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THE

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MINIATURE FRUIT GARDEN;

OR,

THE CULTURE

OF

PYRAMIDAL AND BUSH

FRUIT TREES;

WITH INSTRUCTIONS FOR ROOT-PRUNING,
&c. &c.

“There is no kind of fruit, however delicious, that may not be deteriorated, or however worthless, that may not be ameliorated, by particular modes of management.”—DR. LINDLEY.

BY THOMAS RIVERS.

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INTRODUCTION.

My attention was drawn to the benefits fruit trees derive from root-pruning and frequent removal about the year 1810. I was then a youth, with a most active fruit-appetite, and if a tree bearing superior fruit could be discovered in my father's orchard-like nursery, I was very constant in my visits to it.

In those days there was in the old nursery, first cropped with trees by my grandfather about the middle of the last century, a "quarter"—*i.e.*, a piece of ground devoted to the reception of refuse trees—of such trees as were too small or weak for customers, so that in taking up trees for orders during the winter they were left, and in spring all taken up and transplanted to the "hospital quarter," as the labourers called it. The trees in this quarter were often removed—they were, in nursery parlance, "driven together" when they stood too thinly in the ground; or, in other words, taken up, often annually, and planted nearer together on the same piece of ground. This old

nursery contained about eight acres, the soil a deep reddish loam, inclining to clay, in which fruit trees flourished and grew vigorously. I soon found that it was but of little use to look among the young free-growing trees for fruit, but among the refuse trees, and to the "hospital quarter" I was indebted for many a fruit-feast—*such* Ribston Pippins! *such* Golden Pippins.

When I came to a thinking age, I became anxious to know why those refuse trees never made strong, vigorous shoots like those growing in their immediate neighbourhood, and yet nearly always bore good crops of fruit. Many years elapsed before I saw "the reason why," and long afterwards I was advised by a friend, a F.H.S., to write a crude, short paper on the subject, and send it to be read at a meeting of the Horticultural Society: this paper is published in their "Transactions." I had then practised it several years; so that I may now claim a little more attention if the old adage that "practice makes perfect" be worthy of notice.

This little work is not designed for the gardens and gardeners of the wealthy and great, but for those who take a personal interest in fruit tree culture, and who look on their gardens as a never-failing source of amusement. In some few favoured districts, fruit trees, without any extra

care in planting and after-management, will bear good crops, and remain healthy for many years. It is not so in gardens with unfavourable soils ; and they are greatly in the majority. It is to those possessing such, and more particularly to the possessors of small gardens, that the directions here given may prove of value. The object constantly had in view is to make fruit trees healthy and fruitful by keeping their roots near the surface. The root-pruning and biennial removal so earnestly recommended are the proper means to bring about these results, as they place the roots within the influence of the sun and air. The ground over the roots of garden trees as generally cultivated is dug once or twice a-year, so that every surface-fibre is destroyed and the larger roots driven downwards: they, consequently, imbibe crude watery sap, which leads to much apparent luxuriance in the trees. This in the end is fatal to their well doing, for the vigorous shoots made annually are seldom or never ripened sufficiently to form blossom-buds. Canker then comes on, and although the trees do not die they rarely give fruit, and in a few years become victims of bad culture, existing in a sort of living death.

There is, perhaps, no fruit tree that claims or deserves our attention equal to a pear. How delicious is a fine melting pear all the winter