

POTATO FARMING IN THE WEST.

The western papers, especially those in Illinois, are giving very discouraging reports of the potato crop. One of them says:—

"The Colorado bug was so successful in its war upon this universal favorite that from all quarters a scarcity is announced. This causes prices to advance, and to-day in the principal markets of the country a bushel of potatoes cannot be purchased for less than \$1, and in Chicago a good article commands \$1.25. This places the potato practically out of the reach of the poor man. Other articles of food, under the influence of a stringent money market, have declined in price, but the potato has advanced. The supply is yet unequal to the demand, and further advances in prices must be expected. With potatoes at thirty to fifty cents, poor families could live comfortably, even with flour at \$10 per barrel and meats of all kinds at high figures; but when the potato reaches \$1 to \$1.25 per bushel, the poor man must resort to soup bones, and such other cheap methods of keeping soul and body together as he may be able to discover. But it will cost more to live—and he cannot live so well—in this manner, even with prices generally very much below those which have prevailed for several years. This is peculiarly unfortunate at this time, when work is scarce and the tendency of wages is downward."

WINTER AND SPRING WHEAT.

The distinction between winter and spring wheat is a difference in the time of sowing and not in variety. And spring wheat can be changed into winter, or winter into spring, merely by gradually changing the time in which either is sown. By gradually sowing spring wheat earlier every season, in a few years it can be sown in the fall, and become winter wheat. Or just before the close of winter sow winter and let it germinate slightly, then let it freeze up till spring, and next year it may be successfully sown in the spring. And as it is universally conceded that winter is better than spring wheat, it is a natural conclusion that the sooner wheat can be safely sown in the spring the nearer will it attain to the quality of winter wheat. The difference between red and white wheats, is not in variety, but is owing chiefly to the variety of soil on which it is grown. It is said that the hard wheats are all natives of warm climates, such as Italy, Sicily and Barbary. The soft wheats from more northern climates, such as England, Russia, Belgium, Denmark and Sweden. There is, however, one exception to this general rule, as the celebrated Polish wheat is hard, and from this reason it has been contended that it was not a native of Poland, but was introduced there from a milder climate. The English atmosphere is so humid that it is impossible to ripen any wheat hard, but in many cases it requires artificial heat to harden it before it can be ground into flour. Different soils and climate materially change the nature and variety of wheat.—*Ag. Dept. Report.*

POULTRY AS FARM STOCK.

The London *Field* has the following suggestions that, with some modification, will be applicable to our own poultry keepers:—

How many farmers might obtain plenty of new accommodation for poultry by simply making use of the buildings they already possess, and how many farmers consider fowls unworthy of consideration, because of some supposed difficulty or expense in erecting suitable houses.

And worse than this, how many farmers try to make poultry pay without any result beyond continual vexations, merely from lack of ingenuity in bringing ordinary applications into play. "Why brother," they ask, "what is the use in raising chickens in cow-sheds and out buildings, when you can set out as many coops as you like on the grass of a paddock, the gravel of a stable-yard, or upon the scattered rick-yard straw?" Because, generally speaking, half your chickens die under common farm-yard treatment. They get wet feet and die of cramp; they drink the high-colored soak-water of manure heaps, of straw-yard drains and other filthy slops, and consequently sicken and die by dozens.

We have a troop of adult breeding fowls loose in the farm yard, they pick up a large part of their living there. But they do not thrive so well and keep so healthy as other troops of breeding stock which we have stationed at houses properly erected in grass fields far from the homestead. For a very

small sum you may erect a square board house, tarred outside, lime-water inside, and covered with asphalted felt. Each of the four sides is in a separate piece, the roof (if of a gable form) in two pieces, all knocked together at the corners with staples and pins. So a house, say six or seven feet cubic, can be popped into a cart, and temporarily set up in a pasture, or on a stubble, or wherever there may be a good picking for the fowls. A couple of perches, a few nests, and a drinking-pail for the furniture, while the ground covered in by the house (for there is no wooden floor) is spread over with loose earth, ashes, and mortar. Such is the home for one and eight or ten hens and pullets during the breeding season, or the home of double this number of half-grown chickens. The house should be placed against a hedge, or in a corner where two hedges meet, so that a few poles or posts protect it against cattle.

There can be no good reason against grazing fowls as well as other "animals" and the farmer who tries it for the first time will be surprised at the amount of "grub" (literally, perhaps,) which the active scratchers and pickers will find in a grass field, in and under the droppings of sheep and cattle, among hedge-posts, upon ditch sides, and so on; only a small amount of grain being necessary twice a day. We wish that many farmers would take our advice—procure what hardy sort you must fancy, Cochins or Brahmas, that endure close quarters; game that are strong old English birds; Dorkins that like dry chalk and gravel countries, or, if you are in a low or wet neighborhood, on a tenacious soil, put a Cochins cock to Dorking females (no cross breeds allowed for parents, mind, but get good blood and pure breeds) and you will have hardihood in your chicks, as well as weight and quality in your couples for market.

CERTAINTY AND UNCERTAINTY IN FARMING.

From a correspondent in the New York *Tribune*, in reply to a city man asking advice about going into farming:—

One more point raised in the letter before me demands notice. "I have heard some people say," writes the city young man, "that no money is made at farming, but evidently this must be an error, and I presume failure in it must proceed from a lack of knowledge and management." Most truly have you solved the difficulty, and in fact answered much of your own letter, and your summing up is so good it is worth printing. "Is it not," you ask, "on an average more certain to give a good living, and at least moderate wealth, than almost any other pursuit?" Yes, to those who know how; but to those who do not know how to manage a farm it is a much faster method of wasting a fortune than it is the means of acquiring one, in the wisest of farmer's management. For farming is at once the most certain and the most uncertain of all kinds of business.

This may appear to be paradoxical, but it is a true saying. If we look at general results and periods of years, the business is most stable, as is shown by the general average of crops. Even a single—if we look at the whole of our own country—will show that the deficiencies of some unfortunate districts are generally compensated for by the surplus of the more fortunate sections, and generally each particular section will have its fruitful years to make up for the lean ones. So, a mixed system of agriculture will in some degree cause a well-conducted farm to equalize each year. The wheat may be a poor crop, and the corn make up for it by an abundant yield or an extraordinary price. So wool may be low, and grain bring a good price to compensate. These illustrations might be made much more full, but enough has been said to indicate how it happens that, in periods of say ten years, things come around about as certainly in farming as in any other business. Though it does sometimes happen that a year may be behind the average—even in farming, the most varied—and two or even more such years may come in succession, such successive lean years try the farmer's courage, and his purse too, and if he is in debt, may result in great misfortune to him, but all branches of business have their periods of depression, and times where expenses are hardly met by the best management. The farmer, during these times of short crops or low prices, feels still a degree of safety unknown in most other businesses. His farm cannot be stolen by clerks or cashiers, and all the past teaches that soon the fruitful years will come. So in grand

results, farming is a wonderfully safe and stable business.

But however safe the general results may be, the case of a single crop is very different. One of the best farmers I was in the habit of consulting in my earlier years, said he never calculated on a growing crop as a means of meeting a liability. For such were the uncertainties attending the growth and harvesting, that until the crop was safely harvested and in the barn, where it could be insured, he never ventured to call it property, except in expectancy, and not as safe as the basis on which to contract debts whose payment must depend entirely on the success of the crop. However well a crop may be put into the ground, it cannot be safely counted upon as even paying for the labor bestowed upon it and the same is true of farm stock. The uncertainties of life there come in, and when the calf is in the course of being taught to eat his food, the owner looks forward many years, with all their uncertainties, for his compensation. Every branch of the business, thus looked at in detail, will be found to be wonderfully uncertain, though in the aggregate so sure. The chances here, as elsewhere, are found to work less against the men of skill, than against such as are the followers merely of such practices as may have been established by customs handed down from past times, or perhaps imported from unlike climates; and the advances made during the last third of a century may most readily be discovered by observing the precautions now taken in the direction of what is called "high farming" against the many uncertainties that, though they still, and always will remain, are vastly lessened in their injurious effects—so that it will be observed everywhere that the highest grade of farming escapes much of the injurious results of the unavoidable perils that all classes must encounter.

MINNESOTA'S MARVELLOUS MERITS.

I would say a few words in regard to Minnesota in general, knowing that, if all the advantages that it presents to those seeking a place to get rich in were generally known, everybody would live there. The advantages that it presents to stock raisers are unequalled by any other State of which we have any knowledge. Cattle will live and do well, provided they have a good tame pasture to run in from the middle of June until the first of August in each year.

Winter never commences here before the middle of Oct., and generally is over by the first of May. This year it held off until Oct. 22nd. Now, Oct. 25th, we have good sleighing. And then the weather is so mild and unchangeable. The mercury seldom goes above 110 in summer, and not often gets lower than 45 deg. below zero in Winter in the shade.

Agriculture pays better than any other business, all get rich that follow that vocation; but the most profitable branch of it is raising wheat. Those who confine themselves strictly to raising it have more money than they know what to do with. Some complain that raising wheat does not pay very well. But, if a man comes here with money enough to buy a quarter section of land, and ready cash to stock it with four good horses, wagons, harness, cows, pigs, reapers, mowers, and all things necessary for a prosperous farmer to have, including of course a good house and barn—if he be a man with a constitution that will admit of his working from four in the morning till nine at night all the year round—if he and his wife will both economize a little by going barefoot in summer, and when he must have something to cover his nakedness and keep him warm, in the place of going to the store and buying something for that purpose, let his wife go to his old bags (if he be fortunate enough to have some bags), and, out of them make him a suit of clothes,—if he will do all this he will soon find he will be able to make both ends meet.

But when the wives stand in need of anything in that line—well, I don't know what they will do. That is their look-out. But should there be any children in the family, and they should ever want clothes, I see no other way than to make them from their mother's old ones.

It would be a great help also if the wife would do the chores, such as milking the cows, feeding the pigs, making and tending the garden, planting and hoeing the potatoes, husking the corn, driving the reaper and mower, help stack hay and grain, and

many other little chores that a woman that is at all observing will notice, without having to be told about them every day.

If these suggestions are followed, I see no earthly reason why he cannot lay up money enough each year to pay his taxes, and buy his wife a new calico dress for Christmas, and once in two years may put on his himself by wearing of a Sunday a pair of brogans. But if any one should conclude to come here who has not the means to open up a big farm, the most profitable business he can go into is to buy a few acres of timber near Dundas and go to chopping cord wood to sell to the prairie farmers, or get himself nominated on some of the numerous tickets as a member of the Legislature. U. T. East Castle Rock, Minn.

NOTHING NEW.

LARGE POTATOES.—The Farmers' Union, Minneapolis, Minn., says:—At the State fair, there were on exhibition some immense potatoes raised by Mr. Andrew Holes, of Morehead, on the line of the Northern Pacific railroad. The largest one—an Early Rose—weighed 4 lbs. and 14 ozs., while all of them were much heavier than any beside on exhibition. Upon asking Mr. Holes how he managed to grow them to such size, he responded as follows:—That the land was broken in May last, and shortly after he took his spade and raised the green turf enough to put under a few potatoes of the size of butternuts. Nothing more was done to them whatever during the season. The potatoes grew and threw out tops between the openings, but he hardly thought the yield would be anything until he opened the first hill in the fall. Every seed he had planted had multiplied itself, in an astonishing degree, into potatoes of the largest size, and several bushels were taken from a small piece of ground.

The work of planting potatoes here described is nothing new, though to Mr. H., and to most scientific Agriculturists it is a strange, unheard of method. Like many other practices long obsolete, it is now a new discovery. This method was very general in Ireland till within this half century. A field of pasture intended for a potato ground was plowed shallow, six inches in depth, and the scows of a uniform width, in ridges of six feet wide. In planting, the green turf was raised enough to put under it at the back of the spade raising it one seed. They were planted in this manner in straight rows across the ridge, eight inches apart each way. The yield in favorable seasons was very large, amply repaying the large quantity of seed used. Forty barrels of potatoes have been produced by one rood, plantation measure. The barrel of potatoes is 280 pounds. The plantation acre was in proportion to the statute acre as 14 to 11.

When the potato plants were just beginning to appear over the earth the ridge was covered with a couple of inches of earth from the furrow; this completed the labor till the time of taking them from the ground, unless it might be the pulling of a few weeds. This method of planting potatoes was long since discontinued. Planting in drills has become almost universal, the plough, as in most instances where practicable, superseding the spade.

NATURALIZED WEED.

The New York *Tribune* says:—Two hundred and fourteen of our weeds have been introduced from foreign countries, and chiefly from England. In 1837 only 137 foreign weeds were enumerated in our catalogues. In 1672, a book entitled "New England Rarities," gave a list of 22 plants, which the author spoke of as having sprung up since the English took possession. Among these, the plantain, "the white man's foot," is mentioned. In 1758, the toad flax, or butter and eggs, also then known as the "Raustedweed"—from the name of the gentleman who introduced it into Pennsylvania as a garden flower—had overrun the pastures of that province, and had caused many anathemas by the farmers against the unlucky introducer. The common chickweed is said to have been first sown in South Carolina as food for canary birds, and the presence of the Scotch thistle is accounted for as due to the *amor patrie* of an enthusiastic Highlander, who brought it hither as an emblem of the pugnacity of his countrymen. Another record says we have the carelessness of a clergyman who brought hither a bed of thistle down, and on changing it for feathers, spread it and the seeds it contained broadcast over the country.