

TRIMMING GRAPE VINES.



AS I promised you to say a few words upon this practical subject, I shall remark that pruning, in its essential quality, is antagonistic to nature. It is an effort to bring her in harmony to our designs and our uses, so as best to promote our advantages and to reach our ideals. Or as Shakespeare says: "This is an art that does mend nature."

Further, it may be regarded as a mortal thrust at the life of the plant, and often causes it to produce and do what it would not or could not otherwise be induced to do. As, for example, to bring a fruitless plant into the state and condition of fruit bearing, and to improve the quantity and the quality of the fruit of a plant, heretofore unsatisfactory. Further, I may remark, that all pruning should be with matured and enlightened judgment, and to the least possible expenditure or loss of the vital forces in the plant. It is better if it can be made not so much a severe and bleeding slaughter process, threatening and taking the very life of the plant, but rather corrective and directive of its forces, so as to accomplish our ends and designs in its life, and to show us its beautiful fruits in highest perfection of quality and with the least possible disturbance of its vital economies. The plants most easily affected by pruning and other manipulation, are the grape vines and raspberries of all sorts. These can be made, to produce for us almost up to the demands of our will and by mild and judicious manipulations are improved by the process. The readiness and willingness of response in these directions will often astonish us and is itself a proof of the perfect subjectiveness of nature, in all its forms, to man, as the head of creation and lord of the vegetable and lower world.

The vine may be regarded as an immense reservoir of pleasing resources of force and fruitfulness, that, to be so pleasing and satisfactory and profitable to us, must be properly developed, controled and directed to our advantage, but if neglected, seem to waste itself—and actually does—in rampant, useless growth, and mere showful foliage. The philosophy of pruning, is simply to throw the vital forces of the plant where most useful, viz.: in the full and proper production of fruit in the highest perfection of form and internal quality, and to prevent loss as much as possible by useless exuberance. In the case of grapes it is very easy to tell by looking at the fruit, what the management has been, whether good or bad. The small, poorly filled bunch and meagre skinny berries filled merely with seeds and a valueless scanty liquid, is a standing comment of neglect and a severe stricture upon Canadian grape growing. The opposite of this is the exception and not the rule, for which we greatly lament, as better things might and should be said of us. Only witness the studied art in this particular as seen practically carried out in our best vine-houses under