

led, by the passage this spring, in response to numerous petitions, of the act entitled: 'An Act for the Protection of the Growth of Partridge Berries,' which makes it a penal offence to pick or sell berries before a date to be set by the Minister of Agriculture and Mines. The working of the Act this year has given general satisfaction. There was at first some complaint that the date set, the 12th of September, was too late; but it proved to be quite early enough. Since the act was passed at the instance of the people, it has been very well observed; one or two violations only have been reported, and are being dealt with by the proper authorities.

#### Picking.

Berry-picking was formerly a woman's industry; but the prices offered to the pickers have been sufficient in recent years to attract men; and this year the poor fishery has brought an unusually large number to the berry-grounds. It is customary for the whole family to start off in the early morning for a day of picking, taking with them provisions which they eat around a fire at noon. Considerable trouble has been experienced in the past from carelessness in extinguishing these fires; but this year fire notices were freely posted in the berry-picking settlements, with the result that no fires have come to my knowledge as yet. It is often necessary to go several miles in from the settlements to find good spots, and the day's pack, amounting for an average picker to ten gallons, or for a good one, to fifteen, is carried out in bags. The berries as first picked contain leaves and dirt, and before they are saleable it is necessary for the pickers to wait for a windy day to winnow them. This is accomplished simply by spreading a cloth in an exposed place, and pouring the berries upon it from a pail held at arm's length above the head. The clean berries are now carried to the local buyers, who pack them with water in twenty gallon barrels.

#### Inspection. Shrinkage.

The Board of Trade at St. John's has found it necessary on account of

complaints of shortage from buyers on the foreign markets, to inspect all berries as they arrive from the Outports. Each barrel is opened, and those that show shortage are filled up. All parties agree that even when all precautions are taken, 20 gallons put into a barrel on the grounds will turn out only 18½ or 19 gallons a few weeks later at St. John's. Much comment has been made by the local buyers that they were saddled with this loss which had come out of their commission, though not chargeable to their fault. I find, however, that it is at present customary for the dealers in St. John's to allow for this usual shrinkage in the price which they offer to the local buyers, and to make up the shortage at the time of inspection, a practice which is fair to all parties, since the local buyer's commission depends on the quantity of berries which he handles, and is independent of the price which he has to pay the pickers. In some cases, two quotations are made to the local buyer by the merchant; a lower rate at which the merchant will assume the loss due to shrinkage, and a higher one, 'subject to inspection.'

#### Cause of Normal Shrinkage.

The cause of this loss is probably not a crushing or compression of the berry, as seems to be generally supposed, but rather a settling down of the berries to fill the space as compactly as possible. If a gallon as usually measured by the local dealer, who pours the berries in quickly and levels off the top, be tapped sharply on the table two or three times, the berries will settle to about 95-97 per cent of the volume of the gallon. The process of dumping a barrel of berries into a twenty-gallon measure, as is done at the time of inspection, produces an effect very similar to the tapping. The difficulty is that the contents of a gallon measure, and one-twentieth of the contents of a twenty-gallon measure, are different volumes in the sense that they displace different amounts of water, for the reasons just stated.

Aside from this normal shrinkage which is to be expected and allowed for, very considerable shrinkages are caused by allowing the berries to