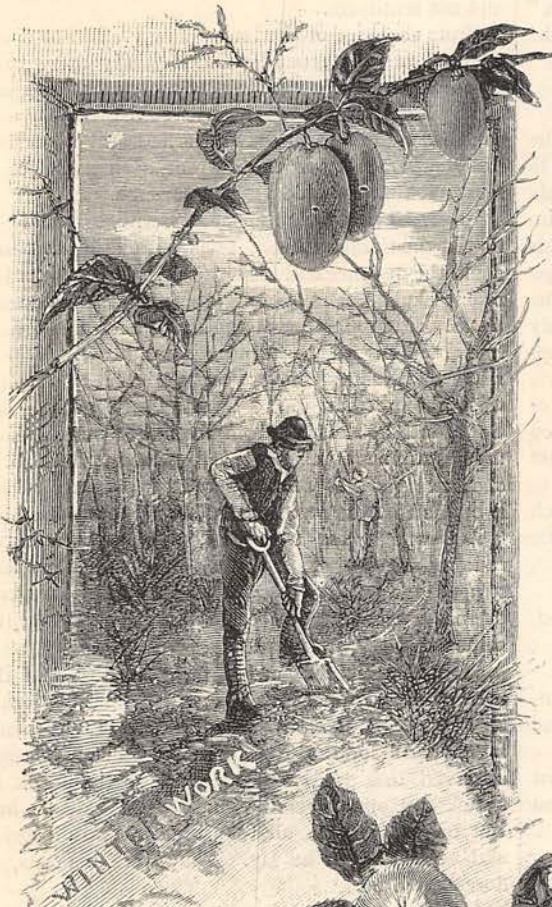
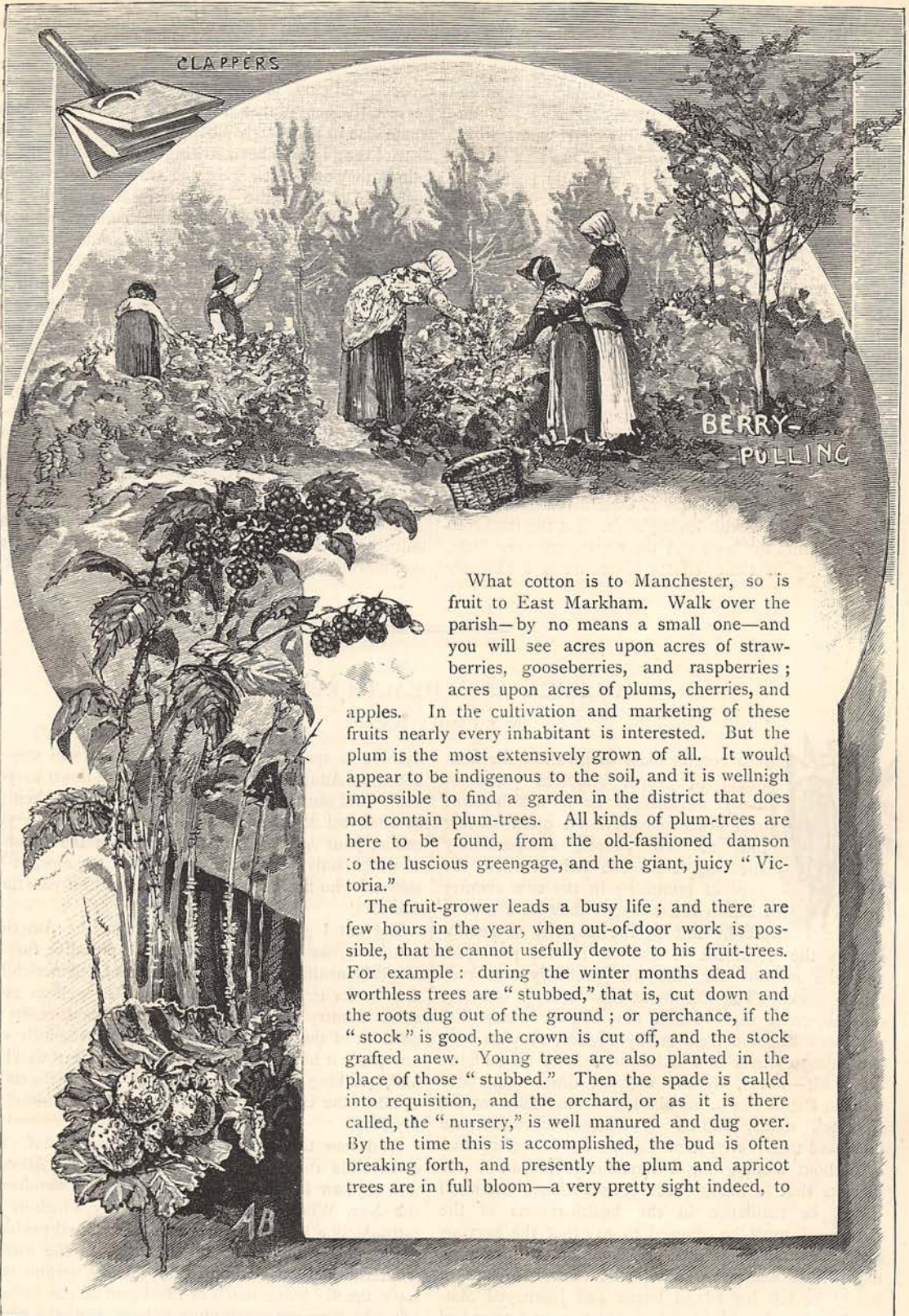


FRUIT-CULTURE IN NORTH NOTTS.



TRAVELLERS on the Great Northern Railway may probably have noticed the great number of fruit-trees growing on each side of the railway near the sleepy old town of Tuxford, six and a half miles south of the important railway junction of Retford. Alighting at Tuxford Station, and passing through the town, they would quickly find themselves upon the Great North Road, the old turnpike-road from London to York. About a mile from Tuxford, the road crosses a very high hill, said by coachmen in olden days to be the coldest piece of road between the two cities above named. An extensive and pleasing prospect is before them, and upon each side of them. The wide expanse of woodland before them is none other than Sherwood Forest, the scene of Robin Hood's famous exploits. To the left is a wide expanse of undulating meadow and arable land, stretching away as far as the eye can reach, and bounded by a range of hills running north from the village of Wellow. To the right may be seen the village of East or Great Markham, formerly the residence of the renowned Judge Markham. It is to this village that I wish to direct our supposed travellers' steps, and another quarter of an hour's walk will land us there, in the midst of a thriving and important industry, to wit, the fruit-growing of North Notts.





CLAPPERS

BERRY-
PULLING

What cotton is to Manchester, so is fruit to East Markham. Walk over the parish—by no means a small one—and you will see acres upon acres of strawberries, gooseberries, and raspberries; acres upon acres of plums, cherries, and apples. In the cultivation and marketing of these fruits nearly every inhabitant is interested. But the plum is the most extensively grown of all. It would appear to be indigenous to the soil, and it is wellnigh impossible to find a garden in the district that does not contain plum-trees. All kinds of plum-trees are here to be found, from the old-fashioned damson to the luscious greengage, and the giant, juicy “Victoria.”

The fruit-grower leads a busy life; and there are few hours in the year, when out-of-door work is possible, that he cannot usefully devote to his fruit-trees. For example: during the winter months dead and worthless trees are “stubbied,” that is, cut down and the roots dug out of the ground; or perchance, if the “stock” is good, the crown is cut off, and the stock grafted anew. Young trees are also planted in the place of those “stubbied.” Then the spade is called into requisition, and the orchard, or as it is there called, the “nursery,” is well manured and dug over. By the time this is accomplished, the bud is often breaking forth, and presently the plum and apricot trees are in full bloom—a very pretty sight indeed, to

AB

be followed in a few weeks by the apple and pear bloom. Then the proprietor often indulges in speculations as to the kind of crop he is likely to have, providing the trees do not get a "smit." But oftentimes, when the fruit is in its earlier stages of development, there comes a "nipping eager" east wind, and then—woe to the "plooms!" One half of the prospective crop may be, and frequently is, blasted in a single night.

There is no help for it, however; and so the grower turns for consolation to his gooseberry-trees. These are usually planted midway between the rows of plum-trees. Currant-bushes are treated in like manner. By the time the longest day has arrived, the green sorts of gooseberries are ready for picking, and then work commences in real earnest. "Berry-pulling" being the order of the day, bebies of women commence robbing the prickly trees of their fruit. Soon the "rasps" will be ready, and the strawberries and cherries too. Then all the youngsters who can be got are pressed into the service as "bird-tenters." Armed with a set of clappers, supplemented by stentorian lungs, they make daylight hideous in their discordant efforts to scare away the fruit-loving birds. But the feathered pilferers mind the boys and their clappers very little, persevering in their efforts to secure a deliciously

juicy meal, to be perhaps ruthlessly shot down by the irate grower himself.

Towards the end of August plum-gathering commences, quickly followed by the apple and pear harvest. Such plums are surely never grown anywhere else in this "tight little island" as those in the district that I have been writing about. Great fleshy fellows they are, often weighing three or four ounces each. And then the strawberries! I really am afraid to say how many inches in circumference some are. The apples, too, include all kinds: summer apples and autumn apples, dessert apples and sauce apples, apples that require immediate consumption and apples that will keep till apples come again.

I must now, however, draw my paper to a close; but I hope I have said sufficient to show the denizens of our great cities that even country people (whom they are apt to look down upon as clownish) have a very useful work to perform; and that the honest labours of these humble ones contribute in no small degree to the comfort and happiness of those whose lives are passed amid the bustle and turmoil of town life.

At some future time I hope to speak of another industry carried on in the East Markham district—viz., flower-gathering.

H. I.

AMERICA AS A HEALTH-RESORT.

BY A FAMILY DOCTOR.



OR a certain class of invalids, the continent of North America possesses many advantages as a health-resort over other places, and I often wonder that so few people, comparatively speaking, cross the Atlantic with the hope of recruiting in the new country the health and strength they have lost in the old. But by the majority of health-seekers the Continent of Europe is still preferred, and the reasons for this are probably not very far to seek. The Continent lies handy; one has only to cross that wicked wee strip of water that separates England from sunny France, only to take the train to Dover or Folkestone, only to be buffeted for a bit—worse, by the way, at times than poor Sancho Panza was in his blanket—in the chops of the Channel, mildly bullied by officious custom-house men, and then—why, then Europe lies all before one.

Without wishing for a moment to disparage the benefits that in many cases accrue from Continental travel, or residence in the health-resorts of the Riviera, I must be allowed to say that the nervous invalid cannot help rubbing shoulders with a good many little worries, which he had never dreamt of before he left his island home and journeyed eastwards. People with abundance of money do not feel these so much; it is the traveller with just enough but

nothing to spare that does. As soon as you step on board an Atlantic steamer, you can dive down to your cabin and see that all your things are right, then you at once feel at home, and your cabin becomes your castle, your *sanctum sanctorum*, across the threshold of which only perhaps a companion voyager, or the steward who has been told off to attend on you, dares come.

But am I going to laud and praise the American continent, as a kind of terrestrial paradise for the English invalid? Nothing of the kind. America has drawbacks in the shape of climate as well as every other country in the world, but as a health-resort for portions of the year it compares most favourably with any place it has ever been my good fortune to visit; and, speaking personally, I can look back to the time I spent in the United States as one of the pleasantest in my life.

And now the question may be asked, what class of invalids would I recommend to cross the Atlantic, and sojourn for a few weeks among the wonders of the New World? That class, I reply, which is unfortunately a very large one in England, and probably getting every day more so. I allude to the men of shattered nervous or muscular energy, people who have already borne much of the brunt of the battle of life, who have yet much more to bear, and who need a breathing-spell of complete rest and change of scene,