

The Canadian Apple Situation

Two sources of loss to the apple trade have been reviewed, namely the packing of inferior fruit and the lack of co-operation between buyers and growers.

A third source of loss and a most serious one, is the damage done the fruit in transit. Improper packing, delay in reaching markets, rough handling, too high or too low temperatures, are the commonest causes. Barrels damaged in this way arrive "slacked," "slightly wet," or "wet," and are catalogued accordingly in the selling list. The damage done is seldom less than 35 cents a barrel, and is sometimes so great as to render the fruit quite worthless. A barrel is "wet" when its contents are so far gone in decay that the juice exudes. If left standing any length of time, a pool collects under the barrel. How to place our apples on the British market in a "good" condition is an all important matter. Thirty-five cents a barrel cuts off the whole margin of profit even when all other conditions of a prudent deal are satisfied.

In the first place, there are varieties that do not carry well under the most favorable circumstances. These should be avoided. In fact, unless a variety has positively good shipping qualities, it should not be exported at all. For winter shipment, only strictly winter varieties such as spies, greenings, russets, baldwins and ben davis should be put into store. All late fall and early winter apples should be shipped from the orchard. It only increases expenses to put them into store. They will be ripe enough when they reach the consumer.

In the second place, no one but an expert should be entrusted with the finishing of a barrel. It requires long skill and knowledge of varieties, to press a barrel properly, so that the pressure may be neither too great nor too little, and at the same time evenly distributed. Much of the damage done to apples is due to over-pressing. On the other hand, if a barrel is not pressed tightly enough, it will become slack through the natural subsidence of its contents. All slack barrels look alike to the foreign buyer.

OUR APPLES NOT FAIRLY TREATED

The rough handling of apples is bad at any stage. Apples that are worth anything are worth taking care of, and our apples are too good for the treatment they actually receive. They should be pulled gently from the trees, placed carefully in the baskets, not tossed, the baskets should be lowered into the barrel, not emptied from the top; and the barrels should not be rolled over a rough surface, or dropped with a jolt. There is a sure loss of money, and little if any, gain in time, in the hasty and rough handling of apples.

Our apples as a rule do not look well in the fruit shops of Great Britain. Placed alongside the carefully packed apples of California and Oregon they suffer greatly in the comparison. Their surfaces are not bright and clean as they might be, and they are strewed with little dents and bruise spots. When one considers how much the market value of all kinds of fruit is enhanced by an attractive appearance, one can readily understand why our apples sell for less than half the price of their handsome rivals. Nor is it because ours are barreled and theirs are boxed. It is quite possible, by careful methods of packing to put barreled stock on the British markets without these surface blemishes. But most of our apples are not treated fairly from the beginning. They are

plucked roughly from the trees, tossed into baskets or rattled and bruised in picking-bags, dumped on dirty sod, exposed for days to all kinds of weather, tossed and dumped again, racked violently in the barrel, and over-pressed. What can one expect of them in the British markets? The wonder is that they sell so well.

SHIPPING EARLY APPLES

Unavoidable conditions of temperature are also responsible for much loss. Too high a temperature affects the early shipments, and too low, the winter shipments. In either case the fruit arrives in an unsound condition, more or less advanced in decay.

So far as early shipments and hot weather are concerned, the remedy lies in having as little as possible to do with either. If, however, shipments of early fall fruit to British markets are decided upon, let nothing be sent but No. 1 stock, carefully handled, and packed under cool conditions. Do not let the barrels lie any length of time about the station; and choose the best and quickest boats. There is generally an excellent demand for good fall apples that arrive in a sound condition. If lost results, the fault may be sure to be with the apples, not with the demand.

GUARDING AGAINST FROST

But frost is the apple-buyer's nightmare. It begins to disturb his dreams about the third week in October; and not till the season is over, is he free from the dread of it. There is no exaggeration in the statement that from the 20th of November to the close of the season, one-third of the barrels exported are damaged by frost. When an apple freezes it shrinks in size and a barrel becomes slack, even though only a few apples in it are affected.

It is when frost attacks an apple that the evils of rough handling are most clearly seen. In the case of an apple frozen on the tree, if the frost is gradually drawn out, the apple is but little hurt, and though it never tastes quite so well, and ought to be shipped without delay, very little damage is done. But if an apple that has received rough handling, freezes, or if an apple on the tree is handled while frozen, all the bruises, dents, and finger marks appear as rotten spots when the frost comes out and the apple is practically ruined. Apples that are badly frosted on the way to the British market present a ghastly sight when the barrels are opened. No frost is visible, but the shrunken, corrupt mass tells the tale. With the danger of frost removed, the apple trade would be placed on a comparatively secure basis.

It is surprising, too, how much cold weather apples can actually stand without injury. Unprotected, they begin to freeze at four degrees below freezing point of water. In a barrel they can resist over night ten degrees of frost, if no wind blows on them; while in a tight box car a zero temperature outside does not seem to affect them for many hours.

REPACKING AT SEABOARD

One of the great problems, therefore, in the apple trade, is how to prevent shipments getting frosted on the way to market. An obvious suggestion is to store them at the seaboard, that is, at St. John, early in November, for shipment throughout the winter. Not only is the danger of frost almost entirely removed, but a stopping-off freight charge is avoided. Apples re-packed in St. John reach the English market in a fresher condition than those shipped from points in Ontario; and the service that the Canadian Pacific and the Allans give from St. John to Liverpool leaves absolutely nothing to be desired. Those who have stored apples in St. John find the number of slack barrels in

their consignments to Liverpool reduced to the vanishing point. On the other hand, St. John is far away from the base of operations; and storage and freight must be paid on the shrinkage as well as on the fruit forwarded. Still the movement to store Ontario apples in St. John deserves all encouragement. But shippers ought to be free in their choice of consignees; and it is doubtful whether the trade can stand a higher storage charge than ten cents a barrel.

Most of our winter shipments are made from Portland. The railway service to that point is rapid, and upon the whole, gives good satisfaction. If sufficient care is taken in preparing the refrigerators, there is little danger of frost, though sometimes the cold becomes so intense that all precautions are unavailing.

A DANGER SPOT

Occasionally something occurs at the wharf sheds to cause an unforeseen delay in loading the apples. The car is emptied, the barrels are checked, ready to be slung aboard; but perhaps the gangway needs fixing, or another hatch must be got ready, or something else, and then if the weather is very cold, and a wind is blowing through the sheds the mischief is done. It does not take long. Only a few apples may be affected in each barrel but the shipment does not arrive in good condition. It is important that the unloading of the cars and the loading of the boat should be concurrent.

Much more frequently, however, the damage is done in the car. Refrigerators not properly prepared, or box cars used too late in the season, are responsible. The trouble with refrigerators is that they are designed, as the name implies, for protection against heat, rather than against cold. They are awkward to load with apples. The ice boxes, vents and ventilators are all sources of danger, and the floor and roof are not always air-tight. A car designed in the manner of a simple, frost-proof chamber, with double walls, ends, floor and roof, one would think, might be constructed so as to afford, with suitable preparation, sufficient protection for apples during the severest weather; long enough, at least, to reach the boat, and particularly if the apples are not too cold at the outset.—E. J. McIntyre.

Old Road Work System Abolished

Wm. Widdon, reeve Malden Township

Statute labor was abolished in our township about 15 years ago. It was abolished because it was an unfair tax. It did not fall on rich and poor alike. The farmer who owned 100 acres had about 8 days work while the hired man had 2 days. The one

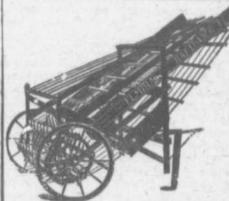
worked for wages and the other was worth, say, \$8,000.

There were 20 divisions under the old system, which meant 20 pathmasters. These did no work and were usually those who had the most statute labor to do. There was great dissatisfaction with it and the council voted to abolish it. This was done and there has never been a kick over the new way. If a person went to the ratepayers to seek election, by doing away with the new method, it would not get a man to nominate, him, let alone vote for him.

By the new plan the council oversees the expenditure of all moneys on roads. The members drive over to the township in the spring to see what work is needed. Each councillor looks after the work in his section. The people believe they get better service this way than by the old way.

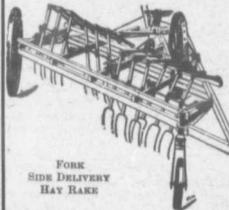
There is no commutation of statute labor at so much a day. Statute labor was simply abolished and a tax quired for all purposes, road improvement included. The plan works well.

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