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Improving an Old Orchard.

Many an old orchard which is now an eyesore to everybody can, at little cost, beyond slight labor, be converted into an up-to-date, tidy, prolific, and profitable branch of the farm. There are many orchards in Canada which bear more worms than fruit, because the generality of farmers cannot be brought to learn that fruit raising pays even if it be grown merely for home consumption. It will only occupy three years to evolve a plentiful harvest as well as a symmetrical well kept orchard out of lichen and moss covered trunks if the advice given in this article be followed with fair faithfulness.

The first thing to be done is to scrape off the rough, loose bark from the trunks and branches, and to prune the trees. While it is true that this rough bark may appear to do but little harm, it affords comfortable free bearing lodgings for noxious insects which thoroughly appreciate and avail themselves of this hospitable shelter.

Pruning may be as simple as A. B. C. At first only dead branches and crowding suckers need be removed, unless the trees be old and decrepit with dying branches and waning strength, and in that case the pruning should be vigorous. As a grape vine can be renewed so can an apple tree, and in extreme cases a tree may be cut to the ground and another one built upon a short shoot which will spring up. Cut out old branches, leave young suckers to take their place, then a new top will quickly form and good fruit will follow. Always take care to thin out useless branches because sunshine and air are inseparable from the steady healthy growth of orchards as of individuals.

An apple tree must be fed if it is to produce fruit, and no diet is more suitable or inexpensive than a leguminous cover crop. Trees require moisture and food; therefore grass and weeds must be removed. To succeed the farmer must plough his orchard and till the ground, tillage being continued frequently during early summer. By midsummer wood growth generally ceases and then tillage should stop. A cover crop sown then will not only protect the soil from washing but will add humus to it, while a clover crop will gather all the nitrogen necessary for the next year's growth. A good alternative to ploughing the orchard is to pasture it with hogs and sheep, preferably the former, and always to keep more animals there than the grass will support, because this will insure supplementing the grass diet by grain, which naturally will bring fertility to the orchard and insure that the grass will not grow tall. Where animals are not grazed in an orchard the grass should be mown early and left on the ground to add humus to the soil; but this is not nearly so beneficial as grazing the land.

Insects and fungi have to be considered with, and it will be necessary to spray with Bordeaux mixture and Paris green at least twice after the blossoms have fallen. The former will clean the limbs of hanging lichens or moss, and the latter will settle most of the noxious insects, though it cannot reach the apple maggot, which calls for special treatment, because it is the larva of a small fly which punctures the skin of the apple and lays its eggs underneath. No matter how thorough the spraying may be it cannot reach this pest; but if the windfalls can be destroyed as soon as they drop, and all refuse from places where winter fruit has been stored be burned, the next season's numbers will be appreciably reduced. It is in this respect that pasturing the orchard has a marked advantage, because if well stocked with hogs or sheep the apples are eaten before the insect is likely to escape.

There are some instances in which the orchard may be in such a condition from long neglect that the land cannot be properly tilled, and the trees cannot be adequately fed. One of the best methods of feeding the tree is to keep it well pruned, because then the food which would otherwise be diffused in numbers of worthless limbs is concentrated in a small number. It is only the well pruned trees that are capable of successful treatment

with sprays. Apple and pear trees should be pruned to keep the heads open. Plum trees should be pruned to keep out the black-knot, and some Japanese varieties require frequent cutting back. All pruning can best be done very early in spring, after the worst of the winter is over, but before the sap starts. There are so many apple trees of little value growing in Canada, which could be successfully top-grafted with better varieties, that it would well repay anyone possessing an orchard to go carefully over his trees and top-graft these which do not produce paying crops. The chief points to take into consideration in top-grafting may be summarized as follows:—

Old trees, if healthy, may be grafted with success. The top should not all be cut away the first year, but should be removed gradually, the time required to change the top of a large tree successfully being from three to five years. Early spring, before growth begins, is the best time to graft. The branches to be grafted should not be more than from two to three inches in diameter where the grafts are to be inserted. After the branch is carefully sawn in two, the stub is split with a mallet, held open with a wedge, and the scions inserted; two being used, one on each side, if the branch is more than an inch in diameter. The scion is made from a twig of the previous year's growth, about four or five inches long, and having three or four buds. It is prepared by making a wedge of the lower end, beginning near the base of a bud. The scion is inserted in the stock as far as the upper edge of the wedge. In inserting the scion great care should be taken that the inner bark of both scion and stock should come in contact with each other. This is very important, as the healing begins from this point, and if the scion be inserted carelessly there is almost certain to be a failure. After the scion has been set the cut surface is covered over with grafting wax to exclude the air and strips of cotton may be wrapped over this. A good grafting wax for outdoor use is made by melting together resin and beeswax in the proportion of five parts resin and two parts beeswax; to this is added one and one-half to two parts linseed oil. In top-grafting a tree always have in view the production of a symmetrical top after the old one has been removed.

With this cultivation codling moth will disappear and in three seasons an old ugly and comparatively worthless orchard can be converted into a pretty uniform one with abundant crops of marketable and profitable varieties. An orchard is "never too old to mend," or beyond renewal.

Ghent's Dog Police.

The distinction of the bloodhounds of the southern and western States as being the only dog policemen in the world is gone. The City of Ghent has recently supplemented its regular police force in the suburbs by a corps of trained collies, whose duty it is to run down burglars and other evildoers who might prove too swift for capture by the human custodians of the peace. The step has been taken by the Ghent Commissioners of Police as the result of an alarming increase in burglary, robbery with violence, and other crimes, committed by night in the suburbs. The vigilance of the police proved unequal to cope with the evil, although their numbers were considerably augmented. The police dogs are of the breed of Swiss-Belgian sheep dogs, and are trained most carefully. They accompany the policemen on their nightly rounds, and not only protect them from being attacked by surprise, but by the quickness of their instinct in scenting the presence of men they make it impossible for any evildoer to lurk in the darkest corner undetected. Great precaution, however, is taken that the dogs may do as little harm as possible, and to this end their management and diet are carefully regulated. They are kept in kennels which are cleaned daily and disinfected weekly, and they are frequently examined by a veterinary surgeon. That the pangs of hunger may not tempt them to take a slice out of any of their victims, they are given two good meals a day, one at 12.30 and the other at 7 o'clock, each consisting of bread, rice and meat, and at midnight they are given a biscuit for supper. When on duty each dog is armed with a spiked collar, and bears a medal with a number to show its identity.

Kitchener in India.

Viscount Kitchener, who is about to become commander in chief in India, is to take up the best paid appointment in the British army. The command in chief in India is worth about £6,000 a year and is tenable for seven years. Lord Kitchener becomes commander in chief in India at the age of fifty-two. His predecessor, Sir Power Palmer, was appointed at the age of sixty. Sir William Lockhart, was appointed at the age of fifty-eight, and Lord Roberts, who preceded Sir George White, was chosen at the age of fifty-three. Lord Kitchener is thus the youngest general who has been appointed commander in chief in India for many years. He is also the first general who has been chosen commander in chief in India without ever having served or commanded in India before.

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