

FRUIT GROWERS ARE FOND OF THE ROBIN

A VIOLENT agitation has been carried on during the past year by fruit growers in several states of the American Union to secure laws that would lead to a reduction in the number of robins, if not to their total extermination. It has been claimed that robins are very destructive to fruit.

The Canadian Horticulturist recently wrote to a number of leading Canadian fruit growers to ascertain their views. Some of the replies are here given, and the rest will be published in following issues. It will be seen that, with one or two exceptions, our Canadian growers are very fond of and appreciate the good done by our red breasted friend and his mate.

FRUIT GROWERS' VIEWS.

Robins are not nearly so bothersome as the crows, nor do they eat as many cherries as the crows. Would dislike much to see any laws tending towards their extermination.—(R. J. Lightle, Brown's Nurseries, Ont.

The robin is the worst of all the small birds. I have some early cherries, but the robins get them all before they are fully ripened. I have a few sour cherries, but Mr. Robin will not touch them. There are a great many robins around our place, and I think it would be wise to reduce the number if possible.—(S. W. Brigham, Islington, Ont.

While the robins do sometimes take a few cherries, and an occasional strawberry, with sometimes a few grapes, in my personal experience I have never suffered any great loss from their ravages. I have always considered they do an immense amount of good by destroying large numbers of our insect foes. If it were not for the assistance we fruit growers get from our native

birds we would have to do a great deal more spraying and insect fighting than we have at the present time, and dear knows that's needless.—(F. A. Sheppard, Queenstown, Ont.

I have some five or six hundred cherry trees in two blocks, and a row of mulberry between. The robins go for the mulberry, and my cherries are safe. I suggest planting mulberry instead of killing the robins.—(G. Findlay, Walkerville, Ont.

OPINION OF AN EXPERT.

Dr. James Fletcher, of the Central Canada Experimental Farm, Ottawa, writes The Horticulturist an exceedingly interesting letter strongly in favor of protecting the red breasted songster. He says: "The food of the American robin has been investigated by students of birds. In the stomachs of 500 robins, collected in various parts of the country, cultivated fruit formed less than 8 per cent. of their food, and practically all that was eaten in June and July. It was found that over 96 per cent. of their food in April, 97 per cent. in May, and over 43 per cent. in June consisted of insects. of which almost one-fifth to nearly two-fifths was injurious insects. In June they began eating fruit, cherries forming 14.6 per cent. and raspberries 36.6 per cent. of their food." From the evidence presented in Dr. Fletcher's letter it is safe to say that noxious insects comprise more than one-third of the robin's food, vegetable food nearly 58 per cent., wild fruits 47 per cent., and varieties that were cultivated a little more than 4 per cent. The Horticulturist will publish Dr. Fletcher's letter in a later issue.

The well known authority on birds, Mr. C. W. Nash, of Toronto, has also sent The Horticulturist a valuable statement on this subject, which sustains the position taken by Dr. Fletcher.