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The Four Apple Trees

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Many years ago, there was a man who wanted to have a beautiful orchard. So, he sent for some young trees, knowing that he should not have to wait so long for his orchard if he planted trees which had already had a good start in growing. Unfortunately, however, the trees arrived just at a time when the man was obliged to leave home for several days. He was afraid the trees would not live unless they were planted very soon, and yet he could not stay to attend to them. Just then, a man came along who wanted work.

"Do you know how to set out trees?" asked the owner.

"Yes, indeed," said the other man.

"Then you may stay and set out these young apple trees. I am going to have an orchard, and I have marked the places for the trees, with stones."

By and by, the owner of the trees came back and went to look at his orchard. He had been gone four days.

"How is this!" said he; "only four trees set out?"

"That is all I had time for," answered the other man. "I dug great holes, so that the roots might be spread out to the farthest tip; I hauled rich earth from the woods, so that the trees might have the best of food; I set the trees straight and filled the holes with care. This took all the time, but these four trees are well planted."

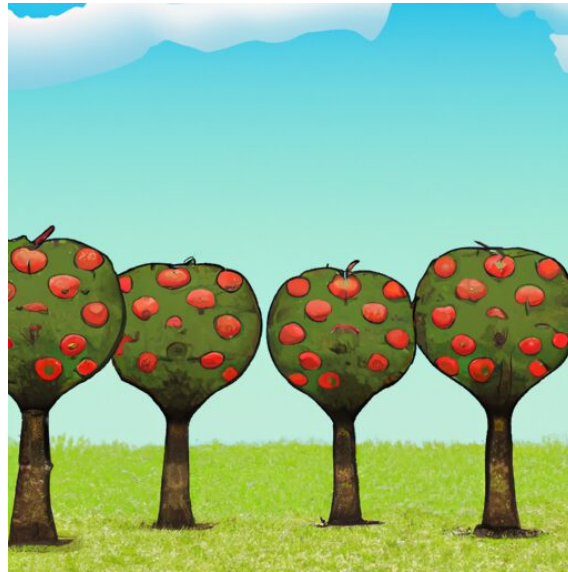
"That is too slow a way for me," said the owner. "I can plant the whole orchard in one day."

So, he went to work and planted the other trees in his own way. He did not dig the holes large enough or deep enough, and so, many of the little root-mouths were broken off when he set the trees into the holes. He did not take pains to get soft, rich earth to fill the holes, and so the trees could not have as good food as they needed.

The poor little trees lived for a while, but they were never very strong, never bore very good apples, and at last were cut down. All that was left of the orchard were the four trees which had been planted with such faithfulness and care.

These four trees are now older than an old man, and have been bearing delicious

great apples for many, many years. These four apple trees stand as a memorial of what it is to do a thing well.



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