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## When the Sap Stirs

Approaching are the Hoar Frost Mornings that Awake Joy in the Hearts of Prospective Sugar Parties By MARY SPAFFORD

HERE is a saying among the people of rural Canada, that when the middle of January is reached, "the back of the winter is broken," and as the year advances toward spring, the question which interests lookers-on, as well as participants, is whether prevailing signs forecast a good sugar season.

Generally speaking, "sugaring" lies within the boundaries of March and May. Sap has been known to run in a recordbreaking February, and old

settlers can probably recall a stray "sugaring-off" in some belated May, but such events are aliens in the normal calendar of a Canadian sugar-bush.

The length of the sugar-season also varies, according to the year, but whenever fitful sunshine, gusty winds, and gently-compelling rains tantalize the maple buds to burst, like Aaron's Rod, into miracles of tender green, "sugaring" is

From the first of March to the first of May, the weather is varied, and unaccountable. There are the hoar-frost mornings, when the trees are fuzzy with prickly cobweb stuff, and the snow is graygummed with a dazzling frozen mesh. There are our inimitable Canadian spring mornings,-typical, charming! There's nothing like them in the world! They ravish your soul out of your body, in ecstacy. The air is a tonic, distilled to intoxication point. The surface layer of snow, slightly thawed during the previous day, has frozen during the night, and will bear your weight. Places are open to you, on these radiant mornings, which will be inaccessible, when the ardent sun has again pressed the chaste snow to its yielding; and for a few exhilarating hours, you can



When the Sap Stirs in the Maples and the Streams begin to Awake from their Winter lethargy

pass an unceremonious "time 'o day" with the tops of apple trees, or cultivate a walking acquaintance with the submerged tops of fence pickets.

There are backsliding days, when the air is thick with stinging frost particles, and there are relenting days, when the sun sends a shy warmth stealing down a bare-limbed hill-side. But the royal sugar weather comes when nights of frost are followed by mornings so crisp and rare, that those who tramp the crusted, sundazzled floor of the snow are intoxicated as by an elixir.

On such spring days does the sap leap from its long inaction, and pulsate imperiously through the blood-cells of the maples. Sap resembles sweetened water. With children it ranks as a delicacy, but the majority of people prefer it in the advanced stages of sugar or syrup.



Lunch Time on a Convenient Snow Bank, when Sugaring-Off is the Order of the Day

## Quite Worth While

THE pecuniary advantage of running a sugar-bush is not believed to be great, but in the farmer's calendar of work, this period falls betwixt and between the appropriate demands of the other seasons, and with an easy conscience, he turns his attention to the minor profits represented in his sugar-bush. The number of trees comprising a sugar-bush ranges from five hundred to two or three thousand, and by a rough calculation, one and one-half, to three pounds of sugar represent a maple's yearly yield.

At any season of the year a sugar-bush is a thing of beauty. In autumn, its trees stand shot through with fire-a still, intense conflagration. In snow-time, relieved of their gorgeous burden, the gray and naked framework of the branches makes a pleasing study in firmly-moulded strength, while, hidden somewhere in their depths, one knows a little weatherbeaten sugar-house stands solitary, or is sentineled by a rough wood-pile.

The amount of snow during the sugar season varies with the year. Sometimes, it is so deep in the woods that the men gather the sap on snow-shoes, and the syrup can be "sugared-off" directly on a snow bank, instead of the traditional bucket or tin pan packed with snow. Again, it may chance that only by scouring crevices and hollows can snow be procured for a "sugaring-off."

What a halo surrounds the sugar seasons of our school days! Then it was, that the place long held by apples, in the running of school economics was usurped by little cakes of maple sugar. Then, too, it happened that the lucky boy or girl whose father owned a sugar-place, suddenly awoke to an overpowering affluence in the matter of friends. There must be some subtle connection between the sweetness of maple sugar, and the dispositions of sugar-makers, for it is an unwritten law in the etiquette of sugar-bushes that free access shall be granted to all who care to come, and the school boys flock like bees to the nearest sugar bushes, while the cordial invitation: "Come again, boys! Come again!" is reiterated (and accepted), until one wonders how bare expenses can be met.

## Sugar Parties

ALTHOUGH sugar parties are sometimes held in the farm house, when the sap is boiled down in the kitchen, and music or games vary the programme, still the woods form the fitting background for the sugar-party proper. The sap seethes in the big boiler inside the sugar-house, deepening in color until it reaches two successive stages known as "syrupingoff," and "sugaring-off." The boys whittle industriously upon little wooden forks, or paddles, destined to find a vocation in conveying "sweets to the sweet." Tin pans are packed with snow

to form a resisting white floor for the golden trail of the syrup which is to be spread upon it from the steaming boiler. Doughnuts, and pickles are often passed at a sugar party, as an accessory to the warm sugar; also salt codfish, to whet the flagging appetite.

Who can describe maple wax to those who have never known the delight? Hard-boiled, it snaps in iced brittle strands, when wrested from its snow bed. Soft-boiled, it is a chilled, velvety confection. In either case, it is permeated by the

rich subtle flavor of the maples.

And as we walk homeward, under the high, wild skies of March, the voice of a crow sounds callow through the air, winging his way from old-time haunt to haunt; now near, now faint with distance. Melting pools become lakes of molten gold beneath a sunset sky, and the sun drops behind stark tree trunks to the purple edge of a world.

## Mobilizing Our Maples

T would be but a faintly-Canadian heart that would not beat to a faster measure at the thought of a morning such as Miss Spafford makes so vivid and so charming-a morning shared with our own maples.

But even apart from the lure of the 'hoar-frost mornings," from the joy of the young day's brilliance and the keen, gay sugar-party, there is a motive that should send forth every Canadian who neighbors a maple-wood-equipped with the full accourrements of the sap-gatherer.

For the maple trees have a gift for the country this year that should be appreciated as never before. Our big need is for production of everything edible.



ewhere in the heart of the Maple Woods a little weather-beaten sugar house stands solitary

Already the maples are producing for us one of the staples we need so much. The sweetness they are storing means more than pleasant flavors, welcome confections. It means an alternative for sugar!

Every pint of syrup, every pound of sugar that our maples give us this spring, will help with "the sweetening of the nation" in this telling year of the war.

So if you can help to gather this oddlytimed harvest, look to your pails and your cauldrons—be ready when the earliest herald cries "sap's running!" Most of all, be sure that there is no contribution in your district overlooked—that there is no gift of sweet, valuable saps silently offered, that does not meet with a graceful welcome, a cordial acceptance.

-THE EDITORS.

Do not fail to get the April issue of Every-woman's World—it's our Easter and Auto-mobile Number. It will contain a plentiade of interesting stories and articles.