



The Lure of Saptime.

I join the throng in the crowded street;
We are slaves in search of pelf;
I am sorry for the fettered gang,
I am sorrier for myself.
Just

Because
I know a place up-country,
In God's great out-of-doors,
A quiet, sheltered corner
On which the springtime pours
The wine of warmth and magic
And well I know the sun
Has kissed the grove of maples,
And sap begins to run.

There are sounds and sights that money
brings,
They are good to hear and to see,
But they're city sights and city sounds,
And right now they've no charm for me—
Just

Because
I want to see the bluebirds
And watch a sap-snow fall,
To see the pussy willows,
And hear the robin's call;
To see the frisky chipmunks,
As oft before I've done,
I want to be up-country
When the sap begins to run.

I sit in the seats of the mighty,
And gather my share of the best,
Of weary toil that brings treasure,
Still, now I am filled with unrest,
Just

Because
I want to see the sap-bush,
And smell the wood-fire smoke
To watch the boiling kettles,
And see the old home folk;
I'm hungry for hot sugar
And the simple, homely fun
That's sure to be up-country
When the sap begins to run.

—Floy Shoemaker Armstrong in National Magazine.

The Farmer's Spring.

(By Helen E. Williams.)

It begins—not the calendar's, not the poet's spring, but the farmer's—some blustering night in March, when he has gone out after dark to see that the live stock are all right. The wind has crusted the whole side of the barn with snow, and swirls particles of it, hissing, against the lantern. It has piled a scalloped drift in front of the sheep-shed door, and when the latter has with difficulty been wrenched open, bangs it precipitately to with tempestuous jeer.

Here and there a sheep or two has got up, startled by the concussion, but mostly they return the farmer's scrutiny with impassive stare. He advances slowly, the lantern breaking the shadows into quivering shafts of light. As his circuit brings him to the farther corner, a ewe suddenly stamps one fore foot twice, as a person might strike a cane on the floor to attract attention. The farmer lifts his lantern, and there, on the straw at his feet, is a yellowish-black something that staggers with a certain grotesque jauntiness up on its stilt-like legs, and, tail wriggling hungrily, emits a thin and querulous bleat. A pace behind a similar newcomer lies couchant. Twins—one dead.

Thereafter they appear on the scene at any and at all times, singly and in twins, occasionally even in triplets. The lambing season is of short but strenuous duration. There are so many contingencies to meet, so many complicating prejudices to overcome. For once in every so often there is a ewe that refuses to own her offspring. This has to be reared, cosset-fashion, by the aid of a bottle or teapot, till such a time as it is able to procure a vicarious living by sponging on sheep who are under the

misapprehension that they are giving sustenance to their own. Or it is conveyed to a ewe that has lost her lamb, when it applies itself in no half-hearted way, while the conveyer stands by to prevent the ewe from knocking it down. So quickly do they learn, that although they dare not approach their foster-mothers alone the instant the farmer appears, they dash for their churlish nourisher, and make up for lost time.

It is quite as good as a play, as the saying is; to watch forty or fifty lambs after they have been put out to grass. When the ewes wander away in search of

the pantomime of I am the king of the castle with realistic abandon. Then they will begin their ridiculous races all over again.

But long before this, other adventures divide the farmer's attention. Whereas, for a time, hardly a corner in the hay-loft was without its termagant "setter," with a chip apparently on every feather, now inordinately proud and matronly Rhode Island Reds strut in slatted coops, aswarm with the fluffiest of yellow chickens. Velvet-eyed calves frisk in box stalls. Little pink pigs scamper in their run.



At the Sugar Shanty.

"For it is the sugaring season, and only the prescience of spring to be sensed."

the tenderest blades, in the morning, or stand dreamily chewing their cud at sundown, the lambs betake themselves to a long, narrow lane, and run races at top speed. Back and forth they tear, their feet seeming hardly to touch the ground. Sometimes one will execute a series of elastic bounds in the air, a foot or more high, little black head waggishly shaking—the rest critically watching. Then another will perform, going a little farther, and bounding a little higher, or, as a special feat, giving his body a comic twist mid-air. Then they will set off, pell-mell, for a compost heap, and act

In the air is the sound of the axe and the saw, converting longitudinal wood-piles into pyramidal ones that exude a wholesome fragrance as tonic as ozone. In the woods is the smell of spring. No hint of green as yet. No pink budding in the maples. For it is the sugaring season, and only the prescience of spring to be sensed. Work for someone here, too, but such work! Tapping the maples under flying gray March clouds; gathering sap while the dawn can still be tasted and the crust "holds"; boiling it down through successive corrugated divisions of the long, shallow vats, in



"This is not work, it is—Sugaring."

the sugar shanties; peddling the bright tin cans of syrup, and cakes of mica-sugaring. But it, and the delightful out-in-the-woods parties which it makes possible, are soon over.

The next thing to appear on the farmer's horizon is the sheep-shearer. He goes from flock to flock all over the country, and is extremely jealous of his reputation for shearing so many per day without cutting them. The number varies, twenty sheep representing an average man's work, forty the skill of an expert. The sheep, even the young ones, appear to know what is coming, and, like their biblical progenitor, are dumb throughout the deft process of clipping off their heavy, hot coats.

For some unsolved reason, sheep-shearers are always garrulously inclined, and possessed of a fund of stories treating of many phases of farm life. Their point of view regarding justice in the concrete is apt to be colored by personal bias. According to their code, it would be the acme of all that is undesirable for a man appointed by the Government to watch lakes during the close season to make an example of a neighbor caught in the act of poaching. "Tell on Tom?" shears suspended indignantly, "Why, that would be mean!"

By the time he has betaken himself and his stories elsewhere, the crows are no longer regarded as harbingers, but as menaces to crops. The trees have burst into mists of green. Bulb and seed catalogues are causing emulative gardeners to don straw hats and sally forth to wage fierce warfare upon quack grass and like obnoxious foes. The snowdrops and crocuses are out, the robins busy with their nests. Intermittently voices of men ploughing or getting in crops float across fields. A smell of burning pervades the air. Wherever one goes, wherever one looks, life, pulsating life—summer on the wing.

Garden Preparations.

(By "Amateur.")

I have received in the last two weeks six seed catalogues! In the midst of winter, as we now are, they seem like a whiff of summertime, and make one think of strawberries, and asparagus, and flowers,—above all, flowers. If you,—and by you, I mean anyone who finds this article of sufficient interest to read, but especially farmers' wives and daughters,—have not one or more of these harbingers of spring on hand, please do send for one. Simmers', or Rennie's, or Bruce's, or any of our reliable seed firms, issue splendid catalogues.

If you have not the time and money to spend on large flower and vegetable gardens, do at least try one or two beds of flowers. Lay a trench of sweet peas, a bed of pansies, petunias, or Shirley poppies, with a few climbing vines, like nasturtiums or canary-bird vine (a very pretty, bright-green mass of foliage, with delicate little yellow flowers, a tender annual), or even morning-glories against your verandas, fences, and your house.

I could, of course, mention dozens of beautiful flowers, but many of the most beautiful are difficult to start.

If you have never gone in for vegetables much, just had perhaps, potatoes, cabbages, and a few roots, just try some extras this year and see what a wonderful difference it will make to your table; yes, and to your digestion, too.

Plant your vegetables where the man can cultivate them frequently with the one-horse cultivator, putting your rows far enough apart so this can be safely done, and you will not find the weeds very hard to subdue. But do not, if you can possibly avoid it, have your vegetable garden between your lawn and