

THE  
CANADIAN AGRICULTURIST.

VOL. I.

TORONTO, MAY 1, 1849.

No. 5.

THE POTATO DISEASE.

If the nature of the potato disease and its remedy are destined to remain in impenetrable obscurity, it will hardly be said to be on account of any want of interest felt on the subject. Perhaps no question connected with vegetable nature ever before elicited so much public attention, and called into the field of observation so many practical and scientific men. From all that we can learn, this destructive malady appeared in a much more mitigated form in Upper Canada, during the past year, than it did in 1847, and a larger amount of potatoes have been kept during the winter, and appear generally to be in a sound condition. The cultivation of this root will probably be more extended this season, and we advise our readers to be extremely careful in selecting seed, in preparing and manuring the land, and to commence planting as early as possible.

Notwithstanding these favourable symptoms of the condition of the potato in this country, we have no guarantee for its healthy restoration, as we find that in several parts of England, where the disease previously seemed to have declined, yet, in 1848, it reappeared in as bad a form as ever. This fact seemed to indicate, that the visitation might become more or less permanent, and consequently but little reliance for the future can be placed upon the cultivation of this crop. Ordinary means of investigation had failed or become exhausted, and men appeared, after a lapse of four years, almost as much at a loss, as to the nature and management of this malady, as they were at its commencement. From the discordant results and conflicting testimony that had been collected, a discovery of the cause of the disease appeared almost hopeless. Scientific men were impressed with the supreme importance of accurate systematic observation. Dr. Lindley, than whom no one ranks higher as an authority upon this subject, accordingly addressed, last autumn, a series of printed questions to a great number of persons in all parts of the United Kingdom, who were likely to communicate re-

liable information. No less than 999 of these forms were filled up, and returned to London: 679 from England, 182 from Scotland, 92 from Ireland, 32 from Wales, and 14 from persons whose residence could not be ascertained. The information thus collected must possess the highest interest, and form a permanent record of authenticated facts. The details, however, are far too lengthy for the pages of the *Agriculturist*; we will, however, endeavour to give our readers some of the more important results of their scientific classifications, as they appear in several articles in recent numbers of the *Gardeners Chronicle*. It appears that the examination, classification, abstracting of the returns occupied a clerk and his assistants 16 weeks!

Much of the information is condensed in a tabular form. The first table comprises the effect of the different periods of planting, to which is appended the following memoranda:

“ENGLAND—*Time of Planting*.—February planting much recommended; said to be more beneficial than autumn planting. Some say February planting produces a heavier and as sound a crop as autumn planting; but the returns show that autumn planting escaped disease, when February planting suffered a little. In some of the northern counties, where there was comparatively little rain, April and May planting succeeded well. *Time at which the crop was attacked by blight*.—Hardy or course growing varieties, in some cases a fortnight later than fine varieties in being blighted, and do not decay so rapidly. Dry, light, and well exposed fields generally about a fortnight later in being blighted than close sheltered situations. In some places where lime was used, even on heavy land, (if dry,) the blight was about a fortnight longer in appearing. SCOTLAND.—Autumn planting not recommended; said by some not to produce such a good sound crop as spring planting. IRELAND.—Autumn planting not better than early spring planting, according to correspondents in Kilkenny and Down”

The second table shows the effect of soils and manures, and the third relates to the comparative power of resisting the disease possessed by certain varieties. It is stated:

“That when *Peat moss* suffered it had been clayed or marled. New heath land, planted in May, was half diseased. *Light lands* suffered much when highly manured, and planted late. *Heavy lands* suffered