

A SUCCESSFUL COOPERATION ENTERPRISE

COOPERATION is in the air. The fruit growers of Ontario are alive to the necessity of cooperating more in the handling and marketing of their fruit. This is evidenced by the numerous cooperative associations that are being formed and by the various plans which are every now and then brought forward in an effort to enable fruit growers to obtain more for their crops.

The importance of the subject being thoroughly realized, The Canadian Horticulturist purposes from time to time describing various cooperative movements which are in successful operation among fruit growers. The Niagara District Fruit Growers' Stock Company, Limited, was formed 25 years ago to assist the fruit growers of the Niagara district to market their fruit to better advantage. While this company has had its up and downs, the fact that it has existed all these years and that it has increased in strength is the best evidence that it has been of value to the fruit growers of the Niagara District.

An editorial representative of The Horticulturist recently called at the head office of the company at Grimsby and had a chat with Mr. Murray Pettit, of Winona, the president of the company, and Mr. J. W. G. Nelles, the secretary. "When we started the company," said Mr. Pettit, "it was capitalized at \$10,000, but in 1894 we increased the stock to \$20,000, the shares being placed at \$100 each. We have about 100 shareholders, principally in Lincoln and Wentworth counties, although some live in Essex.

"At the time the company was formed the commission men in the leading cities had the situation practically in their own hands. They were slow in reporting sales and the growers were unable to ascertain what their fruit had realized until two or three months after it had been sold. Our first intention was to send members of the association to the different markets to sell the fruit of the members of the company.

An effort was made along this line but was finally given up, partly on account of the short fruit season, which prevented the agents from building up a trade, and partly on account of the competition with the commission men, who had the great advantage of being located in the cities.

"Gradually we changed our methods until finally an arrangement was made with the commission men in the different cities whom we knew to be reliable. We agreed to ship our fruit to these men only, and in return required them to furnish bondsmen every year. These bondsmen we insisted should be worth in their own right from \$2,000 to \$5,000 each.

"This method has been followed ever since. The commission men deduct the freight rates and charge seven per cent. commission on all sales. The regular commission is 10 per cent., but the commission men are willing to charge us less in view of the fact that they do not require to have agents in the district where our company has shareholders. The company supplies the commission men with agency books. The commission men report directly to the head office at Grimsby after each sale, the price realized daily. They are supposed to report every week and most of them do so, sending the money and a list of the sales."

PROMPT RETURNS.

"I generally receive reports," broke in Mr. Nelles, "on Tuesday. Every shareholder thus has his money by Wednesday. The contracts between the company and the commission men are signed at the beginning of the season. The commission men are given the privilege of handling all the fruit of the company sent to their city, and in return they agree to report to us weekly. The commission man who is slow in making returns runs the danger of losing the agency. We have agents in 26 or 27 cities in Ontario and Quebec. Some years