

To The Farms!

The Country Needs You!

Five Thousand Women Must Help Out on the Farms and the Orchards
This Summer if Normal Production is to be Maintained

By ISABEL JONES, B.A.

"If you're seeking a pleasant vacation
And something to do for the nation,
There's only one work
You don't want to shirk—
Sign up! It's the country's salvation."



NEED you ask what that work is? FARMING, of course! It was on the tip of your tongue, for you have realized the importance of this work as national service, in fact, have not been allowed to forget it. It is absolutely essential, you feel, and rightly, that Canada must not have less acreage under cultivation than during the previous year, but more. In answer to this statement, the harassed farmer replies that it will be the utmost folly for him to plant when there are not hands enough to help him harvest. Here also, as in other branches of service, women must respond to the call.

By the word, "farming," which I have used somewhat loosely as a general term, I refer to fruit-picking, market gardening, and mixed farming. (Lest the last-mentioned may be ambiguous, the "mixture" consists in vegetables, stock, and grain, perhaps fruit.) Miss Winifred Harvey, Director of Women's Farm Labor, in the Trades and Labor Branch of the Ontario Department of Public Works, says that at least five thousand women can be employed on the farms of Ontario during this coming season. The greatest obstacle which confronts the woman who volunteers for agricultural work is the bulk of prejudice on the part of the farmer, especially in the case of mixed farming. Last summer saw the successful outcome of the experiment of sending women to the fruit farms; here, the prejudice of the growers against city women was turned to enthusiasm. But, in the case of mixed farming, the prejudice does not emphasize the "city," but concentrates all the venom of its spleen on the word "women." The farmer's wife will also add her objection to that of her husband. The farmer's wife—and there is no one harder worked—will say, and with reason: "If you are to have women to help you in the fields, why shouldn't I have women to help me in the house?" Therefore, those who are anxious to do mixed farming will have to accustom themselves to the idea of spending about two hours a day in work for the farmer's wife.

Where There's a Will

TO return to the prejudice against women as farm workers. It has its roots in the fact that most women, aside from those who live in the country, are startlingly ignorant of the work to be done on farms. But "where there's a will, there's a way," and once you have the will, the way will not be hard to find, for the Trades and Labor Branch is organizing training classes for those intending to assume the duties of mixed farming in the spring and summer of 1918. These classes are to be held at convenient centres and are to start the beginning of February. Their object is practical instruction: the system of "chores" will have to be mastered; the applicant must become familiar with the hitching and unhitching of a horse, with the business of milking, with the care and feeding of stock. The duration of this work will be from April to October, so that the appeal will come most strongly to those who are free from other occupations or to those who have a long holiday at their disposal.

Already the question of mixed farming is a burning one among University girls. Applications to enter these classes must be addressed to Miss Winifred Harvey, Director of Women's Farm Labor, 15 King Street East, Toronto—and the sooner they are sent the better. (If you know how to hitch a horse, you are the very person for this work.) If you feel that you cannot attempt mixed farming, there is the necessary work of fruit-picking from June till October. The fluctuating nature of this latter work makes necessary extra help in rush seasons, so that if you can only spend two or three weeks, your services will be welcomed.

It must not be forgotten that the proposition of sending women to work on farms is not so risky as might be supposed. The ground was prepared by the pioneers of last year—the fruit-pickers—who won the admiration of their employers by their willingness to attempt every sort of work given them to do. I should like to say something in detail of last year's experiment.

My outstanding impression on arriving at a fruit-picking camp last summer at the end of raspberry time was one of surprise at seeing my city friends accepting themselves in their new surroundings as a matter of course, and this surprise was deepened by the fact that the farming community also seemed to regard them as an established institution. I soon found that in the yoke of the daily routine one became extraordinarily adaptable to new conditions.

But the importance of this great undertaking must not be lost sight of. The war has wrought many changes, and this experiment on the fruit-farms is not one of the least, perhaps may even have far-reaching consequences. In the spring of 1917, there were farmers who refused to put in tomatoes, onions, and other vegetables, because they had planted them in vain the year before. It was only the extreme need of labor which prompted five

groups of growers and a farmer in Norfolk County to guarantee work to a definite number of pickers for a stated number of months. The courageous districts were Vittoria, Beamsville, Grimsby, Fruitland, Oakville, and Bronte. The rates of pay were those which had existed in the districts for some years. Look at the result of the summer's experience: Here were girls who by their excellent work and undaunted spirit had conquered the prevailing distrust against city workers and won the respect of their employers. The experiment had proven a success!

When you consider that fruit-picking camps were held in all the fruit districts of Ontario and that over twelve hundred workers were sent out by the Trades and Labor Branch, something of the magnitude of the scheme can be imagined. Think what the scheme means in operation! It means, first of all, the necessity of discovering a suitable place of accommodation, with water supply and sanitary conditions; the procuring of provisions; and last, but decidedly not least, the finding of a staff of house-workers.

The majority of the camps, including the largest ones, were administered by the Young Women's Christian Association, under the able superintendence of Miss Frances Jones. Twelve camps were managed by this institution, one by the Fred Victor Mission, and seven by the Trades and Labor Branch itself. The accommodation took various forms in various districts; in one place it was possible to obtain the use of a large summer hotel; in another, a barn was renovated; while in still another, military

A few of last year's pioneers hard at the work that combines pleasure, patriotism and pay.



At the top—Peaches!
To the right—Shifting Ladders to Another Orchard
To the left—The Girl with the Hoe

tents were used. In addition to the seven hundred and eighty-seven girls who were living in camps, thirty were living and boarding with the farmer; twenty were living in military tents and boarding at the farmer's; fourteen were cooking for themselves and living in a small house on the farm; while three hundred and seventy-seven were sent out from the cities by the branch employment bureaux. On the whole, the method of living in camps was considered the most satisfactory.

Oh, Those Meals!

TOO much praise cannot be given to the Commissariat Department in these camps. With real obstacles to overcome in the guise of primitive appliances, they re-

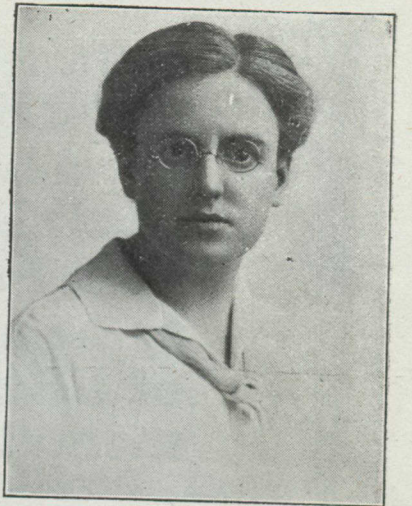


An Enthusiastic Group of Raspberry Pickers

ceived as great a share of the work, if not of the glory, as their sisters in the fields. What splendid meals they gave those hungry sisters—good square ones, substantial enough to satisfy even the voracious appetite of the agricultural laborer!

Concerning the pickers, some interesting figures have been obtained from Miss Harvey. All parts of Canada, except the far west, were represented. Forty-one counties of Ontario contributed workers. In addition, thirty-eight girls came from Quebec Province, three from Nova

Miss Winifred Harvey,
Director of
Women's Farm
Labor for the
Ontario
Government



Scotia, two from New Brunswick, and one from each of the Prairie Provinces. The majority were young; 35 per cent. were in their teens; 57 per cent. were in their twenties; 5.2 per cent. were in their thirties; 1.6 per cent. in their forties, and 0.5 per cent. over fifty. The largest group of pickers was made up of university girls; the next largest was that of leisured girls; next came school-girls and school-teachers; and lastly, those who could come only for short periods of time, namely, office girls, bank clerks, librarians, etc.

The unanimous testimony of the growers was that the type of labor represented by these girls was the best they had ever had. It is no wonder, however, that the girls "made good." There was no sort of work which they were afraid to tackle. The Victoria College girls who were sent to hull American strawberries in Mr. E. D. Smith's canning factory at Winona soon became so famous that the Trades and Labor Branch was flooded by applications from other canneries for workers—applications which were received too late in some cases to be satisfied. Their fame has endured, for only the other day Miss Harvey received a request from Mr. Smith for one hundred girls from the middle of May till the middle of June for the same work. At Grimsby, the girls became efficient commission-agents, one of their duties being to drive the motor truck to Hamilton with fruit for the market. In other districts, it was a common occurrence to see girls hitching and unhitching horses or driving the corn scuffer. Not only did the girls obtain experience as fruit-pickers, but they served their apprenticeship to the hoe and to the pruning-hook.

Weeding of a kind which "no man would ever have attempted" was successfully accomplished. Thinning raspberry canes, pruning currant bushes, and picking tomatoes, were jobs which exacted a trial of endurance. In the work of picking strawberries, raspberries, currants, cherries, plums, and peaches, it was acknowledged that the girls were careful and conscientious workers—they picked with discrimination and thus ensured a minimum of waste. Besides, the duty of packing tomatoes and peaches which is more of a science than the uninitiated can conceive, was entrusted to these workers.

May not this experiment have far-reaching consequences? The fact that city women are becoming familiar with the process of production and are eager to discuss the problems entailed, is a good sign. The most optimistic, after contemplating the enthusiasm of the workers, predict a counter-revolution in the shape of a general depopulation of the cities. It does not require the eyes of a clairvoyant to see the effect which this experiment is producing on the fruit-picking trade. Whoever hit upon the idea of making the workers pay their own board was not lacking in constructive statesmanship. It was a bond of union in all camps; it stimulated the worker to interest herself in the whole question of earnings. It is undoubtedly true that these women went forth into the fields and orchards with the highest motives of patriotism. But with this ideal, an interest in adequate remuneration is not incompatible.

As for Wages

INDEED, which is the more patriotic, the girl who proclaims that she is working solely as a national service with no interest in wages, or the girl who says: "In the cities, the consumer is paying 25c. a quart for raspberries, the fruit picker receives 3c. for that quart, where is the remaining 22 cents?" There were workers who, through no fault of their own, were unable to make a living wage. It has been calculated that over half of the pickers earned between \$5.00 and \$7.00 a week; 51.75 per cent. earned under \$6.00 a week. Although the pickers feel that the unusually poor season was to blame in great part for the low earnings, they feel that the rates of pay are too low in most cases; they ask that the risk of rain and bad weather be shared by farmer and picker alike. The outcome of the summer's experience was embodied in a series of resolutions drawn up at a meeting of Toronto fruit-pickers early in November, the substance of which was that a nine-hour day with Saturday as a half-holiday be instituted; that the farmer shall choose one of three alternative schemes with regard to rates of pay, each of which assures the worker of an average wage of \$9.00 a week. The interests of workers who come for rush seasons were also safeguarded in these regulations. It does not seem too much to say that if co-operation is maintained among the workers, the tendency is towards making the fruit-picking profession stable and self-respecting, and that, although the farmers have a rooted objection to the standardizing of wages, at least we may be sure that under the new arrangement, there will exist a minimum of exploitation.

Women! Do you want to work on farms this summer?
Farmers! Do you need help?
See Coupon on Page 24.