

The Land of the Big Red Apple

By A. McNEILL, Chief of the Fruit Division, Ottawa

(Continued from Exhibition Number)

The development of the Northwest in the neighborhood of Calgary and Edmonton has opened up a market not so very distant and growing quite as rapidly as the means of production of fruit in British Columbia.

Some of the practices of the British Columbia fruit growers would not appeal particularly to the fruit growers of eastern Canada, yet the success of the British Columbia growers must be their vindication. The process of thinning fruit is almost universal except in the case of the cherry. It would strike an eastern grower as a great waste of time and money to pay a man a dollar and a quarter a day for pulling good apples from the trees in the month of June. It is safe to say that at least one-half of all the fruit that sets is taken in the process of thinning. No doubt the dry, bright atmosphere favors better pollination, but the keen competition with and the good example of, the American growers has forced upon them

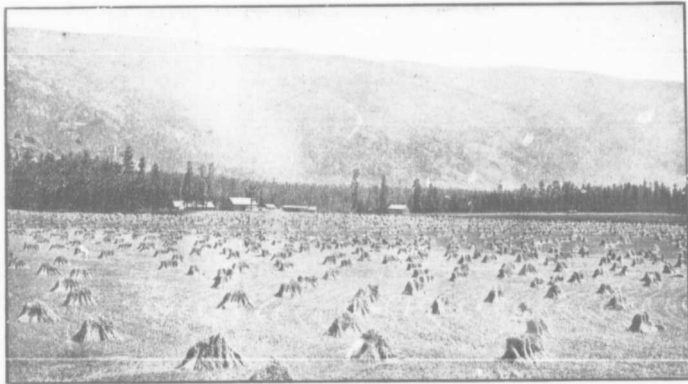
practice to pick even apple trees several times, taking only the fruit that is in the proper condition. This in itself will probably account in a large measure for the better keeping qualities of western fruit. The packing and grading are performed with the greatest care and always in boxes. I need not here take up the relative merits of boxes versus barrels, but there is not the slightest doubt in the mind of any western grower as to which is the best package. One gentleman to whom I referred the matter said that he was not anxious at all to argue the question with me; if he had any preferences at all they were that the eastern grower should still retain the barrel as his package, because he was perfectly certain that so long as the eastern grower did so the western grower would have practically no competition.

There are certain contrasts between eastern and western orchards. The fruit trees of British Columbia, for some

reasons that the fruit growers could afford to pay. Day laborers were getting from \$1.25 to \$1.75 per day and their board. Permanent men were getting wages proportionately. Some of the managers of the larger fruit ranches were getting as high as \$1,500 per year with perquisites. Here again I think that there is a lesson for eastern fruit men. Labor on fruit farms in the east is scarce, but fruit growers have not been willing to pay the prices that manufacturers in the neighborhood are paying a similar class of men, and until they do so, and offer the other advantages, it is to be expected that the laborers will be few.

The early bearing peculiarity of the fruit trees in the west is not easily explained. The Spy will not usually bear in the east in less than 12 or 15 years, and quite frequently a Spy orchard is 20 years old before it gives a profitable crop. A good crop is expected in British Columbia on Spys six or seven years old, and very few of the trees fail to bear a profitable crop in four years.

In varieties the western grower does not depart very much from the varieties in the east. Duchess, Wealthy, McIntosh, King, Spy, Newton, and Spitz-



A Field of Wheat at Enderly, B.C.

the production of the best only. Their markets, too, are all distant markets, which renders it unprofitable to ship anything but the first grade. This is a lesson which eastern growers have yet to learn. For years Ontario has been shipping to the Northwest a large quantity of second grade apples, frequently with the comment that they cannot grow apples in the Northwest, and they should be satisfied with what they get. The reply of the buyer in the Northwest has been a price so low that the Ontario grower did not succeed in getting freight and expenses. Sooner or later the eastern grower will adopt the practice of the grower in the west, and send nothing from home but a number one grade. Another practice universal in British Columbia is quite exceptional in eastern Canada, that is clean culture. The British Columbia orchard is cultivated as carefully as a cornfield from the time it is planted. I need scarcely remind those who are familiar with conditions in Ontario that the great majority of the orchards are not, or if cultivated at all, are cultivated for the purpose of securing a small crop. So, too, when it comes to picking, I am informed that a very ordinary

reason or other, do not acquire the large size that they do in the east. Nowhere did I see any approach to the grand old Graevestines that are to be seen in the Annapolis Valley, nor could the magnificent Northern Spys or Greenings of western Ontario be duplicated in British Columbia. This is the more remarkable inasmuch as the forest trees there surpass the Ontario forest trees in size even more than the eastern orchard trees surpass those of the west.

The labor problem is very much in evidence on the fruit farms of the west. Chinese and Japanese are everywhere present in large numbers, and are giving the best of satisfaction. I frequently asked the fruit growers whether they would not favor the free admission of these people, but never once did I get a direct reply saying that they would. But the closest questioning failed to reveal any good reason why they should be excluded. They are industrious, cleanly in their habits, honest and intelligent. The only fault that is attributed to them is economy, and their habit of sending their savings to friends in their native land.

I was somewhat surprised at the high

enlargement everywhere favorites. A few growers have made the mistake of planting too many varieties, but this is not the rule. Plums are a favorite crop; they grow in all parts of the province, though they are much subject to rot on the Coast. These have all the good keeping qualities of the California varieties, and something of the lusciousness of eastern varieties. The Italian and sugar plums are favorites, and it would not be at all surprising if, at some future time, British Columbia added cured plums to her products. The lower coast and Vancouver Island district excel specially in small fruits. I examined several fields of strawberries and should have pronounced them all a full crop, but the growers all deplored heavy losses this spring from an exceptionally late frost, and spoke of having only a half crop.

Nothing surprised me more than the Logan berry. This is a cross between the blackberry and raspberry, and is cultivated on a low trellis. The exposed surface appeared to be one mass of fruit, and though I cannot say that the flavor appealed to me very strongly yet it is so prolific, and the flavor so distinct, that I have not the slightest