

In some it requires the chemist to detect its presence ; but in others the taste is easily observed by the senses : in dried fruits, for example, in turnips, parsnips, in the stalk of Indian corn, and even in straw. Who has not seen a farmer wile away the tedium of a long haul by chewing a few blades of straw. I often wonder if he knows he is eating sugar.

Even in very young trees the sap contains sugar ; but it is cruel to interfere with their future beauty and strength, and generally it is better to allow the tree to be at least the thickness of a foot in diameter at the bottom before it is tapped. Old trees give little or none, and they are either preserved for shade or cut down for fuel.

The season lasts for three or four weeks, but there may be many days in that period in which no sugaring can be done. When the spring is late the season may be cut short by the urgency of other farm operations.

The quantity of sap varies very much. A tree may yield one or two gallons in twenty-four hours, and again not a drop. Young trees are better than old ones, and trees do better in clearings than in forests. They are more liable to the influences of the weather.

If a farmer had a few hundred trees near each other, he could attend to them with much less labour and from one camp. But large sugaries of a thousand trees or more required several camps. Many obstacles had to be taken into consideration which depended upon the weather. When the snow was still a foot or two deep, and in sheltered places perhaps more, moving about with buckets of liquid sap became a laborious and difficult process.

When two trees grew close together one tub did for both, but usually each tree had its own.

With his auger the farmer made a hole one inch deep in the tree for the sap to flow out by ; and just beneath this he cut with his gouge another hole in which he inserted a small wooden spout or gutter to catch the sap and run it down into the bucket below. As he gained in worldly possessions he improved his instruments and materials ; but the important idea was to tap the tree, to catch the sap, and to secure the buckets from accidental upset by the cattle.

With a yoke on his shoulders suspending a couple of pails he began his rounds, stopping at every tree, emptying the tree bucket into his shoulder bucket, replacing the former, and carrying the latter when full to the camp where he had provided a large cask. When this cask was full it was time to commence boiling.

This was a process quite as picturesque as the tapping, and one which demanded more skill. As one swallow does not bring the spring, one spring does not make a good boiler. Much care and experience are necessary, and the product of an old hand at sugaring is as unlike that of a raw hand, as any other thing in which practice makes perfection.

Two forked poles were driven into the ground. Into these forks another strong pole was laid. From the centre of this pole a large boiler was suspended by a chain. Beneath this kettle the fire was kindled and the process commenced.

Piles of fuel was required, and many odd hours between the loads of sap were well occupied in felling, chopping and splitting.

Old grandfathers of maples, beeches, birches were used, and those near the camp were the first victims.

The sap was thin and watery when ladled into the boiler, and as it dried up more and more was added from the cask until gradually the whole mass became thicker and sweeter. Suddenly you might have seen the farmer run for a few shovelfuls of snow and throw it on the fire to stop the too rapid boiling ; or again he threw in a piece of fat pork which made a scum rise immediately

to the surface, and as this is composed of impurities from which all good sugar must be free, it was removed with the long handled skimmer. When the liquid was of the consistency of oil, the first part of the work was done. This is syrup.

Then the syrup was set to boil till it crystallized, and here the delicacy of manipulation came in. As it wasted away more and more was added ; another piece of pork performed its duty, and the skimmer was in constant requisition.

The fire had to be kept regular, and the stuff watched carefully. When nearly ready the farmer took a soft twig, and, bending it into a loop, dipped it into the liquid. Lifting it out, he observed a film of sugar on which he blew gently with his breath. If his breath blew through he continued his boiling and skimming, trying his twig again from time to time.

At length when the film did not break with his breath, but blew out into a bell, his sugar was ready. He baled it into buckets to harden ; put out his fire ; gathered up his tools and pails, and his "sugaring out" was over.

There are new fashions in everything, and so there is in "sugaring." Some day I will tell you about them. But I love to dwell on the old scenes, so happy were we, so healthy, so free from care.

And the sugar,—it used to be a daily bread matter with us. We know no other. We should have scorned any other.

Now we are getting so refined (!) that our maple sugar and our maple syrup, like our old china and worn out clocks, is classed among the æsthetic luxuries.

A hard word that. I should not have used it. What does it mean ?

OLD GRUB.



THE CALENDAR PRIZE.

MONTREAL, Feb. 19.

DEAR EDITOR,—Thank you very very much for the extremely pretty pencil which you sent me as a prize for the best essay in the January Calendar competition of THE YOUNG CANADIAN, and also for the kind letter accompanying it.

I like your paper very much, and look forward to its coming.

Yours truly,

G. A. W.

The essays were all remarkably good. They show that our young readers are interesting themselves in these matters, in the events that have been recorded in the history of their native country, and that have made it what it is.

The essays were all well expressed, and most of them were in very good style and said what they had to say in a pleasant young-people's way, not with their teacher at their elbow.

We wish we had had twenty prizes offered instead of