

### Waiting for spring



By Mary Cook

“Spring is just around the corner,” Mother said that morning, as she glanced out the kitchen window. “I’m pretty sure I saw a robin yesterday.” Father said it was probably a crow. He wasn’t as anxious as Mother to see the end of winter. He still had a lot of what he called “indoor” jobs to get done.

Father spent most of his time between the drive shed and the barns in the winter. There were always stalls to fix, a place to get ready for the day the old sow gave birth, hay to move from the far end of the hay mow to be closer to the trap door, and the constant cleaning out of the stable and cow byre until the livestock were able to spend most of their time outdoors. He said he would dearly love to see the end of winter too, but he just wasn’t ready. Too much to do...and not enough time to do it in was his constant lament.

On the other hand, this time of year, Mother longed for green grass, open windows, trees with leaves on them, and a laneway leading to the Northcote Side Road that wasn’t full of deep icy ruts. As far as she was concerned, spring couldn’t come soon enough.

That morning the sun was shining brightly, and the snow and ice along the edge of the roof were melting and dripping onto the back step. Mother said we could soon part with our rubber galoshes, which suited me just fine.

When we started out for school Mother was busy pulling out the pieces of long underwear and old wool socks she had crammed into the window frames to keep out the icy drafts of winter. “Won’t need these anymore,” she said.

By the time we reached Plaunt’s road, taking us on the last leg of the walk to school, Audrey and I had opened our coats to the warmth of the day. We dodged the muddy spots in the road where the snow and ruts had melted and Audrey said it wouldn’t be long before the ditches would be full of water from the spring run-off.

When we got home that night, Mother had opened the doors and windows wide and aired out the house, which was a springtime ritual with her, and we knew then

for sure that winter was behind us.

Through the night, Audrey and I wakened together to the same sounds. The wind was pounding on the glass in our window, and we could hear the same noise we heard with the first snowfall a scant few months before. We could hear Father downstairs in the kitchen scraping open the Findlay Oval and plugging the fire box with blocks of wood. Our bedroom had taken on a chill that penetrated our very bones. I burrowed deep under the feather ticking, covering my head.

It wasn't long until the whole house was awake. The boys from the back bedroom were piling on their clothes.

No one said much during breakfast. Mother made more noise than usual banging the pots around on the cook stove. When Father came in from the barns, he was covered from head to foot with snow, and when he opened the kitchen door a blast of cold air followed him in. He said we couldn't walk to school, and that as soon as we got our clothes on he'd have the flat-bottom sleigh waiting with the team at the side of the house. Back then there was no such thing as missing school because of the weather.

We bundled up like mummies, with our lunches wrapped in newspaper to keep everything from freezing. By the time we were ready to go out the door, I turned and there was Mother re-stuffing the window frames with the long strips of old underwear and worn out socks.

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