

THE FRUIT TREE PEDDLER.

DURING the spring months fruit tree peddlers get a large amount of free advertising, and this year is no exception. Already the customary wail is going the rounds of the press against the wicked irrepressible canvasser. It has become the fashion to pounce upon him at this season of the year, and the whole world of newspaper correspondents and agricultural writers, great and small, are emptying their vials of wrath on his head, and advising farmers to let him entirely alone.

One writer denounces the agent for carrying with him picture samples of fruit twice as large as life and colored in a corresponding manner, and then advises farmers to order direct from a trustworthy nursery. I have no fault to find with this; it is certainly better to purchase nursery stock direct from a trustworthy nursery than of a rascally agent; but, on the other hand, would it not be just so much more preferable to buy of a reliable agent than of an unscrupulous nurseryman? Those highly colored pictures are, with hardly an exception, furnished by the nurserymen themselves. Some of the most extensive nurseries in the United States deal exclusively through agents and supply their agents with sample books, as do a large majority of firms engaged in other business. The illustrations in agents' sample books are taken from the finest specimens of the variety of fruit which they represent, and are, of course, larger and finer looking than the real fruit grown in a scrubby grass-grown orchard.

As a rule they as truthfully represent the real fruit as illustrations in catalogues of nurserymen dealing directly with the purchaser; or of seedmen, agricultural implement manufacturers, and livestock breeders.

In the same article the writer accuses fruit tree peddlers of pulling up fruit trees by the roadside, or in some farmer's yard, and palming them off for first-class nursery stock, and for this reason farmers should shoot every fruit tree peddler who dared to set foot on the premises. Why not condemn every merchant because a few rascals among the number mix sand with sugar, or would it not be just as sensible to advise fruit tree peddlers to shoot farmers because, once in a while, one makes butter out of lard, and puts stones in his hay to get even with tricky hay dealers?

I favor any movement to clear the country of rascally lightning-rod swindlers, patent-right men, and fraudulent fruit tree agents; but I do not see why all representatives of nurseries, and book agents, especially, should be sat down upon as frauds by every one who has enough literary ability to get his name in print.

The business of selling fruit trees and books is an occupation of which no man need be ashamed. Many a deserving young man has received an education and gained a foothold in life by spending his vacation canvassing the rural districts in the interests of some publishing house or nursery. The honest, respectable book agent or fruit tree peddler is a friend of humanity. He has carried fruit and flowers, and useful knowledge, to the utmost parts of the country, and caused roses, beautiful shrubbery, and intelligence to bloom where once grew unsightly briars and weeds of ignorance. While we condemn fraud, evil, and rascality, let us not be too eager to depreciate the valuable service, or worth, of the honest, intelligent, trustworthy canvasser.—LINDEN, in *Husbandman*.