

IDENTIFICATION OF VARIETIES OF ORCHARD FRUITS.



IN view of the progress of our experimental work in fruits in the Province of Ontario, and of a large number of varieties—new and old—under test at our Experiment Stations, all of which must be described with reference to their adaptability to Canada, it is important that we duly consider the characteristic points and their proper descriptive terms. Some years ago, Mr. H. E. Van Deman, then U. S. Pomologist, wrote a paper for the American Pomological Society, which we consider of sufficient interest to students of Horticulture in Canada to reproduce in these pages, as follows :

All classification of natural objects may be said to be only approximately correct and strictly arbitrary. The established rules for such classification are frequently found to be unsuitable. The further we proceed with this classification the more complex and difficult it becomes. It is easier to distinguish and separate the natural orders of plants than the genera and species ; and when the subdivisions of species are reached, even the most learned doctors disagree. At this critical place and upon this treacherous ground the pomologist is obliged to make his way.

To be able to recognize every variety of our commonest fruits is utterly impossible, even by the most experienced. However, by carefully studying certain characteristics, and having a vast deal of experience with specimens grown under different conditions of culture, soil, and climate, one may become able to generally determine the names of varieties. To give in a sample way my views of what may be the cardinal points in such identification, is the substance of the hope that inspired the present attempt.

All will agree that certain characteristics of fruits are more constant than others ; these known and we will have gained one point. To my mind, considering all classes, there is no one character so fixed as the form. This will in the main prove true of all kinds, and as well of the immature as the fully developed specimens. Take the apple or pear before fully out of bloom and a difference of varieties may be noticed by their elongated, rounded, or irregular forms.

To some persons all babies are alike, but not so to the nurse or mother. So of the observant pomologist and his fruit. A Chenango the size of a marble is not the shape of a Rambo, nor would a Vicar half so large be taken for a Sheldon. Indeed it would not be hard to tell the difference between such marked varieties even before their petals had expanded. A cluster of the compactly formed Elvira grape could be told from one of Creveling, or even Concord, when only large enough to be observed at all. With growth these peculiar forms enlarge rather than change. Even starvation would not materially alter their shape. Let this then be our main guide in identifying varieties. Of course there are frequent, sometimes radical, variations from the typical forms, occur-