

CANADIAN MECHANIC MAGAZINE AND PATENT OFFICE RECORD

Vol. 6.

JUNE, 1878.

No. 6.

THE WILD BERRIES OF CANADA.



HERE are few, perhaps, who have taken into consideration the value of the wild berries which grow so plentifully in field and swamp, and on the borders of our forests, and which, year after year, fall ungathered. There is, to the distant settler, or the less distant small farmer, quite a small source of wealth growing annually almost at his door, which could be easily collected by his children, alone, after school hours. The great drawback to these field and forest fruits being turned to any profitable account, has mainly arisen

from their very perishable nature, and the distance that settlers live from market towns, or places where they could be disposed of in all their freshness. In the New England States, which are so much intersected with railroads extending up forest streams, and into the very heart of the Green and White Mountains, nearly every station agent is employed to ship the fresh plucked fruit to New York, Boston and other large towns. So that as the fruit is packed up in wood boxes, of a circular form, with strong covers—each box holds a quart—it is delivered by the Express Companies to the fruit merchants in a perfectly fresh condition; whereas raspberries and strawberries, the most delicate of our field fruits, are packed by our people in uncovered pails, and get crushed into a mass by its own weight alone, and so jolted in the transit that it is generally sour and in a state of fermentation by the time it reaches our markets.

The Canadian settler not having these advantages of rapid carriage, is to a great extent helpless in the matter; and even if he knew the value of the fruit growing wild in the fields around him, almost at his very door, he is unable to benefit by what nature supplies him without labor or work to cultivate. But if from want of railroad conveyance, and knowledge as well, he is unable to take advantage of profiting by what nature produces in many sections of the country in such abundance, it is quite in the power of others to instruct him how to preserve

these fruits, and send them to our markets in another form. There is no reason why these delicious berries, if preserved, or their juice made into syrup, should not form a part of our shipments to Great Britain as well as the trade recently grown up with that country in meat, fish and apples. Strawberries, raspberries and blackberries are the most perishable of our wild fruits, but if properly preserved in sugar would realize in our own markets 25c per lb.; then we have blueberries, whortleberries, cranberries, wild cherries and grapes, which could all be kept for some time fresh in their natural state, at least sufficiently long to stand a voyage of some days. The blueberry trade of the Saguenay might be turned to much more profitable account than it is at present. The first thing necessary to be done is to instruct the settler, or farmer, in the best way to preserve the fruit, in any form; this could be very well done by country storekeepers making arrangements with them for its purchase, and manufacturing it themselves into preserves or syrups, or to supply to the gatherer the necessary materials and instructions how to do so. A little experience would soon teach them the proper way to preserve the fruit, and then in a short time, we have no doubt that quite an extensive business in this line could be established, and with very beneficial results. It only requires a few enterprising men to enter into the trade with spirit, and it would soon grow into quite a business—and now is the season to give it a trial.

PHYSIOGRAPHY.

The new and shorter title for that branch of the curriculum of the Science and Art Department formerly known as physical geography, has only its shortness to recommend it; for the older title, properly understood, embraces all that can with advantage be included under the head of physiography. When Prof. Huxley first employed it to distinguish the subject of his lectures on natural phenomena in general from what was at the time understood by physical geography, the use of the term was perfectly legitimate, but nowadays physiography is simply another name for physical geography as understood by Prof. Geikie. Prof. Huxley tells us that, in his judgment, most of the elementary works upon that subject begin at the wrong end, and too often ter-