

SECOND PRIZE Class C. A

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An Imaginary Visit to a Farm
in Canada.

It was winter; the distant sky was gradually becoming paler when I woke on that first morning on my Uncle's farm on the shore of Lake Huron. It was not long before I could hear the rattle of the milk pails, as Joan and Jack trudged through the snow to the great barn where the stock were housed during the winter. Soon the whole farm yard was astir, Phillip brought hay from the loft to feed the animals while Uncle brought them water and filled the wood-box.

I arrived in the kitchen in

2. Patricia Brooker.

time to join the family and the hired man in a hearty meal.

Breakfast over, Phillip went to school and the day's work was resumed. I helped Joan separate, and Jack took the cream out ready for the lorry. Meanwhile the men, amongst countless other jobs, mixed swill and fed the pigs.

Every day the animals were fed with root crops, hay, and oats. As winter advanced Joan, Jack, and I rose long before sunrise to milk.

There was more time for social activities during the winter. ~~and~~ Afternoons were sometimes spent in visiting and entertaining, while every fortnight we attended a "hoedown" at the school-house, where we did square dances to music supplied by local talent.

The day before Xmas we cut our Xmas tree in the forest, and took it home to be decorated. Before tea Phillip lead us to the

barn, inside which he cleared a space where Father Imas would tie his reindeer. That night we all hung up stockings, and, after Phillip was asleep, crept round filling them.

Imas day was fine, but during the night there had been another fall of snow, so for the first time I experienced the white Imas of story books. After breakfast, and the Imas tree Joan and I helped Aunt Rose cook the dinner, which included turkey and the Imas pudding. A Imas day essentially the same as one ^{spent} at home, though in the afternoon a skating party took the place of our swimming one.

Not long after Imas Joan informed me that Uncle Peter was going to start ice cutting.

"Instead of refrigerators we use frozen ice blocks," she explained. When the ice-house was full

Uncle Peter and Jack cut the year's supply of wood.

All the neighbouring men did not stay on their farms during the winter; many worked in the forests, and the crashing of trees could be heard all day. Many of the Lake farms were cleared forest land, and on my Uncle's farm there was still a big stand of timber.

nearly a quotation from "The Young Traveller in Canada" by J. H. Ingram.

A busy time was drawing near with the coming of spring. The sap on the maple trees had started to rise so we had bored holes in the trees, inserted spigots, and hung covered pails on the spouts. A big cauldron was hung over a fire and, when the buckets were full, their contents were poured into it. The sap was then boiled down to a golden syrup, some of which they took out for the next winter's pancakes and some for use as treacle. The rest was boiled again

and the boiling liquid was tipped on the snow to harden. This was the maple sugar. As soon as it was cool enough we younger ones were allowed to start pulling some of it into lengths. We were supposed to keep on pulling until it was quite white, but we ate most of it before then!

The change from one season to another was not nearly so gradual as in New Zealand. The snow, which brought the winter came suddenly, sometimes overnight, and disappeared almost as quickly. As soon as the snow had melted Uncle Peter ploughed and prepared the ground for the root crops, oats, and clover.

This farm carried only a few sheep but lambing gave the men yet another task.

Before long came the hay cutting at which the neighbours helped each other. To keep the mower working we relieved the men

for breakfast. There were hearty dinners of roast beef, maize, and blueberry pie, and teas of salad, eggs, home-made bread and butter, and fruit.

Some summer evenings we went riding, driving the cattle out of the bush to the salting place where coarse salt was spread over the ground for them to lick.

We spent the whole of one day helping a neighbour pick his fruit. He had grapes, olives, figs, apples, pears, and stone fruits. The fruit was placed in boxes, loaded onto a tractor and trailer, and taken to the lorry which took it to Toronto for shipment. The orchards and clover fields were rich in honey so this farmer kept an apiary too.

Canning was another time busy time for the woman. In the 'summer' kitchen a few hundred 'scalers' were filled with blueberries,

huckleberries, wild peaches, cherries, strawberries, and raspberries, and jelly made from chokeberries, which we had gathered from the woods. A plentiful supply of electricity from Niagara Falls made these tasks easier than in the days of coal-ranges.

One evening, all armed with aprons, we went to a popcorn party. Grains from maize, a sweet type of corn, were thrown into a kind of frying pan (the "popper"), heated until they burst into white woolly balls, and sprinkled with castor sugar.

As Autumn came on, and the maple leaves turned scarlet and gold, the oats had to be cut, the corn stacked in the aluminium silo, and the barns cleaned ready for housing the animals.

I had now seen the round of the year's work on a Canadian farm, in so many ways different

to that of our mountainous New Zealand sheep station to which I returned before the St. Lawrence waterway was again frozen.

Books consulted.

- "Boys and Girls of the British ^{World.} Empire"
by B. G. Hardingham, B.Sc.
"Colin and Patricia in Canada"
by C. B. Rutley.
"The Young Traveller in Canada"
by J. H. Ingram.
"Young Canada" by A. M. Peck.
"This is Canada" edited by D. Buchanan.
"Let's Read about Canada"
by L. G. and W. K. Harris.
"Picture Map Geography of Canada ^{and} Alaska"
by V. Luinn.