

GARDEN & ORCHARD

The Lake Ontario Apple Belt.

(Concluded from last issue, page 1435.)

The first orchard in this district dates back to the time when Richard Lovekin planted six acres of seedlings among the stumps on the farm which has been in the Lovekin family for 118 years. Farmers came from all sides to get apples from this orchard, which is a couple of miles from Newcastle. J. P. Lovekin, son of Richard, started a nursery, from which many a tree may be found on farms hereabout. His son, Fred Lovekin, maintains the family traditions, and is the proud owner of an 80-acre orchard of 5,000 young trees, besides a good orchard of older trees in bearing. The ranks of young trees stand as regularly as an army on a crest of rising ground. The ground is carefully cultivated.

Mr. Lovekin upholds the Lake Ontario apple belt against even the far-famed Okanagan Valley. "Why," he said, "twenty men like Will Gibson would grow as much as the entire crop of British Columbia." The W. H. Gibson referred to is president of the local Apple-growers' Association, and is looked up to in the neighborhood as the court of last appeal in the matter of apple culture. "There are few spots adapted to the growth of an orchard," remarked Mr. Lovekin. "The best soil for a long-lived tree is one with natural drainage and with no cold bottom."

"Thousands of trees used to be brought in here from Rochester," said Mr. Lovekin, "but now the trees come, for the most part, from Wentworth County nurseries, a two-year-old tree from there being like a three-year-old from Rochester. Like other growers of the district, Mr. Lovekin has not yet gone in for artificial manures, putting most of his barnyard manure on the orchard. He believes in applying lime in the orchard, as making the fruit color better. Mr. Lovekin plants his trees in rows thirty feet apart, with the trees twenty feet apart in the rows. He plants quick-bearing trees, like Wealthy or Duchess, as fillers alternately with Spies, with the intention of having the permanent trees in the orchard 40 feet by 33 feet apart. Mr. Lovekin advocates co-operation on the part of the apple-growers in disposing of their product, instancing what may be done by the fact that apples shipped from Newcastle have the name of being the best on the Glasgow and Liverpool markets. The product of most of these orchards finds its way to the Old Country, whither the first shipment was made by Dan Simmons forty years ago. The trade opened up by Simmons at Colborne and Brighton now requires storage warehouses with a capacity of 200,000 barrels. The shipments are made in barrels for the commission trade, and in boxes for the fancy London trade.

As to this year's crop, Mr. Lovekin thinks it will be as light as last year's. A. A. Colwill, Reeve of Newcastle, thought that there would only be a three-quarter crop, but W. H. Gibson thinks this pessimistic, and is of the opinion that an average crop would be nearer the mark.

What can be done by modern methods has been well illustrated by Thomas Montague, treasurer of the Apple-growers' Association. He took a neglected orchard, and raised its produce from 3 barrels to 125. The first year he got more apples from it than had been grown there in its whole previous history. The orchard stands on less than an acre of land, and is a stone's throw from Newcastle Station.

Albert Colwill is an enthusiastic advocate of the Ben Davis as a profitable apple for the grower. It comes into bearing in five years, and is as productive at that age as a Spy at fifteen years. The apple is showy, and one which sells readily, especially to the big hotel trade. It looks like a Snow, and has excellent keeping qualities, though it is inclined to be woody. Mr. Colwill has found that, by grafting a Spy on a Tolman Sweet, or a Pewaukee, he can gain five years in bringing the Spy into bearing. Mr. Colwill sees a future for the early apples of this district in the Western market.

How long does it take an orchard to come into bearing? Mr. Colwill has had 25 barrels on 200 trees, 120 trees of five years, and 80 trees of four years. While the trees are maturing, a hoe crop may be grown under them, or profit may be made from berries. On July 12th, one Newcastle man sold a consignment of berries from such a patch, at 12½ cents a quart, in Peterborough. A strip between the rows may be sown to grain even after the trees are in bearing.

Mr. Colwill says that farm land in this district, with an orchard of fifteen to twenty-year-old trees is worth from \$500 to \$1,000 an acre. "The only thing which would lead me to put a price on my farm," said Mr. Colwill, "would be the inability to get labor. At present we are dependent on day labor, for which we pay \$1.50 for a day of from 7 a. m. to 6 p. m., with holidays." "The men can leave at a moment's notice," Mr. Colwill thinks that the day of small

holdings—20 acres or so, all in orchard—is coming. "In ten or twenty-five years," he said, "you will see whole families getting their living on such farms, spraying, packing, repacking, manuring and pruning."

The gross returns from such an orchard, Mr. Colwill estimates as follows: 40 trees to the acre, 5 barrels to the tree, \$2 a barrel sold on the tree; return from one acre, \$400. This is subject, of course, to deduction for loss by wind and weather, as well as for cost of cultivation.

W. H. B. Chaplin has been mentioned as having made a success at storing. He has eleven acres in bearing, and says it is enough for one man. He hires two men for nine days when it is necessary to spray, and from six to ten men for picking, from the beginning of September to about the 20th of October. For picking, Mr. Chaplin uses a couple of hundred bushel boxes, made of slats, with interstices to permit the free circulation of air. The early apples are picked into these, and are allowed to stand in them in the barn to cool. Should rain or frost interfere with picking operations, the men can be employed packing the apples in the barn into barrels. They are headed up with No. 3's on top, which, being small, offer a flat surface, and, on repacking, the larger apples are found to be not bruised. The barrels are stored on their sides in the cellar, tier above tier to the ceiling. The barrels are raised slightly from the gravel floor on poles laid at right angles to the barrels. Mr. Chaplin's cellar has a capacity for 600 barrels. He leaves the windows open till the snow flies, so that it may be perfectly cool. The apples are raised from the cellar, and repacked as the market requires. As has been said, this year Mr. Chaplin repacked his last Spies on June 18th. Sometimes not more than four or five apples in a barrel are found to be decayed when opened for repacking. Mr. Chaplin keeps a few swarms of bees, not for their honey, but for sterilizing the blossoms to secure a good set of fruit. He plows up and seeds down his orchard in alternate years.

A visit to Mr. Gibson's farm, where he has 80 acres in bearing, was of great interest. The orchard, of course, is on a wholesale scale. The spraying, for instance, is done with a gasoline motor, which scatters 150 gallons in 40 minutes. Mr. Gibson makes it a practice to seed a twelve-foot strip under his trees in grass, and to cut the grass to form a sod mulch. He finds that, besides being cheaper than cultivating under the trees, this method results in better-colored fruit. He cultivates, of course, between the rows, which are 35 feet apart. The trees are 26 feet apart in the rows.

Mr. Gibson pointed proudly to a row of eight-year-old trees of the Stark variety. A tape measure on the trunk showed 15½ inches. They were in bearing, and this year average about two bushels. As president of the fruit-growers' association, Mr. Gibson maintained the claims of the Lake Ontario belt to be known as the fruit district above all others of the Dominion. It had over twice the acreage, he declared, of the Niagara district.

REGINALD McEVROY.

THE FARM BULLETIN

Inconsiderate Employers.

Editor "The Farmer's Advocate":

As a constant and appreciative reader of "The Farmer's Advocate," I must agree in the main with what our friend "Rube," in your issue of August 17th, has to say on the above topic, especially his experiences with the boss or bosses over the hours of work, the dividing up of the work, time spent in gossiping (which is very considerable), and other shortcomings of employers on farms in Ontario, at the expense of the hired man.

My opinion is that farmers do not practice their cry of "All on an equality" very much; otherwise, some of them would act a bit differently toward men in their employ.

Because men are called Dick, Sam and Bill, that does not warrant the use of the phrase, "All on an equality." Another thing is treating men more as they would their own. The bosses would, I feel sure, be amply compensated by the more ready co-operation given by satisfied men, some of whom are as intelligent, practical and experienced as their employers.

DUM SPIRO, SPERO.

Air-Slacked Lime for Smut.

Air-slacked lime mixed with seed after first cleaning (1 gallon to 25 bushels), when it may be immediately put through the mill again, will completely destroy all spores of ball smut. This has never been practiced for over thirty years, and has never found it fail. It is cheap, easily applied, and does not reduce the vitality of the seed. It is generally practiced in this section when any smut is found in seed.—[W. S. Fraser, York Co., Ont.]

Fox-farming on P. E. Island.

A FAST-EXTENDING AND PROFITABLE INDUSTRY.

Editor "The Farmer's Advocate":

The greatest boom that ever struck Prince Edward Island is at its height just now. Eighteen or twenty years ago, a man named Oulton started fox-breeding in the western end of the Province. He was alone in the business for a number of years, and little attention was paid to his experiment. He raised black foxes and marketed the skins in London, some of them at a very high price, but he kept his methods and successes pretty much to himself, and did not offer any of his foxes alive, rather preferring to keep the business all to himself.

But after a time it dawned on his neighbors that the business was very lucrative, and they began to prepare to have a share in it. The difficulty was to get stock to start with, as the only man in the business did not want to sell. He being a noted trapper, had begun with wild foxes, and, by crossing the red and black, had been successful, in a few years in having them all breed black ones.

After a time, however, he was prevailed on to sell a pair to a neighbor, and another ranch was started. The business then began to attract attention, as it was noted that in an incredibly short time men engaged in it became rich. Then a mild boom in fox-ranching began. Men of limited means procured red foxes, which were cheap, and easily obtained and crossed them with a black male, succeeding in getting many of the progeny of the first cross black. By following on selecting and breeding to black males, they soon established the color in all the progeny. This being found possible, a greater boom naturally followed, and increasing numbers of farmers rushed into the business. Those few who had established ranches earlier now began to sell their stock to beginners, instead of slaughtering for the skins. Prices then bounded upward as the demand for breeding stock increased, and those who had well-stocked ranches made big money in a short time. Thus the boom increased, until to-day good black foxes are selling in pairs at from four to six thousand dollars. Still there is no sign of a halt; men are coming from the United States and paying the highest prices for breeding stock. In the breeding of foxes they are mated in pairs. The average litter is about four, and the range is three to nine. One breeder told me that his best was a litter of eight.

The ranches where these foxes are raised are generally located in a quiet grove, preferably containing a lot of underbrush, making as nearly natural conditions as possible. The ranch, the size of which is regulated by the number of foxes, is enclosed with strong wire netting on a frame which rests on a concrete wall which goes to the solid, so that the foxes cannot burrow out under it. Then, inside, each female fox has a house or den, as it is called, large enough to accommodate her and her family. The entrance to the den is by a spout, which is just large enough at the outer end to allow a fox to pass through. There are also doors in the dens through which men can enter, but these are generally kept locked.

The male foxes have each one its own den and a small yard for exercise.

Notwithstanding the high prices for breeding stock, the business is still spreading rapidly. New ranches are being started almost every day, and those with smaller capital are buying single foxes or pairs, and putting them in ranches on shares. Good money has been made this way by beginners who get the necessary capital to start ranches without risking too much.

And now the question is with many people, "How long will this boom last?" The continuance of the boom will depend altogether on the spread of the business, which will keep up the demand for breeding stock. At present, a live fox here is worth five times as much as the average skin would bring in the London market; so, if the demand for live foxes should fall off, the price would necessarily drop to the price of the skins. Even then, those who have well-stocked ranches would have a very lucrative business, compared with ordinary farming. It looks as if the business would spread, as a demand has arisen from the United States, as well as from other parts of Canada from those who are going into fox-breeding.

It is estimated that there are about four hundred and fifty black foxes on the Island now in about forty ranches. At prices that obtain to-day, this would sum up to about \$900,000.

That the business will rest on a sound basis when the boom subsides, is allowed by all, as there is no fear of black fox fur becoming a drug in the market. Wild fur-bearing animals are ever becoming scarcer as their haunts are being invaded by men, and the prohibition put on catching the fur seal for fifteen years may make an even larger place for black fox pelts. And perhaps the greatest factor of all is that the world is