

GARDEN AND ORCHARD.

Picking, Packing and Marketing Fruit.

BY G. C. CASTON, SIMCOE CO., ONT.

SIR,—The season is now at hand for the gathering and marketing of our orchard fruits, and a few observations on this subject just now may be of interest to some, at least, of the readers of the *Advocate*. This part of the fruit industry has been already written up frequently in the pages of the *Advocate* and other agricultural and horti-



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cultural journals, by able and experienced men, and so well handled withal that there is little left to be said and scarcely anything new to be presented.

Apples being the staple and principal of our orchard fruits in Ontario, I propose to deal principally with them. First—When to pick, how to pick, how to pack; and then offer a few observations on transportation and marketing. Apples should be picked just at the proper time. Of course, where a large crop is to be handled it is not easy always to do this. When full-grown and full-colored, and the seeds are black, they are ready. If pulled before this stage they will lack flavor. If left until the ripening process has advanced much beyond this stage, they will not keep or stand transportation nearly as well. After an apple has reached maturity, the ripening process begins; when fully ripe, the process of decay begins. Slowly in the hard and long-keeping winter varieties, and more rapidly in the earlier kinds. Therefore, the aim should be to handle them so as to retard as much as possible the process of decay by picking at the proper stage, careful handling, and after that, it is principally a question of temperature—the lower the better, without actually freezing, as nothing retards the process of decay so well as a low, even temperature. In picking and handling apples, they should be handled as gently as you would handle eggs; not as many people do, like they would handle potatoes or turnips. The least little bruise, ever so slight, will soon be a rotten spot. Round baskets, lined with felt or some soft material (these can be got at the basket factories at trifling cost), should be used, with a hook attached to the handle for hanging it on the limbs, and the fruit should be laid in, not thrown into the basket; and when emptying, lower the basket into the barrel or on to the pile, as the case may be, and empty carefully. Just here I would like to say a word for the much-abused packer. It has been the custom to buy the apples at so much per barrel, picked and laid in piles ready for packing. And I think this system is most satisfactory, providing the picking is properly done. But often the fruit is shaken from the trees and so roughly handled that the fruit is full of small bruises, which in some of the hard winter varieties is not always easily detected by the packer. He is expected to take it all, and the seller is not willing to admit that a small bruise disqualifies an apple that is otherwise all right. If fruit handled in this way is placed in store for re-packing, or if shipped to the distant markets, the result is the same: loss to the shipper and discredit to the country.

There should be a community of interest between the grower and the shipper, and the grower who sells his apples in this way should understand that he is interested in the trade of the country, and should see that his fruit is properly handled. Good, careful pickers can harvest the fruit rapidly and yet do it well.

But why could not the farmer with a good-sized orchard pack and market his own fruit. If he has not enough for a carload, let a number join in making up a cargo. Now that the law requires every packer and shipper to put his name on the barrel, and quality and size of the fruit, and provides penalties for dishonest packing, there ought to be an improvement in the quality and reputation of Canadian fruit. As the law now stands, there would be a strong incentive to keep the quality up to the mark, because of the penalties imposed. But the best incentive is in the sure reward for those who grow fruit of the highest quality, and put it up honestly and in the best possible shape for market.

I know of one locality where co-operation is worked with the utmost satisfaction and profit. It was brought about by the push and enterprise of one man in that community, who is still a large grower himself. He taught his neighbors how to pick and pack their apples properly. He acts as salesman, and receives a small commission for the service. As each man's fruit is branded with the owner's name, the returns of account sales show just what each person's fruit was sold at, and each receives a check for the net proceeds of the sale of his fruit. This is an ideal plan and ought to succeed in other localities as well.

With this in view, a few pointers on the packing of apples would be in order, for the benefit of any who have not had experience in the business, and who may be anxious to try it for themselves. Commencing with the early varieties, these should be packed as they are picked from the tree, and placed directly in the barrel, and must be handled very carefully so as not to get the slightest bruise. Have good, clean, sound, standard apple barrels. Take one end and tighten the end and quarter hoop, head line and nail the end, and put three nails in the quarter hoop. I use two-inch nails for the head, and inch and a quarter for head lining and quarter hoops. Turn the barrel upside down and loosen the hoops on the other end and knock out the head, clinch any nails that are projecting inside from the quarter hoops. Place barrel on a piece of plank, select a sample of nice, even-sized, well-colored fruit, and face by placing the first row stems down, having first pinched off all long stems that would turn over and bruise into the apple; then proceed to fill up the barrel, rejecting all wormy, scabby specimens; see that the quality is uniform all through. If any extra fine specimens, put them in the middle of the barrel, not at the ends. After the barrel is a third full, give it a short, sharp shake, and repeat after every basket-full until the barrel is full; fill up till the fruit is a half inch or so above the end of the staves, then have a round piece the size of the barrel head, covered on one side with felt or carpet. Place this on the end, pressing down firmly with hands and



ROYAL FIRST-PRIZE HAMPSHIRE DOWN SHEARLING EWES.

PROPERTY OF HILLHURST FARM, HILLHURST, QUE.

elbows, and at the same time give the barrel a few short, sharp shakes on the plank. This will settle every one tighter into place. Turn the stems of the top layer up and press in the head, nail and head line same as other end, then again turn the barrel upside down, and brand the end with your name, and the name and quality of the fruit, and the operation is complete.

Any smart young farmer would very soon learn to do this as well and rapidly as an expert packer. Summer and fall apples should not be pressed as tightly as winter varieties. The hard winter apples should be placed under cover as they are picked, then the packing will not be delayed by wet weather, and the packing can be done on days that are too wet for picking, and the fruit is in better condition. The old system of leaving winter apples in piles for weeks, exposed to alternate rain, sunshine, and occasional frost, is a pernicious one, and injures the keeping quality of the fruit. The barrels should always be laid down on their side as soon as packed, and should be carried to the shipping place in the same position and never on end.

And now a few words on transportation and markets. There is a vast amount of the early fruit of fine quality that goes to waste every year for want of a market. There should be a market for most, if not all, of this on this side of the Atlantic, and mostly in our own country. There is a stretch of country from the Ottawa River to the foothills of the Rockies that will never produce much in the line of orchard fruits, and that is fast filling up with an industrial population. This should afford a large and ever-increasing market for the product of our Ontario orchards. The trouble with our early varieties is their perishable nature. They mature when the weather is warm, and will keep only for a short time under ordinary conditions. Therefore, they require rapid handling, quick transportation, a low temperature while in transit, and a wide and even distribution, and at reason-

able rates of freight that will leave a margin of profit for the grower and shipper.

The Ontario Fruit Growers' Association have been working in this direction for several years, and as a result of their efforts the Government have given some assistance in the solution of these problems in the way of experimental shipments of perishable products in cold storage. Sufficient has been done to prove that these products can be landed even in the European markets in fine condition and at a reasonable cost, some of the shipments realizing a good profit. The winter fruit, which comprises the largest part of our orchard products, and which forms the greatest part of our exports in fruit, must find its principal market in Britain. This trade is not in a satisfactory condition. The results so far have been on the whole disappointing, and yet we grow the best apples in the world. The principal causes of this state of things may be attributed to bad, careless and dishonest packing, and unsuitable conditions of transportation. The first is a difficult matter to deal with. It is not easy to make people honest by act of parliament. The committee appointed last year by the F. G. A. to deal with this question found it a very difficult matter indeed to draft a measure that would meet the difficulty. After giving the matter the most careful consideration, a measure was submitted to Parliament. What the results will be remains for the future to show.

With respect to the transportation question, some progress is being made. We have a cool passage from Canadian ports across the Atlantic; no tropical heat to encounter on the way, and if our apples could get the temperature of the ocean air while in transit there would be very few wets or slacks reported on the other side. To accomplish this, some of the steamers are putting in a fan blast, and the Government is giving its assistance to this end. The idea is to have a circulation of the cool ocean air through the fruit while in transit, instead of having them in the hottest part of the steamer's hold, where they were almost parboiled, as is too often the case. It has been a source of much disappointment to those who are trying to develop the export trade that after our fine Canadian apples have been carefully selected and packed, a large percentage of them are reported wet and slack through bad conditions of transport, a condition over which the individual exporter can exercise no control. However, I believe the push and enterprise of our people will overcome all these difficulties, and that there is a great future for the fruit industry in this country. But we must aim to grow the best, ship the best, pack carefully and honestly, and if brains, push and perseverance are applied, the reward is sure. It has been said that if you wish to make a good, useful man out of a boy, you must begin with his grandfather; and if you would grow fruit of the best quality, you must begin when you plant the tree. And it is a truism with this, as with any line of agriculture, that quality will always tell.—*In Canadian Horticulturist.*

Fruit-Picking Implements.



DIFFERENT IMPLEMENTS FOR PICKING FRUIT.

No. 1 picker is composed of two pincer-like jaws, with wire guards to receive the fruits, the jaws being closed by means of a cord, which is worked below (2 and 3) by a catch; 4, hook used for cutting off the fruit, the curved edge being sharp; 5, V picker with delivery sack; 6, bag picker hung on a wire

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