

# Watch this Space Next Week

for

## BARGAINS

### L. H. HUGGINS & CO.

#### PICKING THE STRAWBERRY

(Continued from first page)

washed, tent in order and all in readiness to go to a field. So was every one else, but, alas, it rained—just a provoking, hesitating, intermittent rain, but enough to keep the berries wet and unfit to pack. We hung around the entire day in a state of uncertainty. The sun might come out, the foreman assured us, and the wind come up and dry things off, and if it did, there would be picking in a couple of hours. But this did not happen. The sun would peep out for a few moments and then the clouds would close over and in the distance we could see the storm sweeping down the mountains and presently it would be upon us a pelting rain and cold wind. It would last, perhaps, but a few moments and then journey on down the valley. The sun would come out again causing our spirits to rise, only to be dashed by another storm.

The sun was up the next morning, and bright and early smoke was ascending at the various tents, and the odor of cooking prevailed. By 7 o'clock sun and wind had made the vines dry enough that we could begin work. We all filed up to the packing house to get our carrier, which is a sort of tray with a deep handle, and carries six boxes or "hallocks," as they are called. The foreman led the way to the field and assigned to each a "row," giving a few directions as to how to pick—to avoid green ones, and to leave about a half-inch stem. Some may find reason to object to the picking of the berry with the stem, instead of snapping it off near the berry, which is much the easier way on the ground that it leaves more room in the box for berries but when it comes to the packing the wisdom of the stem will be evident. We all set to work most ambitiously, men and women, old and young folks, and the children, too, some of them quite small. Any one can pick strawberries, and if the little ones do not pick very fast, what they do helps to swell the showing when the account is taken at the close of the day. The family parties would keep together, the old folks watching and directing the work of the small fry, and helping out the slow ones, so that all come to the end of the row about even.

It was surprising to see how the experienced ones and experts forged ahead. Their carriers would be full and they would be rushing off to the packing shed almost while we were making up our minds whether a berry was ripe enough to pick or not. They are the ones who earn the \$2 and \$2.50 a day. You can pick leading over or stopping, or clear down on your haunches like an Indian; or on one knee and then on the other and then on both knees. You will probably try them all before your first morning's picking is over, and fervently wish there were various other ways to try. By the time you have had your first day's experience, you are initiated. If you have never before ridden the goat, you certainly feel as if you had. No secret certainties, however sacred, could be more rigorous than the initial day in the berry patch. But that wears off, the experienced ones cheerfully assure you. Healthy? Nothing could be more so. The constant bending and unbending, reaching as far as possible up and down the row, in order to avoid so much bending and unbending, lifting the carrier, growing heavier each time with the weight of the fruit, and all out in the clear, warm sunshine with the air blowing fresh off the mountains. The inventor of the hundred year idea must certainly have gotten his inspiration in a strawberry field.

The patch which comprised several acres, soon became dotted with pickers—those of average speed advancing at about the same pace down the rows, the fast ones way ahead, and the slow ones keeping up a brave count in the rear. There was no time wasted, not a stop for chat or comment. When your carrier is full, mark the place on your row, hurry down your row at the end and then on to the packing-house to deliver your carrier, get credit for it and an empty carrier, then hurry back. If you forgot to mark your row when you went out, you are liable to lose much time finding it when you go back, for the rows look just alike, and you will wander around and perhaps light on someone else's row. The foreman, the only one privileged to walk across rows, moves around among the pickers to see that the berries are properly gathered and assign each to a new row when he is ready. It was marvelous how soon one large tract would be finished and the attack made upon another one. The fields are laid out and rows run according to slope in order to admit of irrigation, and no

sooner is one field finished than the Jay boys come, open the sluice boxes and let a flood of water down each row of berries. The grower in Hood River valley takes no account of the rainfall; in fact, he much prefers to regulate the supply of moisture himself.

And so the day wears on. The faster the fast pickers pick, the faster they seem to be able to do, and in the same ratio the unseasoned ones, who are just beginning to find out how many different sets of muscles they possess, lose time, the rows stretch out longer and longer and the carriers grow heavier. Still you keep at it with a great show of enthusiasm. If you cannot make \$2 a day you are bound to make \$1, and when your carrier is full you hike for the packing house at what seems to you a pretty good clip, but soon an expert scots by you, triumphantly bearing a loaded carrier, then another and another, and before you have finally arrive with yours they are scooting back with their empty ones. "This is my thirteenth today," proclaimed a pretty girl, looking as fresh as a daisy as she passed me with her empty carrier as I was going in with my sixth. She did not wait for a reply, but she must have noticed the look of dismay upon my face, for when the picking was over she was kind enough to stop and tell me not to be discouraged, for on her first day she carried only 40 cents, and then rested for two whole days. The small children often prove very useful in carrying the loaded fillets, leaving the older ones to keep on picking, and, considering the size of the berries, the time consumed going and coming is no small item. But if growers keep on systematizing the berry industry it is not at all unlikely we shall some day see the carriers sailing across the field on electric wires, like the clings baskets in the dry goods stores.

We had just arrived at the state of mind and body where there was doubt whether we would finish the seventh carrier or if it would finish us when we came upon a stretch where the berries were particularly large and grew plentifully, so that we held out until the carrier was heaped up. Fortunately for our pride, also, the mist that had been gathering up the valley now dropped upon us in a pelting rain, and picking had to be abandoned for the day, for the berries were thoroughly wet and would sour easily.

It was still early enough in the afternoon that after a rest we all went down in a field and gathered the strawberries enough for supper. How delicious the wild berry is, and what a treat it would make for its cultivated sister were it not so perishable. They grow so abundantly here that really it is an easy task to gather them. They are exceptionally large for wild berries, too. It was pleasant, too, for you are not thinking of your 9 cents per carrier, and can pause to watch the blue hills in the distance, and Mount Hood and Mount Adams—the presiding geniuses of the valley, who, after loitering behind their veils all day, have finally emerged in their gleaming, snowy vestments. We could hear the boom, boom of the lightning over across the Columbia on the Washington side, where the new railroad is being built.

There were lively times at the camp that night, and much talk and jesting from tent to tent. After it had grown dark a pack of howling Indians and yelping coyotes seemed to be tearing down upon us through the brush, but when they came into the open they proved to be only the men from Backdoor's Row. And after eyelids were all supposed to be closed in sleep, and, in fact, contracting snores were sung from some tents, many were brought wide awake by the crowing of a cock; another cock answered, and then the first cock crowed louder. Goodness gracious! Was it time to get up already, when the ache had not near gone out of the muscles? Then some one laughed, and a woman's voice admonished her boy to keep quiet, and all was still, for it was only 10 p. m.

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