

A COUNTRY DIARY

JULY 30.

Last evening was close and warm. Some predicted thunder, but I watered the plants where they were in very open places, and even in the grey of the early morning felt certain this was to be a really hot day. We have summer weather at last, and harvesting and preparations for harvesting are keeping farm folk very busy. In this district we had but a poor show of apples this spring, and when, as is often the case, some small ones fell off in June we thought we were safe to have the rest maturing to fine fruit, but for days back the largest and best on the trees have been falling—why, I cannot tell. Pears are very scarce in all this district. In many orchards not one is to be seen. Danisons, which are often such a valuable crop in Cheshire, have this year failed entirely. It is well we have still plenty of gooseberries. It has been a grand crop, and most bush fruit has done well. A friend tells me of a visit he paid last week with the schoolmaster in a remote Westmorland valley to the boys' garden, where they are instructed each week by a practical gardener in the business of growing fruit, beans, peas, potatoes, &c. The product of their labour is carefully divided amongst the boys. Even in winter they continue to grow what they can in frames, and the boys are thoroughly interested and attracted by the work.

I hear of a viper being killed near Torver which measured 18 inches. In many parts of the Lake District the viper was common enough a few years ago. Perhaps the enclosure of land and the growth of woodlands has given them increased shelter. Probably they are still as numerous as ever, as they have no particularly deadly enemies. N.