

## THE USE AND MISUSE OF THE PRUNING KNIFE.



WRITER in "Gardening World" treats upon the above subject, and certainly it is a most seasonable one for us also in Ontario, because during the mild days of early spring the larger part of the pruning of orchard trees is done by our fruit growers. Our English friends are well trained in the art of pruning, and we might learn much from a study of their methods. As a matter of fact many of our fruit growers have no ideal or system; they have a vague notion that the tree has too much wood and must be thinned, and they go to work with saw and axe in the most reckless fashion. Such men are well named "tree butchers," and often do more injury to an orchard than can be remedied in years of patient nursing.

Some orchardists we have met, very carefully cut off the fruit spurs along the main limbs, making them as clean as a boat mast, and about as free from fruit. Others cut out great limbs from the centre causing a forest of sprouts or from the sides of the trunk making the tree almost inaccessible to a ladder.

Such work is a waste of energy both of tree and man, and we hope our Agricultural Colleges will soon man our farms with men who will have some training, and who will do their work intelligently.

Our orchard trees do carry too much wood, and do need thinning, but it needs to be done with an eye to the symmetry of the tree, and to an even distribution of the fruit. Even a neglected orchard must not be butchered, it must be gradually brought to an ideal condition and not all at once. Large limbs must not be cut, for the wounds will result in hollow trunks, and premature decay. Patiently remove a portion each year until the proper condition is reached: not by removing large central limbs, but by thinning the smaller ones on the outside of the tree head in every part. This is much more laborious than cutting out at the centre, but is much more sensible, because

it is done at the point of growth and productiveness.

The thinning of the fruit may in this way be partly accomplished as well as the thinning of the wood, two objects of equal importance.

Plums and pears are much inclined to grow long sprawling limbs, which should be cut back to form a symmetrical tree; and in the case of pears we always allow a few side shoots along the trunk which may be grown into a new top in case of blight. In case of dwarf we aim at the pyramidal form of the tree which is less inclined to be blown over with the wind, more convenient for fruit gathering, and more symmetrical than any other form.

Peaches should be well cut back every year, and the dead or weak branches cut out of the interior. Too much stress cannot be laid on the importance of all this work in the production of high grade fruit, which is so important just now for success in capturing the British market.

Fraser, the writer above referred to, writes on this subject as follows:

"It would be interesting to know what idea actuates the mind of many of the great army that wields the shears, the hedge-bill the saw, the secateurs and the pruning knife. It may be, and no doubt is, the case that many of them are victims of mistaken notions, like the apprentice who was set to grind the tools in his master's absence one day; and, when asked at night whether he had ground all the tools, replied in the affirmative, except that he had not been able to grind down all the teeth of the big saw. To make a guess at the intentions of some pruners of deciduous trees whose handiworks we have witnessed, one would imagine that they had been sent to give the trees a good hacking; and if so, they carried out their orders to the letter. The jobbing gardener is often blamed for his accomplishments, but he is no doubt a victim of the order to tidy up the place, and give the inmates room to perambulate in the narrow con-