

MAGIC FRUIT

BY MARY NORWOOD

If old Mr. and Mrs. Tansy had not offered to take Luke and Hetty Bascom when their mother found she would have to go to the hospital for a long time, it is hard to say what would have become of them. Mrs. Bascom was a widow and poor, and there were no relatives for the children to stay with. Luke and Hetty tried to look cheerful when they saw old Mr. Tansy driving up in a buggy to get them, but it was hard work. They had never lived in the country, much less on a farm, and they wondered how it would seem.

"Good-bye, mother," said Luke. "I am going to learn to be a farmer, and then some day I shall be able to buy all sorts of things for you. And I'll buy myself a four-bladed pocketknife and Hetty a—what do you want most, Hetty?"

"A ring with a blue stone," said Hetty, "but I'm going to learn to be a cook and make some money and buy it for myself."

They kept talking very fast about what they were going to do; it somehow helped to keep up their courage. "You will like the country," Mrs. Bascom said encouragingly. "There are so many birds and flowers, and the way the fruit grows is almost like magic."

That made things easier, and so Luke and Hetty were able to keep on smiling to the last.

Mr. Tansy was a silent old man, and the children felt somewhat forlorn by the time the ten-mile drive came to an end. Mrs. Tansy, too, was rather quiet; but she gave the little travelers a kind welcome and a good supper.

"Do you think we are going to like it here?" Hetty asked her brother as they went up to bed.

"Perhaps," Luke answered cautiously. "There'll be the birds and flowers, you know, and the magic fruit."

"Oh, yes, the magic fruit," said Hetty happily. "I had forgotten that."

They found, as the weeks went by, that they did like it very much on the Tansy farm. They played and worked and learned something new every day. It was midsummer when they reached the farm, but there was still plenty of time to see things grow. The fruit did indeed grow like magic.

"I want to learn how to raise things myself," Luke had said the very first day.

"And I want to learn how to cook," Hetty chimed in.

Then they told Mr. and Mrs. Tansy about the knife and the ring that they were going to buy some day, and all their plans.

"Very well," said the farmer and his wife. "Where there's a will there's a way."

So Luke spent a good deal of his time in the fields and in the garden, and Hetty helped Mrs. Tansy in the kitchen, and they both felt very important and useful.

The farmer turned over a whole pumpkin patch to Luke's special care. It was a small patch, but it called for much attention. Water had to be carried to it when there was no rain, and weeds had to be pulled up and bugs destroyed. Luke worked hard.

Meanwhile Hetty, in a big apron, was learning to cook. She was so small that she had to stand on a footstool to measure flour and beat eggs, but that did not discourage her. She learned how to make bread as well as anything, and one day she made three whole pies all by herself.

Later on she helped Luke pick apples and found the largest apple that anyone had ever seen on the farm. Mr. Tansy said she might have it for her own, and he gave Luke the biggest pumpkin in the little boy had taken care of.

"It was nearly Thanksgiving when a letter came saying that their mother was able to leave the hospital. Luke and Hetty rejoiced at the good news, but they were sorry to say good-bye to their friends and the farm."

"You're a very useful pair," said Mr. Tansy. So Luke and Hetty felt pleased and proud.

Mr. Tansy found at the last minute that he could not spare a horse to take the children back to the city, and so they would have to go back by train.

"Anyhow, I'm going to carry my big pumpkin," said Luke. "Mother must see that, no matter what."

"And I am going to carry my big red apple," Hetty said. "I shall make her an apple tart with it, and perhaps I shall make some pumpkin pies from Luke's pumpkin."

Mrs. Tansy laughed; she had taken to laughing a great deal since Luke and Hetty came to the farm.

"So you're going to carry back the big pumpkin and the big apple," Mr. Tansy said. He looked at his wife. "Well, they've been good children," he remarked; "I think they've earned a pumpkin and an apple. Maybe," he added, "they've earned even more."

The next day a happy little pair boarded the train for the city. Luke carried the big pumpkin, which was so large that he could hardly get his arms round it; and Hetty had a huge apple, as red as her cheeks. The other passengers smiled a little.

knife, too. But what of that. Didn't I tell you that I'll soon be a farmer? Then you shall have a ring as pretty as that one—of course, you will."

Hetty sighed. It seemed a long time before Luke would be a farmer. But after a while she grew more cheerful, and when she saw her mother on the station platform she forgot everything else.

Mrs. Bascom was astonished at the size of the pumpkin and of the apple. "Why, they look like magic fruit, to be sure," she said.

That afternoon there was a bustle in the Bascom kitchen. Luke carried his pumpkin in from the back porch, and Hetty, with an important air, tied on a big apron. Their mother was resting; how surprised she would be when she came downstairs and saw pumpkin pie and apple tart under way!

Luke stuck the carving knife into the big yellow ball and bore down on it until the golden halves separated and fell apart.

"What's this," he shouted suddenly, "in my pumpkin?"

It looked like a little roll of rubber. Luke picked it up and unwound it, and something hard dropped to the floor.

"A knife, a knife!" cried Luke. "A four-bladed knife!"

Hetty gasped. "Then—" she said, and made a dash for her apple. An instant later the apple, too, was wide open.

"Mine's a ring," said Hetty with a broad smile. "See, Luke—a ring with a little blue stone! It's as pretty as the ring the little girl in the train was wearing."

Luke was examining his pumpkin. A little piece about four inches square had been cut from it at one side, and some of the meat had been scooped out; then the piece had been put back and fastened in place with strips of transparent paper. Hetty's apple had been treated in the same way. The two treasures had been quite safe.

"Was it really magic fruit?" little Hetty asked in an awed voice.

"Well," said Luke slowly, "I suppose Mr. and Mrs. Tansy had a good deal to do with the knife and the ring; but anyway it's like magic for us, you know."

Then they went busily to work to make a magic Thanksgiving dessert for their mother.—Youth's Companion.

Eat Canadian-Grown Apples.

"Delight in every bite" is the key term used by the Fruit Branch at Ottawa to a little attractively presented booklet on Canadian-grown apples, in which, after a brief outline of the produce in the different provinces and details of the seasons of the numerous varieties, is given in comprehensive and plain form 115 different uses to which "the King of fruits" can be put.

These comprise many new recipes as well as some that are old, and all of value and worth while to the housekeeper. The apple, whether fresh, dried, evaporated or canned, is a wholesome food, easily prepared, attractive and palatable at all times. If eaten at the beginning of a meal, or between meals, it has a medicinal regulating value, as well as, from a dietetic standpoint, furnishing necessary mineral salts and organic acids and possessing important nutritive value supplied by the carbohydrates it contains.

That the Canadian-grown apple has no superior is proven by the 46 prizes won at the Imperial Fruit Show held in London, England, and the firsts and specials taken at other Shows. "Wherever exhibited the apples grown in Canada have always earned distinction in this manner. Doctors agree that the apple-eating habit is most beneficial and every judge is of opinion that for flavor and palatability there are none that exceed the good Canadian apple.

The booklet referred to, distributed by the Publications Branch at Ottawa, gives the details of the Fruit Act in regard to the grading of apples; and thus commends itself to every dealer and grower as well as to every housewife, who it suggests should never be without a box or barrel of Canadian-grown apples. A list of the varieties suitable and obtainable in the different months between September in the one year and May in the next year is also furnished.

A Lucky Cat Nap.

The small gray kitten with jade-green eyes and the snow-white breast was very wise. The little folk were going away to a place that they called "Thanksgiving Day." And Kitty Gray was low in her mind for fear that she'd be left behind.

She trailed them about with a mournful purr, but they were too busy to notice her till little Sue, of the soft sweet heart, explained to the kitty 'twas time to start. "I'll be lonesome, dear pussy, away from you." And the kitten wailed, "Me-too! Me-too!"

Of a sudden they thought of a clever scheme. To kitty 'twas better than mice or cream. And she curled up tight like a ball of fluff and went to sleep in Sue's gray muff!

How the family laughed at the extra guest,—the small gray kitten with snow-white breast!

"I'm thankful she's here," said dear little Sue. And the wise little cat agreed, "Me-too!"—Daisy D. Stephenson.

Fertilizer Harvest Time.

From late fall till the middle of spring is the fertilizer harvest time. Through this long cold season the domestic animals of the farm are housed almost all the time.

Mixing straw with hog manure adds to its bulk, prevents waste and makes it easier to handle. Incidentally, hog manure, preserved properly and intelligently applied, is one of the richest and best of all farm-made fertilizers. It ranks with that made from sheep and poultry. And where hogs are fed liberally of a variety, including animal protein and mineral matter, the manure is claimed by some to be the richest of any produced on the farm.

From a flock of from 100 to 200 hens during the cold months much valuable fertilizer can be made for the farm garden and truck patch. To make more and better fertilizer from the flock, dry soil, dust or coal ashes are sprinkled on the droppings board every few days.

This not only preserves the fertilizing value of the droppings, but also helps to keep down offensive poultry-house odors.

Not only from the droppings board but from the large floor of the poultry house much excellent fertilizer may be made through the cold months. The litter on the poultry-house floor keeps the birds busy while keeping their feet warmer and cleaner. It absorbs floor filth and make a fair grade of fertilizer.

Liberal bedding is the keynote to a large and valuable winter output of manure.

The true farmer loves his animals and soil. Furnishing the animal during the cold and wet months with a clean and warm bedding material to walk on, sleep on or scratch in is a means of expressing his love. On the side, the animals do better. And the large quantities of fertilizer made through the straw passing under the feet of the animals is a good means of making the soil of his farm fatter and fairer.

The successful farmer may be known by the number of manure forks he wears out every winter.

Increasing Potato Yields.

In directing the work of Dominion Illustration Stations it is the policy of the Experimental Farms to confine the illustrations to such methods and crops as are best suited for the locality in which the Station is situated. In the Province of New Brunswick, where the potato is an important money crop, the growing of potatoes is given special attention. According to the report of the Chief Supervisor of the Illustration Stations, available at the Publications Branch, Dept. of Agriculture, Ottawa, practically all of the operators of the Stations are interested in maintaining and improving the quality of their potatoes. Each operator was supplied by the Dept. of Agriculture with a quantity of certified Green Mountain potato seed.

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In the way of a demonstration, certified seed and seed of ordinary potatoes were planted side by side. This occurred at five Stations and furnished a very effective demonstration of the superiority of the certified over the ordinary seed. At two of the Stations the increase in crop from the certified seed over the ordinary was more than 100 bushels per acre, and at another point 99 bushels. The highest yield was obtained at the Grand Falls Station where 312 bushels of crop was harvested from certified seed and 200 from ordinary seed. In every case more than 200 bushels to the acre from the certified seed were secured. The average increase in yield per acre over the five Stations in favor of the certified seed was 70.2 bushels. When the crop was sold certified seed brought from \$2.50 to \$4 per barrel. The Supervisor recommends the average farmer to grow certified seed if for no other reason than that his yields will be increased from 25 to 75 per cent.

The Annual Bout.

The bell rang and Father faced the turkey. He circled the bird warily, looking for a hold. Considerable caution characterized the first few minutes of the bout, in spite of the fact that it was being conducted under carve-as-carve-can rules.

Suddenly they grappled. The turkey, a tough opponent, slid out from under Father and the two went to the mat. Mother, refereeing from the other end of the table, was so annoyed by the spotting of the mat, not to mention the clean tablecloth, that she awarded the first fall to the turkey.

Warning to his work, Father secured the famous drumstick hold on the turkey, twisting mercilessly and savagely attacking with a carving knife, which he declared, had not been sharpened since the iron age. Father pressed his advantage and succeeded in serving three guests.

But although the turkey was somewhat underweight, he was fast and slippery. He broke the scissors hold Father had on his breastbone with the fork and cleverly upset Father's glass of water into Auntie May's lap.

Spurred on by comments from the ringside which were becoming exceedingly caustic, Father threw aside science and resorted to brute force. He got a stranglehold on his adversary and did not relax it until there was a helping of turkey on everyone's plate. Then the victor released his grip in order to serve the neck to little Junior.



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WINTER MULCHING

Why it is Important; How to Protect Your Roses, Bulbs and Hardy Flowers.

One of the best jobs to be done in the garden, and one of the most important, is to cover everything tender in preparation for the long winter nap.

Some people are under the misapprehension that mulching in the winter time—covering the tender things with straw manure or similar material—is done in order to prevent the plants from freezing. On the contrary, mulch should not be put on the garden growth until after the ground has been frozen hard, and the plants with it. The mulch that is placed over them is to keep the plants, not from freezing, but rather from thawing out.

The first cold autumn weather will rarely injure plants. So wait and put on the mulch when it appears that winter has really set in and then apply the covers. This may sometimes be as late as the middle of December.

The alternate freezing and thawing, due to severely cold days followed by thawing, sunny days—the heaving of the soil which exposes plant roots and the too severe freezing of tops and roots, all harm the plants. It is the alternate freezing and thawing, and the heaving of the soil which causes the most injury, however, and it is this condition which the mulch prevents.

GET THE MULCHING MATERIAL READY IN ADVANCE.

Even though the winter mulch may not be needed until very late in the fall, nevertheless that is not sufficient reason to put off gathering the material together and having it ready and dry to cover the plants when it is time. A severe freeze comes very suddenly and unexpectedly, some times and we must be "right on the job" to apply the mulch.

Probably the best material with which to mulch most things is the stable litter or dry, strawy stable manure. This makes a fine mulch for most purposes, with the exception of the bulb beds, which are better mulched with some other material.

Marsh or meadow hay or grain straw is also excellent for most purposes, especially for strawberries and cold frames.

Leaves are always easy to obtain and in the suburbs or the city may be easier to procure than straw or manure.

Evergreen boughs are very good to hold mulchings in place or, in mild climates, the boughs may be used alone as coverings. They are also fine for tying up tall plants instead of the usual straw jacks.

THE NEAREST METHOD OF MULCHING.

If a neat mulch is desired for the borders or beds that will be seen through the winter, it is a good idea to run a piece of 12-inch chicken wire about the bed or border, holding it up with wooden stakes set in the ground. This should be done before freezing weather, then the leaves or straw mulch may be put within the wire enclosure over the plants after the freeze, holding the mulch in place with boughs or boards.

Be sure to always keep the mulching material perfectly dry and under cover while it is waiting to be used.

Mulching is required for the roses, tender shrubs, hardy borders, bulb beds, vines and boxwood edges—also for the strawberry beds, cold frames and newly set shrubs and fruit trees. Manure makes the best mulch for the hardy border, as it can be worked into the ground at the time of the spring cultivation.

Before covering the perennials with this mulch, cut down their tops to within three or four inches of the roots and burn this dead material, which may quite possibly contain disease spores or cocoons or insects eggs. The best mulch for the bulb border will be leaves or straw, as manure might come in contact with the bulbs and rot them.

HOW TO FIX THE ROSE GARDEN FOR WINTER.

Even though a few of the Hybrid Perpetuals and Hybrid Tea roses are hardy enough to stand up against the winter, it is generally the part of wisdom to mulch the entire rose bed. The earth should be drawn around the canes of the tender sorts, or around all of them in severe climates, in little hills, before the ground freezes. This also insures proper drainage. Cut back the canes a third before covering with the mulch. The most tender Teas, or Hybrid Teas, require an extra covering of leaves around them, placed inside of chicken wire that is run around the bed. This, with evergreen boughs on top, will keep the bushes in good condition until spring.

The ground around shrubs should be well covered with the mulching manure or leaves, but beware of packing this mulch about the stem or forking this mulch about the trunk of the shrub where it may offer

a cosy home to field mice or some other little animals.

The newly planted trees will also require a winter mulch for the first year or so, at least until they have become adjusted to their new growth. A mulch of strawy manure will do no harm and can be worked into the ground around the trees next spring.

What to Do to Obtain High Egg Production.

The requirements for high egg production, so says Prof. W. R. Graham of the O.A.C., are clean, dry, comfortable houses, that are free from direct draughts over the birds, and that are well-lighted. The feeding consists of a variety of grains, green feed, animal feed, grit and shell which is clean, sweet and wholesome, and is given to the birds regularly and in such quantities that they have all they want to eat before going to roost at night; that the supply of drinking material is clean and abundant; that the attendant is regular in his or her work and is interested in the same; that the birds are bred from good laying ancestors, and that they are hatched at the proper season and well reared, and are free from disease.

When Eggs Are Worth Most.

A study of the distribution of the egg production is most interesting and important from the point of the annual returns from the birds. Egg prices rise and fall with the seasons and usually the greatest profit is made where producing eggs at a season or seasons of the year when prices are high. Pullets are the chief source of egg supply. They require usually from six to seven months in which to mature. It is, therefore, possible to regulate their production in the fall months at least to some extent by regulating the time they will hatch in the spring. The main source of eggs produced during October and November is the March hatched pullets. By December the May hatched pullets are out for a reputation.

Cooking Apples.

Authorities seem to agree that in the cooking of apples either earthen or granite vessels are much to be preferred to iron or other metal kettles. When the latter are used an unfavorable flavor is liable to be imparted to the fruit. This observation is made in a pamphlet on "Canadian Grown Apples," issued by the Fruit Branch of the Dept. of Agriculture at Ottawa. The author also recommends the use of silver, granite, or wooden spoons for stirring the fruit during the process of cooking.