IMPROVING AN OLD ORCHARD

SCRAPING AND PRUNING—FEEDING AND PASTURING—POOR VARIETIES SHOULD BE TOP GRAFTED—HOW TO GRAFT—GOOD GRAFTING WAX—SPLENDID RESULTS

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ANY 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 board and 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 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 anin:als are not grazing 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