THINNING FRUIT.

THIS is another part of the New Fruit Culture which is absolutely essential to success in plums, apples, pears and peaches. The absurd method of allowing each tree to overload itself each alternate year in its natural effort to produce as many seeds as possible, regardless of the size of the fruit must come to a stop, and the fruit grower who means to succeed must aim at size of fruit and not at the number of seeds. Even for evaporating, buyers will not take apples, for example, less than 2 inches in diameter, and for export it is proposed that we make the minimum for No. 1 grade 2¼ inches. Van Deman writes very sensibly on this subject in Green's Fruit Grower, he says:—

There are several reasons why thinning pays. The most important one is, that it causes the fruit to be large and well flavored instead of small and poorly flavored. It is scarcely worth while arguing about the difference in value between large and small fruits of the same variety, either for market or home use; and I would not do so if there were not so many who continue to grow so much of the latter kind. One big Baldwin, Jonathan or any kind of apple is worth more than twice as much as two of half the size. In actual net profit it is worth fully four times as much whether eaten or sold. The same is true of pears, peaches, plums and all other fruits. When there is a glut in the markets it often occurs that small and inferior fruits will not sell for enough to repay the cost of gathering and transportation.

Now if the trees that bore these small half or less than half-developed fruits had been stripped of half or three-quarters of them when they were about the size of marbles the remaining ones would have grown to weigh nearly as much as all of them and would have been worth much more.

There have been several experiments made to obtain positive evidence as to the profit or loss of thinning fruit and what proportion should be removed. The first extensive experiments of this kind, of which I have knowledge, were made in California some fifteen years ago by Mr. A. T. Hatch, and were made principally upon peaches and pears. I heard him state that he tried leaving the fruits different distances apart; some being just as nature had placed them, some three, four, five and six inches apart and so on up to a foot He said that he had finally decided that for these two fruits about six inches gave the best results. The open hand of the workman was given them as a measure by which to space them. In New York, Connecticut, Michigan and Georgia there have been several such tests with apples, peaches, pears and plums. Only a few persons have tried the plan upon grapes, except in house culture. In every case it has paid. A few have thinned big trees of Baldwin, Esopus and other apples, carefully charging all expense of labor and crediting the trees with the fruit sold. This having been done in comparison with adjoining trees that were not thinned, and of which records were kept of fruit sold, it was found that there was a very decided balance in favor of thinning. If this will pay on a few trees it will pay on many. It is purely a matter of business judgment as whether it should be done or left undone; just as a farmer thins his corn to two or three stalks to the hill and has big ears, or lets five or six stalks stand to make fod-