

AN ENGLISH FRUIT FARM

BY THE EDITOR.

HAVING an introduction from Mr. A. E. Kimmins, of Winona, to his uncle, Mr. A. J. Thomas, of Bargainhill, near Sittingbourne, in East Kent, we went down by a Thames steamer to Gravesend, and from Sittingbourne by carriage, four miles, to his lovely country home. The surroundings are picturesque, the land being somewhat hilly and well clothed with orchards and hop yards. On every side, as we approached, were large plantations of cherry, plum, dwarf apple and pear trees, reminding one of the fruit districts of Ontario, except that with us such plantations are young, while in England they are comparatively very old.

"I have an orchard of black cherry trees," said Mr. Thomas, "which must be nearly two hundred years old, for they were old trees in my grandfather's time."

To us it seems doubtful if any Canadian cherry orchard will ever endure to such an age. We have many cherry trees that have reached the age of fifty years, but they are already beginning to fail.

The lawn and hedges about Mr. Thomas' house were all in perfect trim, and such beds of immense pansies as we have never seen in Ontario were placed about in bold relief. What a delightful retreat from the great city of London! "I would not live amid the smoke and dust of that city for anything you could give me, so long as I have this country home," said Miss Thomas, and we heartily re-echoed the sentiment, applied even to our own country home in Ontario.

"What variety of cherries do you cultivate?" we enquired.

"Chiefly the Bigarreaus," said Mr. Thomas, "and of these the chief are the

Amber, the Napoleon and the Yellow Spanish."

"Do you not cultivate the Kentish varieties of sour cherries?"

"Not of late years," said he. "We find more money in growing such kinds as Governor Wood, the Bigarreaus, and the Black Ox Hearts."

Walking through his great cherry orchards we were struck with the enormous size of the trees, and could easily credit them with yielding an enormous crop in favorable seasons.

"Do you cultivate your cherry orchard?"

"No," said he, "not after the trees reach bearing age. Then we seed down the ground to a sheep pasture."

"What are your prospects for a fruit crop this season?" we asked, seeing that the trees in most cases appeared to show very little fruit.

"The blackest we ever knew," said he. "The severe spring frosts, and the backward weather which has prevailed since, have combined to destroy nearly our whole fruit crop this season, so that, unless prices rule very high, it will not even pay for the harvesting. Nearly all fruits are destroyed alike by the frost, pears, plums and apples, as well as cherries. In consequence this ought to be a most favorable season for you Canadians to ship your fruit in to this country."

"How many acres of orchard have you?"

"About one hundred and fifty; mostly devoted to cherries, pears and apples. The apples are grown for the most part on the English paradise stock, and are planted 9 x 12 feet apart."

The top grafting done by Mr. Thomas is