

CULTIVATION OF POTATOES.

The following paper was read before the York Township Farmer's Club, a few months ago, by Mr. Wm. Lee. It is appropriate to the present season, and we therefore lay it before our readers:—

Mr. President and Gentlemen,—The Potato is yearly increasing in importance to the farmer in this vicinity. The increasing population of our cities, towns and frontier townships, will always demand a large supply of so necessary an article. Let our tables be ever so bountifully supplied with the necessities and even the luxuries of life, without a dish of these best of all vegetable pills, we should feel a loss which no other vegetable could fully supply.

Though the potato may not have found much favor on its first introduction into England by Sir Walter Raleigh, yet it has now become an almost indispensable article of food, and is said to be one of the most precious gifts of the new world to the old. It is very extensively cultivated, and was considered peculiarly free and safe from those dangers and accidents which other crops were subject to. It has now however become one of the most precarious and uncertain products, since that dire disease, the potato rot, has yearly destroyed such a breadth of crop; so much so, that at certain times potatoes were not to be got, even in this new and bountiful country, for either love or money. So much have they become a part of the food of the people, that their consumption would go on in spite of the price if they were to be had. It becomes our duty and our interest to try every means within our reach, to restore this valuable plant to its original healthy condition. Many have been the causes assigned for this failure in the potato crop, and many have been the suggestions for a remedy, both by science, and also by practice. But as yet neither the cause of the disease nor the remedy, has been found out. However, let us not despair. Perseverance overcomes most difficulties. This is an age of progress; many wonderful things in science and the arts, have been found out; and why not in the science of Agriculture. Some of the first minds in the world are engaged in it, and are bringing science to their aid. Let us be patient and persevere, in well doing, and there is not the least doubt, but by careful management, by selecting the best seed, preparing the ground in the best possible manner, according to the best of our knowledge; that we shall succeed in making potato growing a fair remunerating branch of our business.

Now, sir, I will explain to you my practice in growing potatoes. It is always in our discussions, best to give our own experience, what we know from our own practice to be facts. These are worth more to us, than whole volumes of opinions, or theories, from others.

First, then, the preparing of the land. An old grass field is best—neither too wet nor too dry—a good deep, strong furrow should be ploughed—if clayey, in the fall, so that the frosts of winter may assist in mellowing and making the land fine. If the land is light or sandy loam, the spring ploughing is the best. As soon as the ground is in order in the spring, harrow well, and then sow with oats or peas, and harrow again, crosswise, several times. There is no danger of over-doing it, if the ground is dry. A top dressing of plaster will always do good. After the crop comes off a good coating of barnyard manure should be applied—from 15 to 20 tons to the acre, spread evenly over the surface, and ploughed in as deep as possible, so as to effectually cover the manure as fast as it is applied. The ground thus prepared is left in its rough state until the following spring, and then as soon as it is sufficiently dry to work it is well harrowed, and left a few days. It is then crop ploughed, or worked with the cultivator until the earth is finely pulverized.

The Planting and Working.—The drills are now drawn out with a single furrow thirty inches deep; the seed is dropped in the furrow, from eight to ten inches apart. If the field is clear from weed seeds, a brush made of small bushes is drawn crosswise of the drills. This process covers the seed sufficiently, and the field is left until the potatoes are up two or three inches, when the drill hoe is run between the rows, and the weeds between the plants are taken out by hand. After remaining a week they are molded with a double moldboard plough. This should be done immediately after a shower of rain, and the potatoes will not suffer so much from dry weather, as they will soon cover the earth and prevent the evaporation which the sun would otherwise produce. In a few days they are gone through again with a hand hoe to take out any remaining weeds that may