly. They’d always said it wouldn’t work.

Cyrus offered to pay for the grain he had ruined. Then, discouraged, he turned toward home. It looked as if all his work and all his father’s work had gone for nothing.

Just then a white-haired farmer left the group of jeering men.

“Don’t be discouraged,” he said. “You’ve got a good idea there. I’m sure you can make it work. When you’ve tinkered with it a little, bring it over to my field.”

That morning Cyrus adjusted every part of the machine. By eleven o’clock he was ready to try the new field.

No one but the friendly farmer was there. Cyrus started the horse, and the great blades turned once more. The grain fell flat under them, lying even and neat.

It was sunset when Cyrus finished. He was tired but happy. The farmer was delighted too.

“Six acres!” he shouted in amazement. “You have cut six acres in a day! That’s six times as fast as the best field hand I’ve ever had.”

Cyrus climbed down from his seat. He stroked his horse’s neck. Then, feeling a little foolish, he patted the machine. It was his father’s dream come true. The first McCormick reaper had opened up a whole new era of farming.

CHECK YOUR READING

1. **Cyrus McCormick wanted to invent a machine that would**
 - A harvest grain
 - B plant seeds
 - C plow land

2. **He got the idea from his**
 - A brother
 - B father
 - C neighbor

3. **The machine he finally invented was pulled by**
 - A a tractor
 - B a horse
 - C an ox

4. **The blades on the machine moved**
 - A up and down
 - B from side to side
 - C round and round

5. **Cyrus tested his machine on a neighbor's field because he**
 - A had not planted his own
 - B was afraid he'd ruin his own
 - C wanted to help his neighbor

6. **After he ruined his neighbor's crop, Cyrus offered to**
 - A replant it
 - B clear it away
 - C pay for it

7. **Most of the men who had watched the test**
 - A laughed at Cyrus
 - B scolded Cyrus
 - C helped Cyrus

8. **The white-haired farmer told Cyrus to**
 - A destroy the machine
 - B forget about the machine
 - C do more work on the machine

9. **When the machine finally worked, it did the job**
 - A not quite as fast as a man could
 - B just as fast as a man could
 - C much faster than a man could

10. **The new machine was called a**
 - A reaper
 - B baler
 - C thresher