

Practical Pointers from Practical Men

Picked up and Penned by A. B. Cutting, B.S.A., the Special Representative of The Horticulturist, who is Visiting the Homes of Fruit and Vegetable Growers

THE privilege and the pleasure afforded me, during the past few weeks, of visiting some of the fruit and vegetable farms of this province, more particularly along the shore of Lake Ontario, between Toronto and Hamilton, has given me the opportunity of hearing at "first hand" the opinions of growers on different phases of their various pursuits. I have picked up pointers on proper methods of orchard management, on market economics, on the tariff question and on other topics of interest to the readers of THE CANADIAN HORTICULTURIST.

From observations made in certain localities it would seem that some of our local fruit and vegetable growers' associations are not taking full advantage of their opportunities during the winter months. In some places, these organizations hold meetings only once, twice or perhaps three times a year, and then only for business purposes. The business factors of the fruit industry are important, and too much attention can scarcely be given them, but they are not of more consequence than the factor of orchard management. Some associations discuss only the questions of markets and marketing. They fail to realize that there is always a market for the best in any commodity, but that the best is not always produced. In the fruit industry there is a most decided surplus of the ordinary. For this reason it is of advantage for each association to meet at least once a month during the winter season, as I find is the custom of the most progressive organizations, for the purpose of discussing and exchanging ideas on pruning, spraying, cultivation and on all the many practices that are needed in the production of high grade fruit. Such "experience" meetings should be more informal than those visited once or twice a year by speakers from the Department of Agriculture. By carrying on a series of local meetings, some of our associations, now inactive in this respect, would profit by the change.

FRUIT WORK IN CLARKSON

One of the most progressive local fruit growers' associations is in Clarkson. The officers are: Wm. Oughterd, president; Robt. Shook, secretary; and Wm. Clements, treasurer. Regular meetings are held on the first Saturday of each month, when all questions relating to fruit are freely and thoroughly discussed. The area devoted to fruit growing in Clarkson is taken up largely with small fruits, followed, in order of extent of culture, by apples, cherries, pears and plums. Next season, according to Mr. Clements, about 1,000,000 quarts of small fruits will be grown. The association buys all the working material for the members, including barrels, crates and berry boxes. They have a trade mark for their packages registered in Ottawa so that returnable crates and boxes can be claimed and located when lost, strayed or stolen.

OUR TARIFF ON FRUITS

Although the Ontario Fruit Growers' Association, in convention assembled in Toronto last November, decided not to ask for a higher tariff on fruits, and although the stand of the association is supported by the opinion of fruit growers in general, yet there are some who claim that the action of the association is not in accord with the best interests of the industry. Mr. P. Y. Babcock, a well-known shipper of Burlington, believes that we need a material increase in the duties. In the words of Mr. Babcock: "The Canadian fruit grower is handicapped by climatic conditions, by a high American tariff, and by the high cost of labor, and should be protected against foreign importations by a higher tariff. In support of this, I can get hundreds of names in the Niagara dis-

trict to sign a petition for more tariff." Mr. E. Thorpe, Burlington, in his own peculiar way, supports the views of Mr. Babcock, and said to the writer: "I'll bet money that those fellows at the fruit convention who don't want more tariff must have had a jag on. We certainly want more duty on strawberries and on early vegetables. Under the present tariff we cannot sell at a paying figure in Toronto on account of competition from over the line." Another grower, and a neighbor of Mr. Thorpe's, thinks differently, as he told the writer that he did not fear competition from American fruits, as home-grown fruit is far superior in appearance and quality to that imported from the other side. In the face of these pertinent expressions of opinion, it is fit to remark that, when growers themselves fall out, the tariff is safe.

THE FRUIT DIVISION AT OTTAWA

Many and to the point are the comments from growers regarding the placing of the fruit division at Ottawa under the control of the dairy commissioner. That this condition of affairs should not be is the unanimous opinion of fruit growers everywhere I go. That the chief of the fruit division of this country should be given a back seat and made subservient to the dairy commissioner or any other commissioner is most humiliating to the fruit growers and not conducive to the extension of fruit work. On all sides I hear a general tone of disapproval and protest against this action of the Dominion Minister of Agriculture.

Among the many growers who have expressed their opinions on this subject, Mr. J. S. Freeman, Freeman, Ont., said: "The fruit industry of Canada is large enough and far enough advanced to warrant the appointing of a fruit commissioner, responsible only to the Minister of Agriculture. The fruit division should be placed on a par with the dairy and other divisions and should be given the place its importance deserves."

On this question Mr. J. C. Smith, Burlington, remarked: "I think that the fruit division should receive more than second-hand attention. The fruit industry has attained enormous proportions, and this should be recognized by the appointment of a fruit commissioner separate from the dairy division, and responsible only to the Minister."

FRAUDULENT PACKING AND SELLING

Another matter referred to by a prominent shipper in Burlington was the fact that the Dominion force of fruit inspectors should be increased at least threefold. Although the present inspectors are competent and are doing excellent work, they cannot be everywhere at the same time. "During the past season," said the shipper referred to, "some very marked cases of fraudulent packing have come under my personal notice. In particular, I can cite the case of buyers coming here from France who were taken advantage of by the packers in a certain section of Ontario. I saw in one house, growers packing windfalls for XXX fruit, the packers were boasting about how they were soaking the poor Frenchmen, and this was going on right in the face of the inspectors." This is a most deplorable state of affairs, and should not be allowed to occur another season.

When speaking of our foreign commerce in fruits, Mr. J. C. Smith said: "I do not think that peaches and plums can ever be shipped regularly and with success from here to England. Our peaches haven't the body, the dryness and the carrying qualities of western fruit, and should not be expected to compete with the California fruit in the foreign market. Furthermore, we haven't yet secured a system of refrigeration

that can be depended upon to carry fruit safely to England. The best kind of refrigeration, however, is of no value unless we first cool our fruit before it enters the car for transport to the seaboard. Present refrigerator cars cannot cool fresh picked fruit quickly enough. Fruit must first be cooled for best results; it will save ice also, as the cars can then go from here to Montreal without re-icing."

A letter from England to the Biggs Fruit and Produce Co., Ltd., Burlington, says, in part: "Prices for apples are now good—Kings most in demand, some selling as high as 9s. per 40 pound box. We advise the wrapping of all Spy apples, as they are so easily bruised. The more I see of the Biggs case the better I like it. The first impression is undoubtedly unfavorable, but as soon as buyers get used to them, they go with a swing."

IT PAYS TO SPRAY

"This year I had buyers in my orchard competing against each other for my crop of apples, which averaged 75% XXX stock. I credit the excellence of the crop to good pruning and cultivation, and particularly to the methods of spraying that were employed, as recommended by Prof. Lochhead, of Guelph, and by THE CANADIAN HORTICULTURIST. Systematic spraying gives results. Three years ago, when spraying was not practised in this orchard, I could scarcely sell my apples for any price, because they were unsound and undersized." So said Mr. A. C. Cummins, of Burlington, who is a firm believer in the value of spraying, and quite rightly, for his apples the past season, particularly his Spys, were among the finest grown in the Burlington district.

PEARS FOR THE BURLINGTON DISTRICT

Mr. Wm. F. W. Fisher, president Burlington Horticultural Association, is the owner and manager of one of the best fruit farms in his locality. Among the many kinds of fruit grown on his place, the pear is very much in evidence. The writer happened upon Mr. Fisher in the act of directing and assisting the pruners in a young orchard of dwarf pears, and obtained a few pruning pointers that are of value to all. "As far as the time for pruning is concerned," remarked Mr. Fisher, "I believe somewhat in the old rule 'whenever the knife is sharp,' particularly here where labor is scarce, but for ideal results pears should be pruned in late winter for wood growth, and in early summer to induce fruitfulness. The form of the tree should be kept in mind and made pyramidal, a central axis should be maintained as far as possible, the superfluous limbs and all branches that rub and cross should be removed, and the remaining branches should be well headed back, pruning away about two-thirds of the new growth."

Mr. Fisher recommends for his district the Bartlett, which is the best of all; Boussock, an old variety of same season, good size, fair quality, with tree free from blight, not very early bearers, but long-lived; Duchess, an excellent export pear; Howell and Kieffer.

BUSH FRUIT CULTURE

A method of pruning red raspberries practised by B. E. Chapman, of Bronte, is very effective, even though it does appear as though the same ground is gone over twice. Mr. Chapman adopts the hill system of culture and prunes three times during the year. In summer he nips back the new growth as soon as it has reached the height of the fruiting canes, say three and a half feet. After the berries are harvested, he hooks out all old canes and all new ones above six in number. The following spring he prunes back all canes that may have