

Importing Fruits.

According to telegraphic reports from Ottawa, it is learned that the Ontario fruit growers have renewed their agitation against the importation of fruit and nursery stock from the United States, basing their opposition to such imports on the alleged ground that it is necessary to protect Canadian fruit growers from the introduction of diseases peculiar to fruit trees. The prohibition of the importation of fruit would be a fine thing for a few Ontario fruit growers, but it would be a great hardship for the people of Manitoba and the Territories, who are practically dependent upon the United States for their supply of many varieties of fruit. The Ontario growers have never been able to supply the western market with such fruits as plums, peaches, pears, strawberries, crabs, prunes, cherries, etc. Such shipments of soft fruits as have been received here from Ontario have usually arrived in a rotten condition, showing that the Ontario growers are entirely lacking in their knowledge of handling the softer fruits for long distance shipment. Any severe restrictions upon the importation of fruits would be such a severe blow to Manitoba and the Territories that it is not to be expected the government will entertain any such proposals for a moment. Even the prohibition of the importation of nursery stock would be a serious matter to the West, as the stock most suitable to our climate would naturally come from the north-western states, and of late years Manitoba farmers have been doing considerable in the line of experimenting with hardy nursery stock.

British Columbia Business Review.

Vancouver, Jan. 25.

As to Klondikers passing through Vancouver, the lowest estimate now given is 100,000. Victoria expects more than that number and Seattle expects three times as many. A short time ago 200,000 was considered a high estimate and now half a million prospectors en route to Yukon this summer is mentioned as the probable number. When it is taken into consideration that Cook & Son have already sold in England alone \$2,000 tickets to Klondikers some idea of the magnitude of the rush may be had. It is reported that 50,000,000 in gold will be taken out of the country this season. Even this vast amount divided among half a million people is only \$100 per head so that it is quite probable that the majority will come pretty close to misery, starvation and want.

Tremendous preparations are being made. All available steamers are being chartered and twenty-four new

steamers are actually being built for the trade between the three British Columbia cities. Of these the Hudson's Bay Co. are building ten and Canadian Pacific Railway seven.

The streets of Vancouver and Victoria are like county fairs every day now, with the husky dogs out for practice, the loaded mules and the outfitters in their picturesque costumes, but in Seattle the crowds are so dense that the streets are difficult of navigation. There is a hot rivalry between Victoria and Seattle and the press of these cities are saying many bitter things of each other. All lines of business are improving. This is naturally the effect of outside money coming into the country. Klondikers are coming over from the states to outfit here in batches of 25 and 50. Money is plentiful and collections are rapidly improving.

Stocks of hay and oats both here and on Puget Sound are very scarce.

British Columbia Fruit Growers

The annual meeting of the British Columbia Fruit Growers' association took place at Westminster recently. Mr. Earl, of Lytton, gave an address, referring to the vast mineral wealth of the province, but stated that he thought if properly looked after there was a Klondike in the province for the farmers of British Columbia. He took occasion to thank the Canadian Pacific railway for their unfailing courtesy to the association. He acknowledged that they were not able to put their fruit on the market in as good condition as the fruit growers in the south, and suggested engaging an expert from California to teach them.

A board of directors was elected, which subsequently met and elected the following officers: President, G. H. Hadwen, Duncan; first vice-president, W. J. Mcgrigg, Surrey; second vice-president, Donald Graham, M. P. P., Spallumcheen; secretary-treasurer, T. R. Pearson, New Westminster.

The secretary's report showed the association in a sound financial condition. The association after discussion decided to use what is known as the Portland box. A committee was appointed to look into the matter of adulterated jams imported from California. H. E. Bosch read a paper on nut culture. He made the statement that British Columbia paid \$10,000 a year for English walnuts alone, and British Columbia could grow walnuts. It was decided to hold an international fruit fair every year in New Westminster district.

British Columbia Fruit Exchange.

At the annual meeting of the B. C. Fruit Exchange the resignation of Manager Henry was accepted. It was reported that fruits had not been properly packed and that every care must be taken and an exhibit for Winnipeg must be arranged. Secretary T. R. Pearson presented a verbal report. The increase in the amount of fruit handled by the exchange had been most gratifying. In 1896 the shipments only totalled

about \$5,000 worth, while the shipments in 1897 represented over \$19,656. Of this amount, over a third was for apples. Plums were the next heaviest item; pears, and then strawberries.

Coast Merchants Dissatisfied

Vancouver, Jan. 24.—Loud is the talk throughout the coast cities over the dilatoriness and inaction of the authorities at Ottawa in forcing the United States government to abolish the existing customs regulations at Skaguay. The local press comment upon the matter in no uncertain manner. In speaking of the recent visit of the minister of the Interior to Washington, he is spoken of as having accepted promises to remedy the evil instead of insisting, as he had it in his power, to compel the United States government to act promptly and honorably in the matter. Prominent politicians here say that though these promises were made weeks ago, not only have instructions not been sent to Skaguay, but it is very much a question whether the United States authorities have ever thought more seriously of the matter, than to sending Mr. Sifton home with a good impression of Washington society; and to show that he is still under the hypnotic influence of the astute politicians and officials at Washington, one had but to read his telegrams, not later than yesterday, received by the British Columbia and Vancouver boards of trade, in which he announces, in effect, that everything has been arranged with the Washington authorities, but that, owing to departmental routine, there has been delay in promulgating the instructions, but that they will be sent forthwith.

The question is asked: "Does Mr. Sifton comprehend that the telegraph service between the civilized east and the gold fields of the north is still in the embryo stage, and that even should the instructions be issued at Washington to-day, to do away with the obnoxious customs regulations at Skaguay and Dyea, these instructions could not go into effect for at least thirty days, as they must first go to the collector at Sitka, who might readily leave them on his desk for one or two steamers before finally forwarding them to the sub-collector at Skaguay."

In a nut-shell, the situation is simply this: Canadian merchants are losing trade that is justly theirs, and the country is getting none of the gold that is taken out of Canadian soil. That this situation could be changed is without question, and instructions to the Mounted Police at Tagish to close the passes to all aliens, would bring the United States government to time in twenty-four hours, and ensure to Canada that trade that is unquestionably hers, and of which she has but a very meagre share to-day.

Ottawa, Jan. 24.—The department of customs has decided to allow a refund of the duty paid on products from Liberia, Morocco, Spain, Salvador, Tonga, and the South African republic since the preferential tariff took effect on the 23rd of April last, as, with the exception of Spain, Canada does not import much from these countries, the amount of refund will not be great.