

Subsection 6.—Fruit Farming.

The wild fruits of Canada are numerous and varied. Currants, gooseberries, raspberries and strawberries grow wild almost as far north as the Arctic circle, the flavour being unexcelled by that of cultivated varieties. The blueberry grows in great profusion over a large part of Eastern Canada, while the cranberry is found over wide areas throughout the Dominion. Other wild fruits include the saskatoon or juneberry of the Prairie Provinces, the choke cherry, the pin or bird cherry, the buffalo berry, the blackberry, the salmon-berry and the cloudberry. Wild plums are found all through the eastern provinces and wild grapes as far northwestward as Manitoba.

Canadian climatic and soil conditions are eminently fitted for the production of cultivated and improved varieties, and it is usual in the farms of Eastern Canada to find orchard or garden fruits produced for household needs, if not for sale as ordinary farm products. Fruit-growing as a specialized form of agriculture is a comparatively recent development. The building of the railways and the introduction of refrigerator cars provided the means by which perishable fruits might be rapidly distributed throughout the Dominion from districts where climatic and soil conditions were particularly favourable to the cultivation of fruit. While commercial fruit-growing is by no means restricted to a few districts and is often a feature of agricultural production in suburban areas, certain districts are nevertheless noted as being the more important centres of fruit production. The Annapolis and adjacent valleys in Nova Scotia, the Niagara peninsula of Ontario and the Okanagan valley in British Columbia are outstanding, but the northern shore of lake Ontario, the Georgian Bay district, the areas adjacent to Montreal, the lower British Columbia mainland and Vancouver island are also noted for their fruit crops.

The smaller fruits grown for sale generally find a market in nearby towns or cities, although many shipments are made from rural districts by rail or water to more distant centres of consumption. Apples, which are the most important Canadian fruit, meet with ready sale in British and European markets, where their attractive appearance, flavour and good keeping qualities have gained a wide reputation. Practically all varieties of fruit are prepared in canneries located near the centres of production and are shipped to both domestic and foreign markets.

Origin and Growth of Fruit-growing.—In Nova Scotia the apple-growing industry has assumed great importance, the bulk of the crop being annually exported to Great Britain. There are records of the growth of apples in Acadia from 1635. The census of 1698 showed that at Port Royal alone there were 1,584 apple trees distributed amongst 54 families, of whom many had orchards of from 75 to 100 trees. At Beaubassin in 1698 the census showed 32 acres in fruit trees. The first apples exported from the province are said to have been shipped by sailing vessel from Halifax to Liverpool in 1849, the price realized being \$2 per barrel. In 1856 a shipment of 700 barrels was made by schooner to Boston, U.S.A., the price realized being \$2.75 per barrel. The first experimental commercial shipments of apples to England from the Annapolis valley were made in December, 1861, but proved disappointing. The first steamer to carry apples direct from Annapolis Royal to London was the "Neptune", which sailed on April 2, 1881. The shipment consisted of 6,800 barrels, and arrived in London in 14 days. This venture was fairly successful, and from that time the business has continued to increase in volume. Up to 1890, however, the production of apples in Nova Scotia rarely exceeded 100,000 barrels, but after that date there was a pronounced increase in acreage and production, and in 1909 the production reached 1,000,000 barrels.