

THE BERBERRY AS A HEDGE PLANT.

BY A. HOOD, BARRIE, ONT.

The berberry is one of those unfortunate plants that a popular prejudice has in the old world almost banished from cultivation, and just as it was beginning to outgrow these prejudices on this side of the Atlantic, and recommend itself as the only really hardy hedge plant we possess, scientific investigation steps in and exerts a repressing influence on the growing popularity of this valuable hedge plant, threatening to banish it without ceremony from our fields and gardens; this outrage, however, on one of our best friends I cannot permit without a word of remonstrance.

Let us see in the first place what is the indictment against this unrivalled pig repeller and crop protector. It is charged then by popular prejudice that the berberry causes the rust in wheat, and by scientific investigators, who are more careful in their choice of expressions, not that it "causes rust,"—they are very careful not to go so far as that—but that the fungus which attaches itself to the straw and there growing becomes rust, that this fungus at one stage of its existence attaches itself to, and is sustained and nourished by the berberry. This is the charge. Very well, for the sake of argument suppose all this is admitted, what does it prove? Does it prove that if there was no berberry there would be no rust? Nothing of the kind. Does it prove that if there was no berberry there would be less rust? No, even this much is not shown; but it can be shown that whether there is berberry or not, in this country at least, there is always more or less rust, proving that the berberry is not by any means the only plant to which the rust producing fungus can attach itself, and on which it can feed and flourish. Could it be shown that if the berberry was banished there would be no rust—could it even be shown that without it there would be much less rust, I would say at once tear it up root and branch; but if such cannot be shown where is the wisdom in destroying our friends when by doing so we cannot weaken our enemies? Where is the use in discarding the berberry when it leaves us as far off as ever from banishing rust?

The berberry is hardiness itself, and as a hedge plant has, I believe, no equal for a climate like ours. It is not in the least injured by the