

THE BEN DAVIS CONTROVERSY.

IT WAS not really my intention to add another word to the controversy on the Ben Davis which has been carried on in *The Horticulturist* for many months past. But on communicating with Professor Craig, whose opinion was cited by Senator Ferguson as against the longevity of this particular tree, I find that he in nowise bears out the Senator's view. On the contrary, he fully justifies my own contention that the deterioration he spoke of at Halifax must apply in a commercial sense to the fruit and not to the tree. "A misapprehension will not down until it is plainly corrected," writes the Senator, in the April number, and as there has evidently been a misapprehension of Professor Craig's words on somebody's part (not mine), I beg leave to state the case in dispute clearly and terminate with the authority which practically settles the case.

In an article in last year's *Horticulturist*, I marvelled at an opinion expressed to me by Senator Ferguson, who had recently returned from a trip to Nova Scotia, that the Ben Davis tree was a "slow grower" and of "short duration" in that province, and also in Eastern Prince Edward Island. The estimable Secretary of the F. G. A. of Nova Scotia immediately took the matter up, and declared that the tree was as great a grower in his province as I found it to be here, and as to duration, that was a question for time to determine. I rejoined that this must necessarily be so; but that a portion of a discussion in the N. S. report for 1899 conveyed the same impression as did the Senator's words. Professor Sears was concerned in the citation, and he comes to the rescue by saying that the Davis was not intended by the parties to the discussion to be regarded as a "slow grower," but the Gravenstein a more rapid grower, and, therefore, not desirable as a top graft on

such stock. And he modifies this somewhat by adding that this is not so much so because the Gravenstein can outgrow the Davis (which is questioned very generally), but because the former has the habit of making comparatively few large branches, whilst the latter divides up into numerous small ones. Senator Ferguson also invokes his splendid paper, read at the late annual meeting of the F. G. A. of P. E. I., in which he says "that Professor Craig does not regard it (the Ben Davis) as a tree that will, as it grows old, continue to bear the best fruit"; still holding, all will observe, to the idea that this tree must be short lived. I could never discover the data on which such an opinion was based. When the Senator read the passage in question before the association, I made bold to interrupt him and say: "Did Professor Craig really declare that the tree would not last, or did he say the present place of its fruit in public favor would not last when it became better known?" "He said, in his opinion, the tree would be of short duration," the Senator replied. "Well, we ought to know," I added, "on what he bases this opinion." Now, it transpires that with those gentlemen the tree and its fruit have been interchanged with undue freedom. No mortal man ever contended that the fruit, especially as grown with us, could ever be regarded as No. 1. It will grow well, keep clean easily, fill the barrel surprisingly, suffer all the incidents and accidents of transit, and go on the market at Liverpool at a time when fruit is scarce, in splendid shape, and thus secure a good price; that is all. But the tree, as a tree, is grand. It grows like "a-house-a-fire," if you permit me a boy's phrase; stands extreme climatic changes admirably; is free from the enemies which beset other sorts, and wants less attention than any other tree we plant. Why it