

Asparagus the Second Season after Planting.

THE new beds were planted in the third week of March last year; they were prepared in the ordinary manner, and a bountiful supply of good rotten dung well incorporated with the soil. The plants were covered two inches in thickness with nice fine earth; they were not planted in drills, as many plant them, but every root was disentangled, and then carefully spread out upon an even surface on the bed, and covered as above described. At the time of planting, the plants were two years old, and I might here advantageously state that I was very careful in not allowing the plants to suffer anything from their being out of the ground, for as soon as they came to hand they were unpacked, and the roots spread out upon the floor of an open shed, and then covered with dry earth. This precaution enabled me to keep the roots perfectly free from harm until the condition of the land out of doors would enable me to plant them, and as I did not order them until the middle of the month, I had only to wait about three days after I received them before they were comfortably placed in their permanent positions. I have been thus careful in detailing this procedure because I am convinced that the greatest secret in forming new beds of asparagus is not to let the young plants be exposed any length of time to the air, for if you do they become shrivelled up after the fashion of dry sticks, and the nutriment stored up in them—upon which they depend solely to start them into active growth—is wasted by the action of the air, and then people wonder why their plants die, or if they survive the injury, only come up very weakly, so that in the room of getting asparagus the second season, they have to wait until the fourth.

As I have promised to detail my system throughout, I must tell the reader that immediately after the dry hot weather sets in in April last year, the beds received a good soaking of clear water; this I well remember gave them quite a start, and as soon as all the crowns had thrown up one grass each, I mulched the beds with a covering an inch in thickness of short grass from the lawn. In a few days after this, as the weather was still dry, and the young grass sufficiently advanced for me to tell the position of every crown, I went carefully through the beds with my feet, and so trod the ground between the plants. I am so well satisfied that the utility of that simple half-hour's work can never be estimated to its full extent, that I would say to every reader do the same with all newly-planted beds. If they are made as they should be, no one would ever think of treading the ground at such a season, either before or after planting, unless the land was in an unusual state of dryness; and if it was, I believe the after-treading would be equally beneficial as in my case. Owing to the unusual hot dry weather of April and some part of May last year, the first mulching of short grass was soon withered up, but this I replenished again, but not until I had given the beds a thorough soaking of sewage water; I then applied another covering of short grass immediately after; this kept the surface of the bed and the roots in a moist growing condition. I continued the application of this sewage water up till the end of July, at intervals of about a week, and the progress they made was somewhat astonishing. After the first week in August, the little of the withered grass that was left, with all weeds, was carefully picked off, and during that showery month I gave it three separate sprinklings of salt, about 8 lbs. to a 4-foot bed 50 feet long. At each sprinkling at this stage the plants grew amazingly, and the only after-attention they had until the autumn was careful hand-weeding, for I never permit a hoe to be used amongst them.

Thus end the details of the treatment during last summer; the treatment in the autumn was only what should be given in every case of newly-made beds. The stems were cut down at the end of October, and then each bed received a covering of rotten dung all over to the depth of three inches, and upon this was added four inches of earth dug up from the alleys; in this state they laid all the winter, and all they have had done to them since is the top surface just loosened up in the beginning of March, and once since hand-weeded.

I have been very particular in noticing these little points, because they constitute the very essence of good management; but they are too often overlooked by those who could do well to observe them. But there is one other very important matter that I ought to give a caution about: I mean the common practice of burying the crowns too deep at the time of planting. It is the system of many to put at once the required depth of soil upon the roots; but this is radically wrong, as a little reflection must convince everyone. To bury such roots eight or ten inches underground directly after removal, at such a season of the year, when the earth is down to its coldest point, and to

shut them out of the influence of both sun and air just at the time when they most require it, is to me a most unbusiness-like manner of proceeding. One would think that people who do such things had a greater delight in killing them than they had in seeing them rise out of the ground strong and healthy.

It is a much better plan to cover them with not more than three inches of earth at the time of planting, adding four inches in thickness more the next autumn and three the succeeding one. When this is applied, there will be sufficient to enable a careful person to fork up the beds in the spring, and to allow a portion of it to crumble down into the alleys, as seven or eight inches is quite enough soil upon the bed for the grass to find its way through.

The result of the above management in my own case this season is the production of grass as fine as some I am cutting from beds five years old; in fact, much inferior grass is sometimes sent both to market and to private tables than these beds have produced in the space of fourteen months. But the reader must bear in mind I have not cut from them, nor do I intend to do so this season. I am aware that the above result may appear to some an improbability, but at the same time I can assure them I have no interest to serve in overstating the case, and it is open to the inspection of any interested party.

But my chief reason in penning these notes is to call the reader's attention to the fact that we need not in the case of making new gardens wait four years before we cut asparagus from it.

If I were engaged in the work of getting up a supply of new beds, I should proceed in the following manner. I will suppose that four beds seventy feet long, when well established, would serve for a permanent supply; I would make these, and then add to their number two more. These last two I should reckon upon for getting a supply for the second and third year for planting. After this the permanent beds would be in excellent condition for cutting, and the other two might be destroyed, or left one more year to be taken up for forcing. By this means a supply of home-grown grass is to be had without any serious outlay, in two years' less time than the majority of people think it can be had.

J. C. CLARKE, in *Gardener's Magazine*.

The Household.

Homedale Farm.

SOILING AND ROOT GROWING.

MR. PERLEY's agricultural reading had interested him among other things in the system of "soiling" cattle, as it is called. He was well convinced that on our ordinary plan of pasturage, a great deal of land is wasted and impoverished. While not insensible to the comfort yielded to farm animals by a free range in the meadow, he knew very well that scant feed at certain seasons, exposure to the noon-day blaze of our burning sun, and other inconveniences, detracted much from that comfort, and helped to equalize the lot of cattle left to roam, with that of those limited to the range of the shed and barn-yard, but abundantly fed. Theoretically, he was well satisfied of the superiority of the soiling method, but he saw a great practical difficulty in the cost of labour. He doubted, in short, whether it could be made to pay when stock was kept in due proportion to the size of a farm. He thought, however, it was the part of wisdom to experiment on a small scale that he might better judge how it was likely to work. Not getting on to his place very early in the season, and finding it difficult to put every desirable thing in operation at once, he did not sow any spring vetches—a crop he would have resorted to for early soiling,—but made his first trial with Indian corn. He thoroughly ploughed and cultivated rather more than an acre of land adjoining the barn and cattle sheds, gave it a dressing of plaster, and sowed it broadcast with dent or horse-tooth corn, the beginning of June. Though this large variety of corn will not ripen in our climate, he saw no reason why it should not make a rank, thick growth of green forage. The result more than equalled his expectation. It sprang up and grew with surprising rapidity. By the middle of July, there was a good cutting of juicy food, and the two milch cows, Brindle and Bess, got the benefit

of it. They had a run during the day in a piece of pasture consisting of a few acres of rather neglected land, on which there was quite a growth of scrub-oaks and bushes of various kinds. Mr. Perley meant sometime to grub, plough, and reclaim it, but meanwhile it answered a very useful purpose as a wild pasture lot. Every evening the cows were brought up and yarded until morning. When the green corn forage was tall enough to begin to feed it out, the cows were supplied with it, at first sparingly, but at length, bountifully. The young folks were able to take this job in hand. Charles felt himself man enough to mow down the green corn with a light scythe, while Lucy and Georgy thought it nice fun to gather up the stalks and feed them to the cows. They were repaid by the manifest delight of the creatures, and by the increased quantity of milk they gave in consequence of getting such liberal supplies of juicy food. As the summer wore on, the corn made a prodigious growth. It shot up thin and spindling to the height of 8 or 10 feet, and was the admiration of all beholders. The children were fond of playing hide-and-seek in it though it must be confessed that sort of thing resulted in some mischief in the way of treading down stalks here and there. Brindle and Bess were unable to devour the mass of green feed yielded by the broadcast corn patch, and as the pasture grew bare toward the end of the summer, the horses and other stock had many a nice toothsome meal from it. On the whole, the little experiment was a very satisfactory one, and showed what might be done on a larger scale. Mr. Perley resolved never to be without a reserve of green fodder, even though necessity compelled him to adopt in a measure the ordinary plan of pasturing. By means of clover, vetches, and corn, he felt sure he could greatly help the spring and summer support of his animals, and economize the occupancy of grass land. He was especially pleased with the green corn crop, and often expressed his wonder that farmers did not make greater use of it as a reserve supply, especially for such times of deficiency in the grass yield, as now and then are sure to come through drought and other causes.

As a matter of course Mr. Perley sowed a good breadth of turnips. He was a thorough convert to that system of husbandry which grows root crops, fattens cattle, and makes piles of manure. To his regret he could only devote six acres to turnips the first year of his operations at Homedale. But some of his neighbours thought him crazy to take so much land for a turnip patch. "He had no stock hardly, how could he consume so many ruta-bagus? Did he think it would pay to haul them to Brantford and sell them for 8 or 10 cents a bushel? Could he reasonably expect to market all he would grow if he got a good yield? Thus they queried, while Mr. Perley quietly kept his own counsel, intending before next spring to prove the wisdom of his method of procedure. His plan was to wait and see how his turnips were going to yield, and then embrace opportunities of buying some cattle and sheep at reasonable prices so as to have sufficient stock to consume his root crop, and turn it into meat and manure. He knew that every autumn there were auction sales of surplus stock by farmers who were not well enough posted in their business to fat up their spare animals, and he believed he should have no difficulty in buying up at twelve months' credit if he desired it, all the sheep and cattle required to consume his straw, and turnips. The vision of a huge manure heap danced before his eyes as he revolved this part of his plans, and he saw his farm in prospect not only yielding fine crops, but increasing in fertility from year to year.

The children made themselves useful in putting in and caring for the turnip crop. Charles insisted on working the seed drill, to which he had become somewhat used in the spring sowing of the kitchen garden. He said it was like playing with a toy wheelbarrow. But he found it no child's play to wheel it over drills of a six acre turnip patch, and was glad enough to