

# THE CANADIAN HORTICULTURIST.

VOL. XXI.

TORONTO,

1898.

OCTOBER.

No. 10



## THE WALNUT TREE.

"On barren scalps she makes fresh honors grow.  
Her timber is for various uses good;  
The carver she supplies with useful wood;  
She makes the painters fading colors last.  
A table she affords us, and repast,  
E'en while we feast, her oil our lamp supplies,  
The rankest poison by her virtues dies."  
—COWLEY.

WHEN black currants hang ripe on the bushes of an English market garden of which we have read, the berry-laden branches are cut off and carried away to be stripped of their fruit in the cool shade. A comfortable way on a hot day, and a beneficial operation for the bushes too, which thus severely pruned give a plentiful crop next season. This may serve to illustrate the rationale of the old English fashion of knocking the walnuts from the trees by beating with long poles the ends of the branches (on which alone the fruit is produced) and breaking many of them off. The broken ends would then be stripped of their nuts and the boughs thus "shortened in" throw out more bearing spurs, increasing the tree's future fruitfulness. So

it was "Merrie England" that gave rise to the not very chivalrous couplet:—

"A woman, a spaniel, and a walnut tree,  
The more you beat them the better they be."

Walnut-beating, however, is nowadays as much in disrepute as wife-beating, the former practice though right in theory being too rough and violent in execution. The walnut figures again in English Folklore in the riddle:—

"As high as a wall,  
As bitter as gall,  
And yet it is man's meat."

Man's meat! or as an old writer more quaintly puts it "A most pleasant and delicate meat, comforting to the stomach and expelling poison." At Glastonbury, in the churchyard of St. Joseph's Chapel (Joseph of Aramathea, who tradition says landed here, over-awing the hostile natives by causing his staff to blossom forth as a thorn tree.) there used to stand a walnut tree regarded with awe and reverence by the people, as possessing the weird and mystic power of deferring the putting forth of its buds till after the festival