THE SWEETEST THING IN CANADA.

By Aubrey Fullerton.

The Canadian maple may be grandest in October, when it is gay with color, but it is sweetest in March and April, when the sugar sap is flowing.

There are not many Canadians, young or old, who do not relish a taste of maple sugar, which may very rightly be called our national sweetmeat. It is good, even when we buy it at the city stores; but, in the maple-woods, fresh from the trees and the sugaring-off kettle, it is a treat "once tasted, always remembered." If you have ever spent a day in the sugar-bush, the memory of it will stay with you long after much more important matters have been forgotten.

At the St. Louis Exposition, the last great world's fair, one of the most attractive features of the Canadian exhibit was a pavilion constructed of maple wood, and decorated with jars of syrup and cakes of sugar. In the center of the pavilion was a miniature sugar camp, with men and horses at work in a neatly-fenced grove of maples. A large placard on the side of the pavilion stated that Canada's annual output of maple sugar and syrup is nearly 18,000,000 pounds. The exhibit, with its tempting array of good things, was admired by thousands who, whatever else they might have thought about Canada, had not likely thought of it as a land of sweetness.

But we Canadians need no such demonstrations to convince us of the excellence of our native sugar, though perhaps we have not realized that so large a quantity of it was made each year. In some parts of Canada it is a very profitable industry, particularly in the Eastern Townships of Quebec; various parts of Ontario and Nova Scotia also produce large quantities.

Usually, in early March the sap of the maple tree begins to run, and continues till the warm days of late April bring out the buds. The best sugar weather is warm days following frosty nights; on such days the sap flows freely, and is of good quality. As it comes from the tree, the sap gives but little promise of its future lusciousness, for it is very much like sweetened water. It is the boiling that concentrates its strength and brings out its virtues.

A visit to a sugar camp, where the sap is being gathered and boiled, is, in the opinion of the young people, the greatest event of the year. There is the bewitching spirit of approaching spring in the air, besides the assurance of good things when the woods are reached.

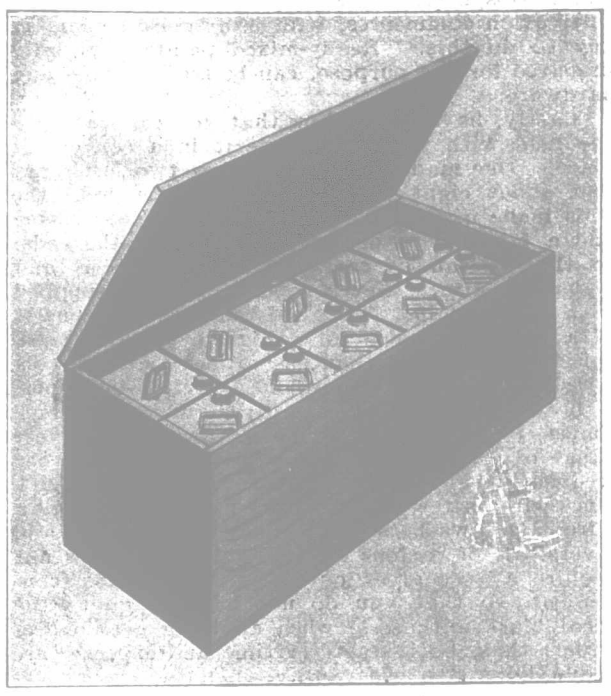
A sugar-bush may range from a few hundred to two or three thousand trees, and these little forests of maple are beautiful places, even without their suggestiveness of sugar and syrup. There is usually some snow on the ground when sap-time begins; sometimes, indeed, the men are obliged, while collecting the sap, to travel from tree to tree on snowshoes. The sap-gathering is the first thing you will notice when you reach the sugar-woods. A "spile" is driven into the tree, and a bucket placed on the ground to receive the sap; or the bucket may hang from the spile, which is driven into the trunk a few feet from the ground. It is an odd sight—these buckets fastened to the trees, as if the great maples were leaking. But that is just what they are doing—leaking sweetness—and the important thing is to catch it. A full-grown tree will yield sap enough in one season to make from one and a half to two pounds of sugar.

For a while you may be satisfied to linger about the trees and taste the sap as it has collected in the buckets, but you will soon go in search of more substantial delicacies at the sugar-house.

It is interesting, however, to follow the process of sugarmaking from its first stages, and, before there can be any sugar or syrup in the big kettles, the sap must be gathered from the trees. This was done in pioneer days by men afoot, carrying yokes on their shoulders, from the ends of which large pails were suspended. Into these was emptied the sap from the wooden troughs, used then instead of buckets. When all had been collected, it was taken to the sugar-house over none-too-easy footpaths. Nowadays, the sugarmakers usually drive sleds or wagons from tree to tree, thus collecting the sap not only more quickly, but more comfortably.

The boiling of the sap is done in large, flat pans or boilers, built into covered furnaces. In the smaller camps, brick arches are used, or sometimes open fires, over which deep kettles are hung. More scientific methods are, of course, in use to-day than formerly, but, by old or new, the same delicious results are obtained. As the sap boils, it thickens into a syrup, and at certain stages in the process it is transferred successively to other pans, then finally set aside to cool. Poured into variously-shaped moulds, it assumes the form in which we buy it, in fancy cakes, at the stores.

But this is how maple sweets taste their best. When the syrup has deepened in color until it has become like dull gold, spread it out on slightly packed snow, thus quickly cooling it. If it soaks into the snow, it is still too thin; but if it hardens and leaves crisp, brittle strands along the edges, it is just right for eating. Now, you see the possibilities for good fun, don't you? Imagine a sugar party in the woods, or, for that matter, in the kitchen of some roomy farmhouse; a big boiler or kettle of syrup on the fire, and a dozen or more eager tasters gathered around, each with a panful of snow, waiting for the moment when the "sugaring-off" stage shall be reached; then, dipping out the golden syrup and cooling it, vying with each other for the most fantastic or best-shaped cakes; and finally the climax, the eating of it. In the sugarmaking districts, such parties are annual features, and sometimes there are sugar socials in the churches, which are, it is almost needless to say, always popular, for skillful sugar cooks can prepare a great variety of confections from the maple syrup, using it as the basis of the various delicacies.



Case of Syrup Cans Packed for Shipment.

Good sugarmaking is a process that demands care. The appliances may or may not be of the best, but the boiling and clarifying must be done to a certain exact degree—just so far, and no farther—for the best results.

The sugarmakers who look to their maple woods for business profits, receive usually ten cents a pound for sugar, and a dollar or a dollar and a quarter a gallon for syrup. There are many farmers, however, who aim merely at supplying enough for the use of their own families and of their friends. Generosity is one of the characteristics of the sugar-camp, and a free invitation is given to share its delights.

The manufactured article, as we find it in the stores—the syrup in cans, and the sugar in bars and cakes—is the next best approach to the home-made sweet. It finds a wide favor all over the Dominion, and even in England, where it is sometimes sent by the larger dealers.

Since the maple is one of Canada's national emblems, we may have the satisfaction of both enjoying its sweetness for its own sake, and knowing that other people as well as ourselves will recognize the value of the tree which gives the finest of foliage in the summer, the rarest colors in the autumn, and the most delectable of sweets in the spring.

The Modern Way of Boiling Maple Sap.

THE TRADE IN SMALL SEEDS.

To many farmers, clover seed at 25 cents per pound is almost prohibitive. Those farmers and seed dealers who stocked up last autumn were wise, as the price of seeds is on the upgrade. While the farmer who has to buy pays a long price, those who are fortunate enough to have some for sale are getting good prices. Many cases can be cited where farmers got $12 to $13 per bushel for their seed this year. It is true they were clean, pure lots. One man, I heard, had refused $13.50 per bushel for his red-clover seed. This meets the criticism of a purchaser of seed, who thought the seedsmen were getting all the rake-off between the prices quoted in the market—about $10.25 to $10.50—and the retail price of $15.00 per bushel.

The red-clover seed, on the whole, this year, is freer from noxious weed seeds than other years, but there is a larger amount of dead, dull, discolored and shrunken seeds in the samples. Alsike seed was above the average in size, color and purity. Alsike prices seem to be steadily advancing. The alfalfa crop in Ontario was light last year, and, as with the red clover, there was a lot of inferior seed in it. The price of that, too, will be high.

A good deal of seed is changing hands among farmers this year in localities where seeds were grown. The high prices paid has brought out about everything in sight, so that the markets are likely to be sold pretty bare again this year.

It will pay farmers who are fortunate enough this summer to have good clover fields to prepare them for the production of seed.

Very much could be done early in the spring to abate the buckhorn nuisance in seeds by going over the clover fields early and spudding out this weed. It shows up quite early, although the best time is a few days after mowing, or after stock are turned off the pasture field. A great deal can be done at small cost by farmers in weeding the crops of all small seeds in the field, and thus make a more salable article, for which apologies need not be made. It would also tend to cheapen the seed to those who have to buy.

Notwithstanding all the drawbacks, let us remember that clover is our best and cheapest soil builder, as well as one of our best foods for all classes of stock. Don't cut out the clover.

T. G. RAYNOR.

LIQUID MANURING IN SIAM.

Editor "The Farmer's Advocate":

Apropos of the various articles which have appeared from time to time, dealing with the waste of manure entailed by the manure heap being exposed to rain, perhaps the following notes may be of interest to your readers. A few years ago I was in charge of a cocoanut estate of 1,200 acres in Siam. We had about 100 cows and cart bullocks, and the only method of manuring the cocoanut trees was by tying the cattle to the trees at night, two cows tied to one tree for three nights in succession. Afterwards, the manure was dug into the ground round the trees by Coolies.

By this system it took a very long time to manure all the trees on the estate, and entailed a lot of work tying up the cattle every night, and digging round the trees afterwards; also, the loss of cattle was very large from tigers, cheeters, panthers, etc. I have known twelve cart bullocks killed in three weeks.

To obviate this loss, and to economize labor, I erected a cattle shed, in the form of a hollow square, about 200 feet square inside. The stalls were placed all around the square; roofed with thatch and floored with cement. The roof of the stalls drained inwards, and the floors also drained inwards, to an open drain running round the square. The floor of the square was of hard red earth, and in the center was a cement well or liquid-manure pit, connected to the stall drain by four open drains.

Every morning the stalls were swept out and