

* Open Letters. *

A Canadian Fruit Grower in Alabama.

SIR,—I formerly resided in St. Thomas, Ont., and was a subscriber to your Journal for eight years. For the past three years or nearly I have been engaged in the vineyard industry.

This is an ideal country for grape and peach culture; situated in the eastern part of Ala. The Topography is very rolling, many parts so steep it has to be cultivated by hand. It is all of a volcanic formation, red soil, with a great deal of quartz rock of various sizes from that of a pea to a bushel basket, and much of our soil is composed of rotten rock that pulverizes to dust when cultivated and said rock contains a large percentage of mica-like substance. Frost only penetrates about 1 to 2 inches; ice on still water $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch. Our season of sunshine from last frost to first gives ample time to mature cane and crop. A man can work outdoors the entire year without coat or gloves. The summers are pleasant, never warmer than 96°, it is always cool in the shade as we have as a rule always a pleasant breeze. Nights cool. I have slept under a single blanket every night this and last summer. We are on these "uplands" 1,250 feet above sea level, air clear and invigorating. We have, what was on January, 1895 a virgin forest, 3,000 acres planted to grape vines. The timber on land is principally what is known north as "Georgia Pine," also various kinds of oak, hickory, chestnut and gum trees. Wild blackberries grow in the valleys in profusion, superior in size and quality to any I ever eat north. Natives peddle them at 8c. to 10c. per gallon. There are scarcely any negroes in this county, they can't keep any land in this colony which is composed of people from the Eastern and Western States with a few from Canada.

The size and quality of our grapes and productiveness of our vines is not excelled, if equaled, in the U.S. They are largely Concord, Niagara, Delaware. For shipping we also grow several varieties, for wine principally, that are indigenous (Munson's Hybrids) to the South; also Scuppernon's native grape. We make everything required for picking and shipping except baskets; will put in basket plant this fall. Our crop is nearly all gathered. Our first shipments about July 25th. We harvested crop this year from about 1,300 acres.

As there are but a very few here that have any experience in shipping grapes, and our crop being a good one for what you might term our first crop, found us unprepared to handle it with that expedition necessary. Here all grapes this year have been brought to one packing house and packed. They are unable to pack fast enough. Confusion is too great to be expeditious. There are 85 in packing house, sorting and packing, etc., and this system causes too much handling of the grapes. What I want to learn is what is the system that governs the packing and shipping

of grapes or other fruits in the grape and fruit (Niagara) belt, Ontario.

If you have a shippers' organization would be pleased if you could supply me with a copy of their by-laws. Is packing all done at one place or does each do his own packing (and brand his package), subject to inspection at point of shipment.

As we must get organized before another season, would be pleased if you could assist as outlined above.

I often thought of writing to HORTICULTURIST, but did not know that anything I could say of this region would be of interest to your readers. I wrote a home paper once in reply to a number of enquires.

I did not write this for publication as you can see. Still if you think any part of it is interesting you can use it. While this is a fine climate and I like it here very much I still have a warm feeling for Ontario, where I spent 42 years of my life. When I left Canada I left to go into business in Chicago as my family were all there. One year proved disastrous. Hearing of this I looked it over and located, and I think the outlook to-day is better than any time since we started this colony.

D. NEILSON.

So far every fruit grower in Ontario packs and ships his own fruit. The Niagara District Fruit Grower's Stock Company appoints reliable agents in all the principal towns, who receive fruit on consignment. All stockholders receive daily market reports, and thus are guided in their shipments, and frequently are able to load cars for special points.

Packing companies who would pack and ship for growers, and who could succeed in establishing a confidence in their method would no doubt receive much patronage, but we doubt if growers could manage a co-operative packing business to advantage.

The best scheme we can think of is for every dozen or more growers to combine and build a cold storage at shipping point; to engage a competent man in charge of this storage who should be authorized to inspect every tenth package, and see that each shipper was packing according to an agreed standard. If he was not, the inspector should have authority to reject the whole shipment of the faulty shipper for that occasion.

As soon as a car load is made up the man in charge should see after a refrigerator car, and loading of the same.