

TAILING.

The process of 'tailing' is the severest test of a good packer. It consists in arranging the last two or more rows of apples against which the tail head will press, so that they will reach not more than level with the top of the chime.

Nearly all printed instructions in tailing a barrel advise that the apples should project above the chime, before the head is put on, to the extent of an inch or an inch and a half. I am persuaded that any projection beyond the chime of the barrel is quite unnecessary, if the racking has been properly done, as recommended in the preceding paragraphs. The reports of the Dominion Fruit Inspectors, who open many thousand barrels in the course of a year, are almost unanimous in saying that more barrels are slack from over-pressing than from any other cause. Where the projection is above the chime it is almost impossible not to injure the apples so as to offer an entrance for rot germs, and quite apart from the natural injuries to the apples by pressing, there are secondary consequences that follow by the introduction of these germs. Over pressing is particularly objectionable in several varieties of apples that are characterized by a certain crispness, which in other material would be called brittleness, the Northern Spy being a marked example of this. It is quite possible, however, to give more pressure to a Russet than could be recommended for the more brittle varieties. As in all matters connected with apple packing, discretion must be used, suited to the various conditions under which fruit is packed and the varieties that are being dealt with.

The characteristic of good tailing is to have the apples in the last two rows placed solidly and evenly, so that when finished the head will touch with the same pressure each apple exposed. This is a very difficult thing to accomplish, even where considerable time is taken in the operation, and it is only a skillful packer who can perform this operation quickly and well. It is a common fault with unskilled packers to allow one or more apples to project above the general surface. When pressure is put upon the barrel, these apples take the whole pressure first, and are frequently crushed before the head is in place. It is advisable for young packers to open a barrel of their own packing occasionally and note the number of apples which have been touched by the head at the pressed end. If it should appear that a number of apples have not been touched by the head, and others are severely pressed, then they may rest assured that they have made a poor job of the tail. The aim should be to have equal pressure upon every apple in the last layer. This is attained by levelling the apples as they approach the top and placing a 'follower' upon this roughly levelled surface. Slight pressure is now put upon the 'follower' and the barrel is racked so as to settle all the apples into place. Some packers go to the trouble of exerting pressure upon the 'follower' by means of the ordinary apple press, being careful to use very slight pressure indeed, and after racking slightly giving the screw an additional turn and then racking again. Others, however, do it very successfully by placing the 'follower' upon the roughly tailed surface and, grasping the edges of the barrel furthest from them with the hands, bringing the elbows down upon the 'follower' and exerting as much pressure as they can while they rack the barrel backward and forward on the racking plank.

Considerable judgment is necessary to determine just how high to have the apples in the barrel before applying the follower. The aim should be to have the fairly level surface made by the process of racking under the follower, so that the apples used for making the regular tail should reach just to the top of the chime of the barrel, or perhaps slightly more in the case of some varieties. When the head is placed upon this and pressure applied to force the head into the croze, apples will be packed tight enough for export. Of course if the apples are intended for nearby markets or for immediate consumption it is much better not to press quite so heavily, so that the tail would then be slightly below the top of the chime.