

vitality in their seeds for a long period, those belonging to the Leguminosæ are in greatest numbers.

G. H. C.

"The Origin of Our Cultivated Fruits" was the main subject under discussion at a meeting of the Botanical Branch held at the home of Mr. R. B. Whyte on March 6th. There were present in addition to the Chairman, Messrs. Attwood, Campbelle, Bond, T. E. Clarke, Geo. H. Clark, Eddy, Binnie, Groh, Morris, and W. T. Macoun.

The origin of our cultivated fruits had evidently been thoroughly investigated by Mr. Whyte, who gave a very interesting account of what was known in regard to it. Most of our fruits have been cultivated for such a long time that there is little definite information as to their origin. It is known that the Romans cultivated the apple, for Pliny wrote about it. An apple was also exhibited by Mr. Eifrig at a former meeting of the Botanical Branch taken from the ruins of the habitations of Lake Dwellers in Switzerland who lived probably a thousand or more years before the Roman era. Practically all of the cultivated apples are derived from European species, the only named variety with American blood being the Soulard crab, one of whose parents was *Pyrus coronaria*. The pear is also a native of the old world and has evidently been cultivated since very ancient times. One of the first historical references to the pear is in Virgil, where it is stated that "Varieties of pears are almost countless and nine-tenths are unworthy of census." The two species of pears from which most of the cultivated varieties came are *Pyrus communis* and *Pyrus sinensis*.

The peach is another fruit of which little is known regarding its origin, but it is believed to be a native of China and taken to Persia in very early times, in which country it has been improved very much.

The early history of the European plum is also wrapt in mystery, but it is supposed to have been derived from *Prunus spinosa* and later from *Prunus domestica*. The Asiatic species from which comes the Japanese plums is *Prunus triflora*. The Apricot plum, *Prunus Simoni*, from China is another Asiatic species. In America improvement is just beginning with the native species, *P. americana*, *nigra*, *hortulana*, and *angustifolia*.

The European grapes are derived from *Vitis vinifera*, improvement evidently having been begun in very early times. In America, hybrids of *Vitis Labrusca*, the fox grape, and this European species had given marked results. One of the earliest known grapes of American origin is the Catawba, found wild in Maryland in 1819. It probably has European blood. The