

NO. II.

WASHINGTON, June, 1871.

In the cultivation of trees and plants, at the Agricultural Department, two objects are kept in view—the one a specimen ground, in which may be found all the more prominent and valuable varieties of the different fruits, trees and shrubs, so that a visitor may see specimens of these, as far as it is possible to have them all in this locality; the other an experimental ground, where plants, trees, fruits and shrubs are grown, not merely with the view of testing their adaptation to the climate of Washington, but also for the purpose of distribution into such of the States as may be supposed to possess the climate and soil suited to their culture. Here, just now, a large number of *Cinchona* plants are being raised, to be sent out under proper restrictions to those who are willing to undertake their culture and test their adaptation to the soil and climate where they may reside, in the hope and expectation that their successful and profitable culture may yet be established in some part of the country. In the same way a large number of tea plants have been sent out by this department, and attention directed to the culture of this plant in the United States. A new fibre-producing plant, known as the New Zealand Flax, is being introduced in the same way. The fibre from this plant is equal to the best manilla, and its introduction and successful culture in the United States would be a great national benefit. Attention has also been given to finding varieties of apples suited to the trying climate of the north-west, and in the hope of supplying this much felt want a quantity of hardy varieties were last fall imported from Russia, and the scions freely distributed through the north-west for trial. The trees have been planted in the grounds of the department, and are all living, and in due time will yield scions which will be scattered through all the colder parts of the country, where it is to be hoped they will be found to be valuable in extending the list of hardy apples, beyond those ripening in the summer and autumn months.

Some experiments are being made in the raising of new varieties of fruit from seed. Just now Mr. Saunders is turning his attention to the strawberry, and conducting a series of experiments in the raising of new varieties, some of which give promise of being valuable sorts. In the *Hanthois* family especially there is a most marked improvement in productiveness, so that the lovers of the peculiar flavour of this family may hope to be able to gratify their utmost longings.

The grape has naturally commanded a large share of attention, and the collection of varieties is very extensive. The diseases and remedies are carefully studied, and the results of all these experiments are made known every year in the report of the able superintendent.

Nor is the beautiful overlooked. Possessed of a comprehensive view of utility, the Honourable Commissioner of Agriculture sees in the increase of knowledge of the culture of trees and shrubs an increase of taste in the adornment of rural homes, with a consequent greater attachment to home, a more widespread love of nature, more refined and elevated tastes, a more contented and virtuous people, and has caused to be planted, under the direction of the superintendent, collections of trees and shrubs, so arranged as to show the families and genera to which they severally belong, intending to have thus grouped together every species that can be grown in the climate of Washington. Here then one may have an opportunity of seeing every variety of tree, native and foreign, deciduous or evergreen, with which he may think to plant his lawn or ornament his grounds. If he wishes to select from the oaks, or elms, or ashes, those trees which to his eyes are most pleasing, he has but to step across the lawn to the group of oaks, &c., and there he will find every species likely to thrive with him, and the trees planted so near to each other that a comparison of their forms, foliage, habits of growth, can be easily made; and having made a selection of those he wishes to plant, he has but to transcribe from the label attached to each tree the correct name of the variety.

The same system is carried out with the shrubs, all so grouped that the comparison of different forms in the same genus is readily made. The value of such a collection of trees and shrubs, open to examination and study by every one who may choose to look at them, in imparting correct information, enlarging and refining the taste, and stimulating the enterprise of a people, cannot be overestimated.

In closing this letter, I can but express the wish that something of the same nature may be done for our own Province of Ontario. The Fruit Growers' Association, with a zeal worthy of all praise, is doing what it can with its limited means to disseminate information on the culture of fruit, and to send out through the country new and promising varieties for trial. But it should be provided with an experimental ground, where every variety that will endure the climate should be grown, and then open, under proper regulations to prevent abuse, to the examination of every one who wishes to study the collection. Yet not only should we have such a collection of fruits, but there should also be added, in the same vicinity, a complete Arboretum, where the Canadian may find grouped together for study and comparison every useful and ornamental tree that can be grown in our climate.

These important objects might with great advantage be incorporated in the proposed scheme of establishing an agricultural college and experimental farm for the Province of Ontario.

NO. III.

PHILADELPHIA, June, 1871.

I have been enjoying the hospitality and delightful conversation of that most thorough student and botanist, so well known to us as the able editor of the *Gardener's Monthly*. In his grounds are some fine specimens of different ornamental trees; and while the climate here enables him to enjoy a somewhat greater variety of trees, shrubs and plants than we can ever hope to carry safely through our Canadian winters, yet one will return from a visit to Mr. Meehan with new courage and a keener zest to the culture of the many beautiful things with which the Canadian may increase the comforts and attractions of his more northern home. In the first place, I am more than ever persuaded that we have not given sufficient attention to the wealth of beautiful and hardy things that are to be found growing within our own borders and native to our own soil. We have many very handsome native evergreens and deciduous flowering trees and shrubs well worthy our attention, which one needs to see gathered together and grown from home, really to appreciate their worth. Our *Cornus Florida* makes a very ornamental spring flowering tree of moderate size, and in the autumn is gay with its scarlet coloured fruit. The *Malus coronarius*, abundant in some localities, but scarce in others, vies in beauty with the flowering thorns of our gardens. But it is not so much of these that I wish to speak as of one or two very hardy, and, as grown here, very beautiful evergreens, not native, but foreign, which should have long ago have found their way into every collection in the land. Why it is that Nordman's fir has not been planted side by side with the Norway spruce, seems unaccountable when one sees its exceeding beauty of form, and learns that the bright green colour of the foliage is retained through all extremes of weather. In growth it is vigorous, in verdure beautiful, graceful in outline and regular in form, adapting itself to any soil, and, so far as tested, as hardy as the Norway. The other evergreen is known as the Eastern spruce, *Abies orientalis*, and is certainly the perfection of compact growth, and this is combined with such a graceful elegance of outline as to make it a most charming object. This also seems to be as hardy as the Norway, and is well deserving of attention from every lover of the beautiful. These two charming varieties will make a most noble addition to our list of evergreen trees.

The Japanese maples are also a very interesting collection from the peculiar form and colouring of the leaves, which give the trees a very attractive appearance. These will probably be sufficiently hardy to endure the climate of a large part of Ontario, and if so, will be a very attractive addition to our collections of maples.