

First Prize



KUMARA MOON

WHEN the tenth moon is full and bright it is time for the kumara planting, and those are the days for which I long as I pick lemons in the citrus groves of the pakeha rangatira.

The wattle trees in the pa are showing a tinge of the palest yellow, so that I know Uncle Kepa will be getting out his plough to clear his land of rubbish and last year's stalks.

Then one day soon he will laugh to himself, and harness old Moko, his horse.

Together they will lend themselves to the Maori neighbours, ploughing up the rough earth, turning the hardness to softness, sweetening the ground for the straight furrows that will hold next year's crop of smooth pink kumaras. Bella, and all my friends, will

be taking the best of what are in the pits, putting them in their new shallow beds of sifted soil where soon they will be throwing up small tender green shoots.

Little pale shoots waiting for the tenth moon. Like me, waiting also for that moon and . . . Tu . . .

All those who will not lose their jobs on the dairy farms and citrus groves will help with the planting. I think of how all through the sunshine we will sow the even rows of roots pulled gently from the old kumaras.

Carrying our bundles of shoots, we move down the furrows, some making the holes, some planting, some pressing them firm, singing, laughing, but always working. All together working. Soon the patch at Bella's place is smooth and the green lines clear in the bright light. Bella brings out food from her whare, and we talk and rest in the shade after the labours, eating good things from

to speak when the bosses swear and rage. But my pakeha say it is no use to have the crossness. He put his shoulders up and down, telling poetry about "a heathen who smiles and a Christian who riles and it weareth the Christian down."

But me, I do not understand such meanings. One time Uncle Kepa dig a new kumara pit and Peta lie down in the hole, and fold his hands under his chin, putting out his long red tongue, rolling his big eyes to show white. The girls kneel round the pit, covering their eyes, but peeping, making keening on a high note as for a man in death. Uncle Kepa he turn to see what Peta is up to now, and shovels a lot of earth on to him so that he jump out quick. We all run away, falling over with laughing.

Huia say the kumara planting is a good custom. She say she feels good thinking of Maoris all over this country stooping in the sunlight mak-

"The Month I Like Best"

AUGUST, the time of singing birds and spring flowers, when spring wakes the earth to new beauty, is the month most beloved by "Good Neighbours." Other months, too, have their share of admirers, especially October, December, and March.

First prize to "Isabel Emm," Tauranga, for her distinctive contribution, "Kumara Moon." Second prize to "Bee," Timaru, and "Faraway," Gisborne; and "Alison Grey," Tauranga, highly commended.

Bella's oven and from the store, too; so we are glad.

Huia plants her small ground alone. She must show Toni how clever she has been when he returns from the fighting overseas, how she has made his land flourish for his children. In the heat her small dress clings, showing much of her round damp body.

The men joke her for this, but Huia does not unbend her back, nor do her hands cease planting, pressing. She raises crinkled laughing friends' eyes against the sun, but says no words.

At sunset we go home, but after that maybe we go to Bella's or Maggi's, and make fun. Tu . . . Tu makes music on his Spanish guitar. Lehi brings his ukelele, while Bernardo plays on his long blue comb. We sing and sometimes we dance on the marae of our pa.

If the planting round the whares is all done and only one or two days remain of the working week, we do not then go back to our jobs. The river shines sparkling like silver where we swim and fish.

Peta mimics, and makes fun copying what our pakehas will say when we return to our works, and shows how we will smile and lower our eyes, saying no words, which is a good way

ing our pas fertile for the childrens. All safe and happy together.

When the tenth moon comes again, Huia will wish for us to help her this time for now Toni will come back no more to his home on the hillside. And me, I get lonely picking lemons

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