

THE ORCHARD.

CLEANING-UP.

THE picking season now being over, the orchardist will be able to devote his attention to other seasonable work, and also to give the orchard, packing-shed, and surroundings a general clean-up. An important preliminary is the cleaning-up of all fruit unfit for sale. It is bad practice to allow half-decayed and rotten fruit to lie about either under the trees or around the packing-shed. This class of fruit is usually infected, or is liable to breed fungoid diseases which become harmful to both trees and fruit.

PRUNING.

This work will commence in real earnest in June. All stone-fruits will have lost their leaves, and they should be the first to receive attention. Many different methods are adopted in pruning stone-fruits—some good, some indifferent. It is not possible to lay down any rule that will be applicable to all parts of the Dominion, but the foundation principles advocated by the Department from time to time still hold good. It is in detail that several different methods can be followed with satisfactory results. Some of the leading growers in America are carrying out very little pruning on stone-fruits, but it is quite an easy matter to go from one extreme to the other. While not being an advocate of non-pruning in this Dominion, I consider it bad practice to cut too severely. One should always be guided by local conditions, and, moreover, test several systems in order to ascertain the relative value of each.

The commonest mistake—and a very harmful one—is to prune trees hastily on a uniform method, which, however good it may be in itself, cannot but be harmful to a large proportion of the orchard. For example, the Sturmer, Delicious, and Jonathan apple-trees are of such diverse type that a one-system practice must do harm. The simplest way is to take one variety at a time, to remember its nature, and do all that is possible to correct its natural bias where such is necessary. The Delicious tree is usually very vigorous and inclined to become densely wooded, and to cut the leaders hard and stop the laterals back to young wood-buds would only intensify its habits, which are bad from a fruitgrower's point of view. On a mature tree the leaders should be pruned lightly, if at all, and the laterals well thinned out, cutting them clean back to the leader from which they originate. If it is necessary to shorten remaining laterals, care should be taken to cut to fruit-buds or small side twigs, thus stimulating as little growth as possible. This method has been found to check growth and encourage cropping. The Sturmer in most fruitgrowing districts is a type of those with just the opposite characteristics, and the pruner has usually to prune the tree, which is naturally a heavy cropper, to encourage a vigorous constitution. He has to cut the leaders harder than in the case of the Delicious, and, where laterals are inclined to fail, to cut them to young wood-buds so as to invigorate them. If the pruner studies his pip-fruit trees along these lines a great improvement will be brought about in many orchards.

MISCELLANEOUS.

When pruning, the opportunity should be taken of examining the trees carefully for disease, and any requiring special treatment can be flagged with a piece of cotton cloth carried for the purpose.