

Pastime gooseberry "extra bracts are often attached to the sides of the fruit."¹²⁴

The most interesting point in the history of the gooseberry is the steady increase in the size of the fruit. Manchester is the metropolis of the fanciers, and prizes from five shillings to five or ten pounds are yearly given for the heaviest fruit. The 'Gooseberry Grower's Register' is published annually; the earliest known copy is dated 1786, but it is certain that meetings for the adjudication of prizes were held some years previously.¹²⁵ The 'Register' for 1845 gives an account of 171 Gooseberry Shows, held in different places during that year; and this fact shows on how large a scale the culture has been carried on. The fruit of the wild gooseberry is said¹²⁶ to weigh about a quarter of an ounce or 5 dwts., that is, 120 grains; about the year 1786 gooseberries were exhibited weighing 10 dwts., so that the weight was then doubled; in 1817 26 dwts. 17 grs. was attained; there was no advance till 1825, when 31 dwts. 16 grs. was reached; in 1830 "Teazer" weighed 32 dwts. 13 grs.; in 1841 "Wonderful" weighed 32 dwts. 16 grs.; in 1844 "London" weighed 35 dwts. 12 grs., and in the following year 36 dwts. 16 grs.; and in 1852, in Staffordshire, the fruit of the same variety reached the astonishing weight of 37 dwts. 7 grs.,¹²⁷ or 896 grs.; that is, between seven or eight times the weight of the wild fruit. I find that a small apple, 6½ inches in circumference, has exactly this same weight. The "London" gooseberry (which in 1852 had altogether gained 333 prizes) has, up to the present year of 1875, never reached a greater weight than that attained in 1852. Perhaps the fruit of the gooseberry has now reached the greatest possible weight, unless in the course of time some new and distinct variety shall arise.

This gradual, and on the whole steady increase of weight from the latter part of the last century to the year 1852, is probably in large part due to improved methods of cultivation, for extreme care is now taken; the branches and roots are trained, composts are made, the soil is mulched, and only a few berries are left on each bush;¹²⁸ but the increase no doubt is in main part due to the continued selection of seedlings which have been found to be more and more capable of yielding such extraordinary fruit. Assuredly the "Highwayman" in 1817 could not have produced fruit like that of the "Roaring Lion" in 1825; nor could the "Roaring Lion," though it was grown by many persons in many places, gain the supreme triumph achieved in 1852 by the "London" Gooseberry.

¹²⁴ 'Catalogue of Fruits of Hort. Soc. Garden,' 3rd edit. 1842.

¹²⁵ Mr. Clarkson, of Manchester, on the Culture of the Gooseberry, in London's 'Gardener's Magazine,' vol. iv. 1828, p. 482.

¹²⁶ Downing's 'Fruits of America,' p. 213.

¹²⁷ 'Gardener's Chronicle,' 1844, p. 811, where a table is given; and 1845, p. 819. For the extreme weights gained, see 'Journal of Horticulture,' July 26, 1864, p. 61.

¹²⁸ Mr. Saul, of Lancaster, in London's 'Gardener's Mag.,' vol. iii. 1828, p. 421; and vol. x. 1834, p. 42.