

At that time the old Spitzenburg was in high favor, in quality the king among apples. The yellow Belleflower, the Genetting and a few other named varieties had their place, and the rest of the orchard was made up largely of a come-by-chance collection. Among the choicer fruits, the cherry was the queen. Occasionally one would come across a farmer with an Yellow egg or a Green Gage plum tree on his premises, and the existence of a pear tree was famed for miles about.

After an absence of twenty-five years, I returned, during the summer just past, to spend a few weeks in that loved, and, in some senses, hallowed home of my boyhood. But what a change! Looking from one of my old haunts, out upon the lake, a soft and silent voice spoke from within, "changed in all save thee." The neighborhood, however, had lost nothing in beauty, and certainly none of its interest and attractiveness for me. Although the woodlands, which used to stretch away to the northward, had nearly all disappeared, the apple orchard on every hand had taken up a considerable portion of the landscape they had left bare. Not the apple alone, for the plum and the pear held a prominent and considerable place. It struck me, indeed, that the section from Whitby to Cobourg and northward, about ten miles, was peculiarly adapted to pear culture, for nowhere in the province did I see trees looking more thrifty, or anything like as heavily laden with fruit. I saw nothing to compare with them at St. Catharines or Hamilton, on my way round about, returning home. The apple orchards in that same tract referred to were likewise uncommonly thrifty; the Baldwin, the Greening and the Spy surpassing anything that I had seen west, except perhaps in the neighborhood of Clinton. The plum does well down there; and why should it not? for there the wild plum seems to be in its nursery home.

Driving northward toward Peterborough and Lindsay, through our good friend Mr. Beal's district, and making closer observations by the way, I was persuaded that Mr. Beal has a good deal of educating to do among the farmers of his vicinity and southward. I never saw a country so full of wild plums, many of them comparing favorably with that humbug, the Weaver, and also wild or chance apples. The roadside and inland fences seemed to be in some localities overgrown with both of them. But I found a great falling off in the better varieties of apples after leaving Port Hope, about fifteen miles, and on to within a few miles of Peterborough and Lindsay. On speaking to some of the farmers of the defect, as I termed it, I found them in a skeptical frame of mind as to the suitability of their soil and locality for pears, cultivated plums and the better varieties of apples. I was convinced of their mistaken idea, the farmer at the front thought that way but twenty years ago. It is true, where I did come across a more progressive farmer and found an excellent orchard upon his place, that his trees were not as thrifty in appearance as further south; but they were sufficiently thrifty and well enough loaded with almost perfect fruit, to convince me that the prevailing belief among the farmers was a mistake. At an altitude of