Prof. Goff is not with us this morning, but he has kindly sent us his paper, which Mr. Hatch has consented to read.

COMMERCIAL PLUM GROWING IN WISCONSIN.

By E. S. Goff, Horticulturist to Wisconsin Experiment Station.

Can the growing of plums for market be made profitable in Wisconsin? This is a practical question that should interest all our fruit growers. If it can be, many of us would doubtless take advantage of the fact, for reliable and profitable fruit crops are not so numerous in our state that we would not gladly welcome a new one.

If we attempt to analyze this question, it separates naturally into two other questions, viz., 1st,—Can we grow the fruit? and 2nd,—Can we sell it after we have grown it, at profitable prices? Our experience at the Experiment Station enables me to answer these questions in a measure, while the experience of others furnishes additional evidence.

First,—Can we grow the fruit? The cultivated plums include a number of botanical species, which differ materially in hardiness and other qualities. The large blue or yellow plums that have been common in city fruit stands for half a century or more, belong to a species that was early imported from Europe and that is grown with more or less of success throughout the eastern, southern and Pacific states. The flower-buds of this species are tender in Wisconsin, and while they often escape destruction in the southern and eastern portions of our state, they are not to be depended upon in any but the most favored locations. This European species, botanically known as *Prunus domestica*, cannot therefore be commercially grown to any large extent in our state.

The more recently introduced Japanese plums, *Prunus triloba*, that are so rapidly flooding our markets with their showy but generally inferior fruit, are little if any more reliable in Wisconsin than the European species, and, at present at least, should not be planted commercially. The Wild Goose Plum, that is grown so successfully in southern Illinois and Missouri,
and is so extensively shipped to the Chicago market in July, rep-
resents a third species known botanically as Prunus hortulana. This
does not fruit well at Madison more than about one year in
three, owing to the tenderness of its flower-buds. The Chicasa
plums, Prunus angustifolia, judging from the varieties we
have grown at the Station, are more reliable than any I have yet
mentioned, but these and also the Marianna plum, which repres-
tsents still another species, were badly damaged the past winter.
So far, then, all seems to be negative. And yet the largest crop
of plums we have ever grown at Madison we harvested the past
summer after the most disastrous winter we have ever known. This
crop of plums all came from varieties of the northern na-
tive plum, Prunus Americana. We have here a plum that is
practically "iron-clad," that has not failed to give a crop of fruit
since 1894, and of which the better varieties sell readily in our
markets at paying prices. Here is a plum that can be grown,
in its different varieties, on every farm in Wisconsin, and that,
with proper culture, may be depended upon to produce a crop
almost every year.

This brings us to the second question: Can we sell the fruit? I
answer, yes. We have sold the fruit readily, and in consid-
erable quantities, at prices varying from $1.00 to $1.50 per
bushel and occasionally at higher figures.

The market for this class of plums will undoubtedly improve,
as the best kinds, like the Surprise, Wyant and Ocheeda are more
extensively grown, as the fruit is marketed in better shape, and
as the people learn to distinguish between it and the stigmatized
"wild plums." But we should remember that it is not the fruits
that sell to the wealthy few at fancy prices that will ever yield us
very large returns; it is rather those that we can sell at a small
profit to the millions, at prices that they can afford to pay, that
must yield us our fortune, if we ever get it from fruit growing.

The Americana plum is exactly this fruit. We can depend
upon it, for it is hardy and productive; we can grow it cheap,
because we get a crop every year; we can sell almost unlimited
quantities of it, because we can afford to sell it at prices that the
people can afford to pay.

I do not wish to be called an enthusiast, and I certainly
would not be held responsible for losses incurred through following my advice, and yet it is my conviction that the judicious planting and cultivation of the choicest Americana plums may be made profitable in Wisconsin, both as a home market fruit and for shipping. Please to note, however, that I use the word "judicious," which means "according to sound judgment."

I would not advise any one to undertake plum growing who is not willing to give careful attention to the selection of varieties, the culture of the trees and the marketing of the crop, and this will necessitate some experimenting, and in most cases some mistakes will be made. I would plant cautiously of varieties that yield large fruit of good quality, and of which the trees are productive. I would group these trees with reference to their time of bloom so far as I could gain knowledge on this point; I would cultivate or mulch the trees well; I would protect them from the curculio by the jarring process until we find a better method; I would thin the fruit on over-bearing trees; I would pick the fruit when well-colored and a little hard; I would pack it artistically and conscientiously in rather small handled baskets, and would experiment considerably in selling it, using printed matter to call attention to the uses to which it is especially adapted. If we spend as much mental energy in our plum growing as we must in any other business to make it successful, I believe we shall be abundantly rewarded.

It would be easy to figure out very large profits by computing the possible yield per acre from the amount of fruit that certain trees in our experiment orchard have borne during the past five years, but such computations are always more or less delusive. The days of fabulous profits in fruit growing are probably over, and it is perhaps well that they are, for they always provoke imprudent investments that bring only disappointment in the end. What is vastly more important is to find and to grow those staple fruits that yield a living profit every year. The Americana plum is such a fruit whenever we choose to make it so by meeting Mother Nature half way.