

The Canadian Horticulturist

Vol. XXIX

NOVEMBER, 1906

No. 11

How Canadian Fruit is Sold in Great Britain

A MAN should be placed in London, during the fruit season, to represent the fruit interests of the Dominion. This should be done by the Dominion Fruit Division or the various cooperative fruit growers' associations could place a man there on their own behalf. Such a move would benefit the fruit industry in two ways; first, by making it possible to hold and dispose of fruit when the market is most favorable, and second, by lessening the chance of false reports being returned to the growers. By examining the fruit on arrival, the representative could determine the exact condition and report same to the person who made the consignment. The unsatisfactory manner in which Canadian apples are handled and disposed of by the majority of firms in Great Britain would warrant this move. It would be an important step in the placing of the Canadian fruit trade on a satisfactory basis. This was made evident to the staff representative of THE CANADIAN HORTICULTURIST this summer while visiting the Old Country on a tour of investigation along these lines.

The way in which Canadian apples are sold in the cities of Great Britain, where the fruit is landed, is as varied as one could imagine. Only a small percentage of our export apples are sold direct from the grower to British retailers. The larger portion is sold by auctioneers or brokers; the balance is sold by wholesale houses to the smaller dealers. The only claim one class of brokers can make to prove that they are fruit merchants is the business they conduct in importing fruit on consignment from small growers and dealers in Canada and other countries. Later, they turn it over to larger firms to dispose of, but not until they have deducted a liberal commission. In this transaction, it will be seen, the grower has to pay a double commission as well as run the chance that both of the dealers may make false returns.

All fruit merchants are not honest. The green fruit trade seems to offer splendid opportunities for dishonest individuals. When sending fruit to Great Britain on consignment, exporters should exercise great care to ascertain the financial standing of the consignees.

The formation of cooperative associations in Canada is approved by the majority of British fruit merchants. It is believed that these associations will help solve the dishonest packing problem, and lead to a reduction in the number of brands.

Owing to the dishonest manner in which some Canadian apples have been packed, a feeling of distrust exists among the retailers. While anxious to deal direct with the Canadian grower, the retailer will not take the risk. He prefers to buy from the auctioneers or brokers, so that he may examine the fruit before the purchase is made.

Small growers should not attempt to export fruit. A better plan is the

countries was handled. At the time he was in London, the Tasmanian fruit season was nearing an end; the last cases in the different warehouses were being sold.

The larger portion of the fruit sold in London is disposed of by auctioneers or brokers in the vicinity of Covent Garden. There they have a large building erected for use as a fruit market. Each of the many firms represented there announce on blackboards, placed in front of their booths, the quantity and variety of the fruit they have for sale and the hour of the sale. The booths are arranged around the walls inside the hall. Above the booths are the offices, and in front is the auctioneers' stand. Sometimes rival firms conduct sales at the same hour, which has a depreciating effect on the prices realized for the fruit.

When the sales commence, the stand is usually surrounded by representatives of wholesale houses, large retail firms and small fruit dealers. These buyers are ready to purchase anywhere from one to 100 cases of fruit, according to the size of the business they represent. Unknown or unreliable parties must pay cash when the fruit is knocked down, others are given 30 days' time. Samples of the fruit are placed on the stand for inspection. In many instances, the entire lot is within a short distance of the auctioneer, and may be inspected by prospective purchasers before the sale starts. Immediately after the sale the fruit is removed to the purchasers' warehouses or stores. The whole transaction often is completed within 48 hours after the arrival of the ship.

The commission charged by auctioneers varies from 2½% to 10%. It is safer to trust the man who charges 10% than the man who is content to deduct the smaller figure. Experience has shown that 2½% is not enough commission to enable a broker to make an honest living, and as he has to live, the extra amount generally is made up by means of false returns to the grower. Instances are known where brokers have realized a handsome price for the fruit, and when the returns were made to the grower, they reported the fruit as being in bad shape on arrival. The grower, not be-

Leads Them All

I like THE CANADIAN HORTICULTURIST very much. It gives the best value of any horticultural paper in the world. There is no horticultural paper in England or Canada that can touch it. I know this because I have taken, at one time or another, all such papers in both countries.—Francis P. English, Niagara Falls South, Ont.

formation of cooperative associations so that large shipments can be made under one brand. Then send only the best, and that properly packed. Fruit of uncertain quality finds a poor reception on the British market. It affords an excuse, which is quickly taken advantage of, to cut the quoted price. Many cases of fruit that left the orchard in Canada, apparently in good condition, were found, when opened in the auction room, to be slack. A small fault, perhaps, but sufficient to place the consignment among second-class fruit, and thereby reduce the price.

In a previous article it was stated that business arrangements did not permit of our representative being in Great Britain during the fruit season. He got a good idea of the way our fruit is cared for, however, by visiting the various warehouses, and observing the manner in which fruit from other