

GARDEN AND ORCHARD.

THE SHARPLESS.

BY T. C. ROBINSON, OWEN SOUND.

What is the Sharpless? A strawberry, of course, every fruit-grower will reply. But what are its characteristics and its relative value among strawberries, both for home use and market? This can be determined for the country at large only by reports from those who have tried it in different districts and on different soils. Here is how it does with me on fair loam at Owen Sound. First it must be candidly stated that while it stands the winter well, the blossoms seem more easily killed by a late spring frost than some of the commoner kinds. Its most notable feature is its size. It is got up entirely on a large scale—large plant, large leaf, large fruit. No man need think to grow it on the matted row or broadcast principle; the plants must each have about two square feet or more of garden area to spread their roots through, or else only half-coloured, poor-flavoured berries, and very few of them, need be expected; for the foliage will have a certain amount of sap, whether enough is left to develop fruit buds and perfect the berries, or not. Plant in rows two feet apart, or farther, and one foot apart in the row, clip off the runners and hoe down the weeds, and you will see what Sharpless is. I have it growing this year on light, poor land, both with and without a good manure mulch applied after planting; also on the rich loam on which it has fruited, and if its crop next year on this light land only fulfils the promise of this year's growth, and as its record on light land in other places gives me reason to hope, I expect good satisfaction. But while its size and vigour of growth are all that can be asked, I cannot say as much for its shape. The fact is, most large berries run a great deal to humps and crannies, and the Sharpless is no exception to the rule. Yet there is a symmetrical sweep in the irregularities of this berry that redeems them from the ugliness and deformities of other large berries. There is nothing, as far as I have seen, to compare with the abrupt small lumps and furrows found in the Cheney and Miner's Prolific. Those large Sharpless berries, that lie so heavily on their straw mulch, so impress you—even while you are noting their flat, coxcomb shape or other irregularities of contour—with their roundness of outline and shining smoothness of surface, that it scarcely needs the further attraction of its rich, bright crimson colour—the handsomest in the garden—to induce a trial by the palate as well as the eye. Let us take this big fellow of over an ounce in weight, and noticing that the last spot of pink on the under side is just merging into scarlet, at which stage it is in the right condition for shipping or eating; let daylight into the centre with our organs of mastication—tools that in this case will give entire satisfaction. Observe, as you do so, that while the berry is two inches to two and a half in diameter, and the outer edges of the exaggerated coxcomb are almost meeting in a complete circle, still enclosing the large green hull in the centre, yet it is nearly flat like a cheese, with a short diameter of barely

an inch. Now smack your lips over the choicest morsel you are likely to find till you pick the next Sharpless, and as you will make two bites of this strawberry—whatever you may do with a cherry—see from the remaining half the firm, solid quality of the flesh, which, nevertheless, your organs of taste inform you is not at all wanting in juice. Then finishing, you will need no further invitation to go for the next, and give it the company of many of its fellows. But stop! While yet there is room, step over here to my Wilson rows and sample the best specimens, as grown on the hill system. See, here is one of the largest, about the size of the medium or smaller run of Sharpless. See, it is of the rich (murky?) dark crimson, with mahogany-coloured seeds, which shows the stage of ripeness praised in the Wilson by Prof. Clarke and other supporters of this old market fruit. "Yes, not so bad!" you say as your glance strays to the patch you have left. But you will try another, and help yourself. Oh! This time you got a Wilson—"red but not ripe,"—just in condition for marketing, as it is so firm, and you turn away with a face suggestive of pickles. But hold on! You are just stepping over a row of Crescent—that famous berry for a near market. See what a grand crop of handsome, bright berries. You must know what they taste like; and help yourself, because I can't tell from the colour which are the ripest ones. Yes, that sent you, didn't it? "Wilson or more so," did you say? Now, don't head right for the Sharpless again. See here, I have a little petted strip of Triomphe de Gand, that will serve as a gauge of flavour. So you are willing to stay here awhile, though you speak enviously of the superior size of the Sharpless. Do you like these Triomphe better? You do, a little, if you can stand the muskiness. But lo! the supply runs out. The Triomphe is too dainty to grow a large plant, or bear heavily even with petting. Try these Miner's Prolifics in passing. Grand crop of large fruit, eh? But rather dark and soft. What! insipid, did you say? I believe you—after tasting Triomphe. But here is the famous Glendale! Just beginning to ripen, you observe, and a great bearer of large, late berries. Try this one, just red enough to pick for market—firm as Wilson, you see. Did you throw it over the fence, and ask for a cooling drink of vinegar to sweeten your mouth? No! But remember the Glendale, like Wilson, is not ripe till its colour is quite dark, and it is therefore commended to the lovers of Wilson, whose peculiar excellence it prolongs till very late in the season, being thus truly valuable. And you don't care to try Windsor Chief and other new sorts beyond the Charles Downings? Well, call again when I have more and better specimens growing. Meantime I must go to my pickers for a while, and will call for you at the Sharpless patch—an absence that I think, from your looks, is the greatest favour I can do you.

If the reader should glean from this that I have a high opinion of the Sharpless, he will not miss the fact. My only doubt is as to its relative productiveness, which, settled favourably, will induce me to set it out further by the acre, and for the settling of which I have some five thousand plants in hills to fruit next year.

From experience and reports of others, I think its crop will be not less than about two-thirds the bulk of Wilsons in hills; and if it is that, it ought to pay better. But that is a question for market growers. There are new berries coming that promise great things; notably Bidwell and Manchester, which claim to be equal or superior to Wilson and Crescent in productiveness, with all the excellences of Sharpless. Their promises may be fulfilled, and I am testing them. But they are the birds in the bush. The Sharpless is in hand, and of all tested varieties I regard it as *facile princeps*—without a possible rival in its season for home use, and very promising for market: but as it is rather late, it needs a few plants of an earlier sort to begin the season.

ORNAMENTING SCHOOL GROUNDS.

At the twenty-seventh annual meeting, in Rochester, of the Western New York Horticultural Society, the question of ornamenting public school grounds was considered at length, their barren and desolate appearance being considered a reproach, resulting in examples of disorder and depravity to children, whereas cultivation of love for the beautiful and orderly enlarges and enriches the character. School yards are too small; an acre is none too large. Three dollars expended for plants and seeds will, in proper hands, completely transform neglected school grounds. As the actual planters take the greatest interest in what is planted, it may be wise to appoint committees from among the boys for planting and caring for trees, and among the girls for flowers, making the leading members feel responsibility in the premises. Any school teacher may receive seeds free for decorating school yards by addressing James Vick, Rochester, N.Y., or D. M. Ferry & Co., Detroit, Mich. A committee of five was appointed to suggest plans for further work in this direction.—*N. Y. Tribune.*

RENEWAL OF AN OLD ORCHARD.

In the winter of 1862 I rented a farm near Lockport, N.Y., that had been leased for twenty-five years continuously, with an "old orchard" on it of from two to three acres. The real plight it was in would take pages to describe. It looked as though fruit would be scarce "off" or "on" years. A number of trees were so near dead the owner said I never could save them. I began to trim trees every day I could bear the cold in winter, and worked every hour of spare time trimming until July. I scraped the limbs and trunks of the trees, with the help of a hired man and two small boys, every time a rain would come, so the old bark and filth could readily be removed. In the course of the season I ploughed the ground five times in that orchard before the fruit began to fall, and dragged it as thoroughly in proportion. I manured nearly all of it once, with from two to three extra doses at different times around the sickly trees till they were waked into life. The result was: That fall, the "bearing" year, I sold 208 barrels for 63 cents per barrel for the fruit. Many came to see and admire the beautiful crop. Even the purchaser pronounced all beautiful, but