

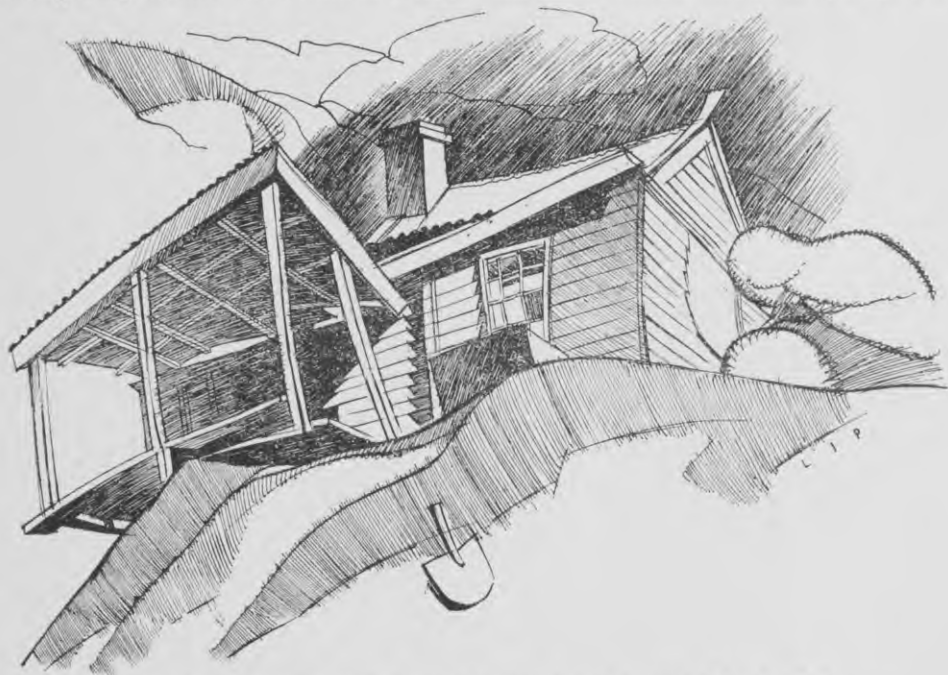
job. The older Daisy stops for a second to snatch an apple, misses, so contents herself with a mouthful of tree. Every night in the picking season she is given a feed of reject fruit—"and once," the boss said, "she wandered into the packing-shed in the lunch hour and ate fifteen cases of extra-fancy dessert peaches."

Picking is from early in November to the end of April, with January and February the busiest months. In spite of seasonal busyness and the urgent need to pick and to pack fruit as it becomes ready, the orchard is run to factory routine. No overtime is worked, the men finish in the packing-shed sharp at five o'clock—with the work finished. No one knows this better than the older Daisy: she's a quiet biddable old horse generally, but it's an impossibility to make her do another trip from the shed into the orchard after four o'clock; she knows as well as the boss that by that hour if work is to finish on time picking for the day should be complete. She just won't go. And as soon as the last load is brought in, without word from or a beg-

pardon to any one, she trundles herself, her cart, and her daughter round to the stable.

One thousand cases of fruit a day can be handled in the packing-shed; with twenty packers 1,000 cases can be handled in four hours. The grader, powered by an electric motor, grades to eight (adjustable) sizes, reduces work to a minimum. Packing is by hand, a job only for the expert if the fruit is to arrive at the market in good condition. When picking is ended, when the trees are bare-branched, there is pruning, top-dressing, replanting, and spraying to be done—work in a large orchard is by no means seasonal. A peach-tree needs about four years to reach full bearing, and plums and apricots a year or more longer. Trees will fruit for as long as forty years, but usually crops begin to decrease after twenty-five years; best practice is to get about fifteen years' heavy cropping from a tree and then replant.

"It's all for the best, but don't talk to me about marketing regulations," said the boss. Here is one of the paragraphs



*This old house looks ready to topple into the gulch near Gabriel's Gully.*