

## Banish the Common Barberry.

*The Case against an Immigrant Plant Which has Betrayed its Trust.*

By DR. E. C. STAKMAN, PATHOLOGIST, UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA.

THE common or high bush barberry is in disrepute. In the grain growing regions of Canada and the United States respectable citizens do not wish to maintain the bush on their premises. *Berberis vulgaris*, as the common barberry is called in the language of the plant doctor, was brought into North America by the English colonists and has been planted widely on lawns, in parks and even in the country as an ornament, but now it is being accused of spreading the deplorably destructive black stem rust of grain crops.



DR. E. C. STAKMAN

This is indeed a serious accusation.

The stem rust destroys millions of bushels of wheat, oats, barley and rye every year. Some stem rust occurs in grain fields every year, but it does much more damage in some years than in others. When weather conditions are favorable to the spread of rust terrible epidemics may develop which sweep across grain-growing regions like a prairie fire and leave destroyed grain and wrecked hopes in their wake. The worst epidemic of recent times occurred at the most critically inopportune time in 1916. In that year the stem rust destroyed about 300,000,000 bushels of wheat in Canada and the United States. The rust was one of the prin-

cipal causes for the food shortage which resulted in so much anxiety and so many dissatisfied stomachs. Rust was largely responsible for the use of corn bread, barley bread, rye bread,

oat meal bread, and many other substitutes which failed to make good with our palates. And not only were there these appalling losses of wheat, but of other cereals as well. It was positively sickening to travel through the spring wheat region and see the devastation which the rust had wrought. Thousands of acres of wheat were never

cut because what the rust had left of the once promising grain would not pay for the harvesting and threshing.

Rust is one of the oldest plant diseases of which there is definite record. The Bible speaks of blast in grain which probably refers to the rust. The Ancients certainly knew the rust and made many interesting observations about it. They shrouded it in much mystery and made comments on its nature which furnish much amusement now.

The Romans feared the rust so much that they had a special rust god whom they called Robigus. Every spring they held a festival, the purpose of which was to propitiate Robigus. This festi-