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Ontario Apple Industry Should Be Revived

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THE statement by Prof. J. W. Crow, of the Guelph Agricultural College, published in the September issue of THE CANADIAN HORTICULTURIST, that for fifteen years the apple industry in Ontario has been declining and that it is still on the decline requires serious attention. Coming as it does from an official of the government, it proves the apple industry of the province to be in a critical position.

This is a discouraging admission after all the time and money that has been expended in building up the business. All who are interested should examine the causes given for this decline and if possible find a remedy, for if the same ratio of decline is maintained for another fifteen years, there will be no apple industry to conserve.

INSECTS AND DISEASE

The first reason given is the prevalence of insects and fungous diseases. These are very evident, but we have no more trouble of this kind than our neighbors to the south of the line, who continue to raise profitable crops of fruit by thorough spraying, pruning, and cultivation. This being the case, why have not our Canadian farmers been educated to the value of this work? Who is to blame for the fact that insects and fungous diseases have been allowed to destroy this trade? Surely the Ontario farmer is not deficient in intelligence as compared with the New York farmer. Then his unenlightened condition must be due either to the inefficiency of his teachers, lack of money or the neglect of the government to supply a sufficient number of teachers to do the work thoroughly. This is a pertinent question, for we either want better men or more of them or more money to carry on the work.

WINTER INJURY

The second reason given is winter injury, caused by our cold climate. That our climate is severe we all know, but I doubt that the loss from this cause is as great as supposed, especially if we deduct the damage done to trees, which are in a weakened condition from fungous and insect injuries by lack of proper care. Here again lack of education is shown, as it is generally the man who thinks that he is taking good care of his orchard by stimulating the growth with farm manure, a highly nitrogenous fertilizer, thus causing a soft, rank growth, who loses

his trees by winter frost. This loss can be charged against lack of knowledge on the part of the farmer which leads him to feed his trees an unbalanced plant food ration. It indicates also a lack of familiarity with the hardiness of the different varieties of trees and their suitability for this location.

We know, of course, that it is impossible to buy trees with a guarantee worth the paper it is written on that they are true to name. It has happened not in-

this source of injury to the industry is still needed.

THE UNSCRUPULOUS BUYER

The third reason given by Prof. Crow for the decline is the unscrupulous buyer. Quite true, but why has not the Ontario government gone after the unscrupulous buyer? If it had expended a small part of the energy in this direction that the Dominion Government has spent looking for the little apples put in the middle of the barrel by the farmer, developing markets and providing apple quotations, the apple industry might tell a different tale.

Owing to the perishable value of the crop and their inability to make sales, farmers have to take what they can get at the time for their apples. They cannot hold them for higher prices as they can wheat or oats. The work, therefore, of assisting them to form more cooperative associations should be pressed more vigorously.

Reliable buyers sometimes have a way of apportioning off certain territory among themselves. One will not bid higher than another. If an outside buyer comes in, he is either paid sufficient to lead him to get his apples elsewhere or for some other reason he makes up his mind to leave the territory, turning his apples over to the local dealer. Is it any wonder that with these lessons the farmer decides that it will pay him better in the end to produce staples, such as wheat, oats or butter? Why is it that the government has not stepped in and when the dealers refused to pay proper prices, arranged to have the apples taken off the farmer's hands and disposed of in some such way as the New York Central Railway has commenced to do? The farmer delivers the fruit to the car and the railway attends to the rest and sees that the apples reach the proper market and that the proceeds are remitted. Why has not the government made it its business to see that the man with a small quantity of fruit is assisted to dispose of his good apples to advantage either through cooperation or by vigorous search for and prosecution of dishonest buyers?

These are questions that should be answered, and I trust that the readers of THE CANADIAN HORTICULTURIST will see that they are answered by pressing for action which



Picking a Ben Davis Apple Tree, Tillsonburg, Ont.

Packing Gang of J. C. Harris, Ingersoll.

frequently that a man, after spending time to learn the most suitable varieties for his locality and buying from a supposedly reliable nursery firm, has found after he has cared for them for years, that they are not only worthless varieties, but that they are tender as well. By the time these trees commence to bear, they are so injured by frost they are not worth grafting. Under such conditions a man may well lose heart in the apple business. I have an example of this unscrupulous substitution in our own orchard, where, after buying what we thought were standard varieties, we found that we had all the varieties of size and color known, and also a large number of unknown varieties. A solution of