

TENDER FRUITS AND TRANSPORTATION

FRUIT Inspector Scriver, who was stationed at Winnipeg for some time, has returned to Montreal greatly impressed with the prosperity of the west and its possibilities as a market for choice fruit. After a careful study of the trade in Winnipeg, he has come to the conclusion that the fruit growers of Eastern Canada will be able to capture and retain a good share of the western business, if they can only lay down their goods in as good condition as the fruit from California, Oregon, Washington and British Columbia. The western fruit is larger and higher colored, but has not the juiciness and flavor of the eastern article, and as the greater number of residents of Winnipeg came originally from Eastern Canada, they naturally prefer the fruit to which they have been accustomed.

The Winnipeg dealers are practically unanimous in demanding that all fruit, particularly the tender varieties, shall be packed in boxes similar to those used by Californian shippers. Hitherto Ontario peaches, pears, plums, grapes, etc., have almost invariably gone forward in baskets, which are always objected to in Winnipeg. None of the tender fruits except grapes have given results at all satisfactory when shipped in baskets. In every car of eastern fruit examined by Mr. Scriver he found from 40 to 100 baskets broken and the contents ruined. This in itself would go a long way toward wiping out the profit on a shipment. On the contrary, not a single box was found in any carload of western fruit. In those cars every tier of boxes is braced as soon as completed with stout uprights, and there is practically no injury to the fruit from pressure or jarring. This fruit is, of course, picked before fully ripe, and carefully wrapped in paper so as to stand a long trip. Even in

the case of apples the Winnipeg merchants want tender fall varieties, such as Alexanders, Snows and McIntosh Reds, and even fancy winter apples, like Spys and Baldwins, put up in the forty pound boxes.

The matter of packages can be easily remedied, but the transportation problem is a far more serious one. Mr. Bunting, president of the Ontario Fruit Growers' Association, pointed out a couple of weeks ago that the freight on a carload of fruit from Hamilton to Winnipeg is nearly \$200, and the express rate \$400. An illustration of how these rates work out was given by Mr. Scriver. A consignment of pears, on which the express charges amounted to 60 cents per basket was being sold in Winnipeg while he was there for 75 cents per basket. In other words, the express company got four-fifths of the selling price of the fruit. It may be remarked that these pears would have brought at least 25 cents per basket in Hamilton or Toronto. The lake and rail route, say via Sarnia and Fort William, is about 18 cents per basket cheaper than all rail, but this involves handling the fruit four times oftener, and the number of baskets broken owing to rough usage is so great that the cheaper route is really no advantage.

These transportation rates would not be considered so extortionate by eastern shippers if the cars were rushed forward with all possible despatch. But they are not only delayed on the road, frequently owing to the congestion of freight at Winnipeg, cars of tender fruit are left standing for days in the yards before they are run up to the city. Nearly all the large wholesale establishments have switches right up to the rear of their buildings, still they each find it necessary to keep a man who does nothing else except hunt up missing cars and try to get them switched into position to unload. Mr.