

WEEK

# NOVA SCOTIA



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*Omnium rerum, ex quibus aliquid acquiritur, nihil est agricultura melius, nihil uberius, nihil homine libero dignius.—Cicero: de Officiis, lib. I, cap. 42.*

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## NORTHERN LIMIT OF WILD GRAPE VINE.

BY PROFESSOR LAWSON.

Read to the N. S. Institute of Natural Science, 14th January, 1884.

I lately received a letter of enquiry from Professor Blytt in reference to the Northern Limit of the Grape Vine as bearing upon the early discovery of America by Norwegian sailors. As the range of our wild grapes had not been made a special subject of enquiry by botanists, and as these plants wherever they occur, are so conspicuous as to attract the attention of persons who might overlook other plants, I requested publication of a note, for the purpose of eliciting information, in the Halifax Morning Chronicle, Morning Her'd, and Acadian Recorder. This brought some facts which will be found in the following correspondence. It is now published in the hope that additional facts may be obtained. It is not improbable that the range of Grape Vines along the Atlantic Coast region was more extensive before the country was settled than it is now, when the best lands are cleared and the country pastured by cattle. Any information on this point from old records or reliable tradition would be of special interest.

### AMERICAN SPECIES OF VITIS.

The proper Grape Vine (*Vitis vinifera*) is believed to have been originally a native of the hilly region on the southern shores of the Caspian Sea, and of the

Persian province of Ghilan; but it has been cultivated by man from the earliest times of which we have record, and has thus been extensively distributed over the world. It was not known, however, on the American Continent before settlers from Europe had brought it with them. Nevertheless early voyagers speak of finding Wild Grapes on landing on the American shores. These so-called Wild Grapes are vines very distinct in character from the old world Grape Vine, but they nevertheless consist of species of the same genus *Vitis*, several of which bear, even in the wild state, clusters of well-flavoured grapes, whilst the fruit of other kinds is acid or mawkish.

*V. bipinnata*, which extends through Virginia to Georgia and west to Arkansas, has a globose depressed berry, size of a pea, blackish when ripe.

*V. indivisa* grows in the swamps of the Southern States west to Louisiana and Arkansas, bearing a very small usually one-seeded berry.

*V. aestivalis* the Summer Grape, grows from Connecticut to Florida and west to Arkansas, ripening its blue, pleasantly flavoured berries in October.

*V. vulpina*, or Fox Grape of the South, grows in Virginia, Florida and intervening States.

*V. incisa* is a Prairie plant confined apparently to Texas and Arkansas, and has black shining berries the size of a small pea.

*V. cordifolia* and *V. riparia* which are more northern in their range, have acid fruit, which sweetens after having

been touched by frost, hence they are called Winter Grapes to distinguish them from *V. aestivalis*, the fruit of which becomes sweet as it ripens in the sun.

One of the best known species is *V. Labrusca* which has very large leaves, and is familiar to us in its garden forms as the Isabella, Catawba and several other well-known American grapes. Varieties of this species are distinguished by the hairiness or woolly character of the very large leaf, and comparatively large berries.

### CANADIAN SPECIES.

Only three species of *Vitis* extend into Canada, viz: *Labrusca*, *cordifolia* and *riparia*.

*V. Labrusca*, leaves (thick 4-7 inches) broadly cordate angular, more or less lobed, the sinuses obtuse or rounded, the under surface tomentose, berries, large globose.

*V. cordifolia*; leaves (thin, 3-6 in.) cordate acuminate, toothed, smooth (except on the vines), berries small.

*V. riparia*; leaves (thin 4-6 inches) more or less deeply divided into three lobes and incisely toothed; smooth, except on the petioles, veins and margins, which are pubescent; berries small.

*V. LABRUSCA*, Linn. Canada, Pursh. Torrey and Gray.

Near the Falls of Niagara, *Provancher*, Extends south to Georgia and west to Arkansas and Texas.