



Fruit Growing in British Columbia Valleys has attracted many who prefer country to city life.



Will the small fruit farms of the Niagara Peninsula be "merged" into large farms with operations on a broad scale?

FRUIT GROWING BY CITY MEN

By NORMAN PATTERSON.

A DESIRE to get back to the land on the part of well-to-do city business men is manifested in many ways. These men as they get past middle life feel the need for relaxation and out-door occupation. They talk much about going back to the farm. An odd one does abandon his business, buys a farm or two and settles down to country life. With most of them this is impossible. Their money is tied up in many sorts of investments which must be looked after. They cannot cut the painter which ties them to city life. However, they can take up farming as a side line and indulge in a country home. In Ontario, the city man is taking a great interest in fruit growing. This is a development of the last five years.

In the days when fruit was sold only to the local dealer, and when the growing of fruit was but an incident in farm life, the fruit farm was almost unknown. To-day it is quite different. Fruit farming has become an individual occupation in many districts of Canada. It is also changing from a small business to a large business. At first the fruit farmer was about on a par with the market gardener. He cultivated five, ten or twenty acres; his annual production ran from fifteen hundred dollars to three thousand dollars. To-day there is a tendency to establish fruit farms varying in size from one hundred to fifteen hundred acres with an annual production running from twenty-five to a hundred thousand dollars.

The city business men are helping to create this revolution. Some of them are combining fruit-farming and the making of a country home. Others are treating fruit-farming as a business and an in-

vestment. There are several companies of Toronto business men who are operating large fruit farms in the Niagara district. A Toronto lawyer recently purchased eight hundred acres of fruit land in the county of Norfolk and proposes to produce apples and other fruit on a scientific and financial basis. Other Toronto men have invested largely in fruit lands in British Columbia, and spend their spare hours in reading scientific publications on planting, pruning, spraying and the cultivation of fruit trees.

One of the chief results of the advent of the city man in fruit-growing is sure to be scientific production. He will not be content with any trees, vines, or plants which are not producing an average crop. He will not be content to have an orchard which bears fruit one year and does not the next. He will have the benefit of the very latest scientific research and will see that it is applied to his farm or ranch in a thorough and businesslike manner. At least one large fruit-farm in the Niagara Peninsula is managed by a staff of fruit experts under the supervision of a man who might be a professor in any agricultural college in America. These men receive large salaries and are expected to produce superior results. The fruit from their farm will be taken to the railway station on motor trucks instead of horse-waggon. This fruit will be properly selected and packed. Everything that capital can do to produce the greatest dividend from a given area of land will be done.

A prominent manager of an insurance company in Toronto has, not far from the city, a fifty-acre farm, where he and his family spend the summer months. His automobile carries him back and for-

ward several times a week. This year he planted eighteen acres of potatoes and planted them by machinery instead of by hand. He is spraying the potato bushes by machinery and proposes to take the tubers out of the ground by machinery. All the farmers of the district are wondering whether the man is sane or whether he is remarkably clever. They are watching his experiments keenly and earnestly. If his methods are not successful they will have a laugh at his expense. If he gets a big return per acre from his potatoes they will all take advantage of his experience and adopt it in so far as such may be possible. In the meantime, however, he is attracting as much attention as an Uncle Tom's Cabin troupe or a two-ringed circus.

This movement is sure to have a tremendous influence on fruit-growing in Canada. The scientific production of fruit and the scientific marketing of fruit in the United States is compelling a similar state of affairs in Canada. The proposed reciprocity in fruits will further accentuate this necessity. If Canadian fruit is not properly grown and properly marketed it will not be able to compete with similar products from the United States. Last winter apples from the State of Washington were sold as far east in Canada as Toronto simply because of superior cultivation, superior packing and superior business management in selling. The orange-growers of California were not successful until they began to take advantage of co-operation in packing and marketing. To-day a California orange-growers' association is carrying on an advertising campaign all over America and greatly increasing the consumption of California oranges. This is the method which will become general in fruit-growing, and Canada must learn it. The uneducated farmer will never learn it. It is too large a problem for him. It requires business experience and business ability which he does not possess, and which he cannot secure. Just as there are mergers in manufacturing and commerce so there will be mergers in fruit-growing. The Orange Growers' Association of California is a large and successful merger.

In addition to this business view of the city man's interest in fruit-growing, there is the other side—the glorification of the out-of-doors. Instead of spending his spare hours and holidays in fruitless wanderings about the country in search of rest and change, the city man will find in fruit-growing both health and inspiration. There is something in every man which is stirred by a vision of nature's prodigality. There is a delight in watching things grow at the touch of the invisible power which cannot be equalled by any interest in manufacturing which depends wholly on human skill. There is almost as much excitement in making trees and vines produce luscious and valuable fruit as there is in trying to induce a wary black bass to gulp a live frog, or to persuade the evasive trout to snatch at the imitation fly. What would be hard work for one man is relaxation and amusement for another. The man who has been imprisoned for twenty years between the four walls of a small city office throws back his shoulders and holds up his head when he gets an opportunity to manage in his spare hours a piece of land over which the smoke of a factory does not sweep. Twenty years ago the same man might have wanted to escape the drudgery of farm life.



The apple blossoms which have made the Annapolis Valley famous on two continents.