



VOL. XI. No. IX.
(NEW SERIES.)

TORONTO, CANADA, MAY 1, 1874.

\$1.50 PER ANNUM.
SINGLE COPIES 8 CTS.

The Field.

A Bad Variety of Spring Wheat.

One of the most prominent millers in the County of Wellington has called our attention, rather late we fear to have much influence on this year's seeding, to the fact that a very inferior species of spring wheat is being raised in his section of the country, the cultivation of which it is very desirable the farmers should be persuaded to abandon. It is known as the "Red Chaff Spring Wheat." Owing to its having been but recently introduced, it is not as yet very widely diffused. Indeed, it is only since last harvest that much of it has come into the market, except for seed. It has already become pretty well known to millers, bakers and grain-buyers, who are unanimous in the resolve to avoid it as completely as possible. All who have given it a trial pronounce it the worst variety of spring wheat that has ever been cultivated in Canada. No miller who is acquainted with it will purchase it, except at a great reduction in price below what the Glasgow or Fyfe variety will bring, as it injures the appearance and depreciates the value of any brand of flour which it may be used to make. Bakers complain that the flour made from the wheat in question runs like that made from sprouted wheat, and has no strength or sponging quality in it. The cultivation of such an inferior grain will not only seriously lessen the profits of those who grow it, but tend to injure the reputation of Canadian wheat and flour. We would therefore urge those who are already raising this inferior wheat to desist from doing so, and would at the same time warn others to beware of it, and to give it a good letting alone.

It is marvellous how incautious many farmers are about the kind of seed they sow. Every consideration applicable to the subject urges them to "get the best," and to use none other. Yet often for the mere sake of novelty, or to save a trifling amount of trouble and expense, they will procure and sow what is inferior or worthless. We can quite understand the desirableness of a change of seed wheat every two or three years, owing to the tendency of grain grown on the same land year after year to "run out," as farmers express it. But it is not needful to change the variety, nor is it well to do so unless one equally good or better can be had. If seed be obtained occasionally from a distant locality, where the soil and climate are somewhat different, there will be no ground for complaint of loss of vitality and diminution of value from the continued use of a particular sort. This can easily be accomplished at no great expense by dealing with a respectable and responsible seedman. But so long as farmers are content to run for seed to their next-door neighbor, just because it is "handy," we may expect to hear of deterioration of old varieties, and imposition and disappointment in connection with new ones. The Fyfe wheat

is undoubtedly the most valuable variety of spring wheat grown in this country, and may be kept up to the mark in the way suggested. We are by no means opposed to the introduction of new varieties, but they should be carefully tested before they are grown to any extent. For want of this, a considerable number of the farmers in Central Wellington will sustain serious loss on their spring wheat crop, millers and others will be subjected to inconvenience, and a great deal of trouble and expense will be required to root out what it would have been far better should never have been rooted in.

Potato Culture and Disease.

The value of the potato crop to many a farmer, and the loss and hardship which attend its failure by disease or otherwise, we plead for reverting to the subject. Last week we made a few extracts from a valuable pamphlet, recently published by Charles Dimmick, nurseryman, Ryde, Isle of Wight, on "Potato Disease and its Prevention," commented favorably on it so far as time and space permitted, and recommended its perusal by farmers and gardeners. Since then the little work has been favorably reviewed in the columns of several contemporaries. Our author asserts that the tendency to disease in the potato is largely due to a weakened constitution in the tubers. This is very likely. At any rate there can be no question we have not properly studied the desirability of maintaining the vitality of the potato. Nor have we kept sufficiently in mind that this esculent is a native of a finer climate than ours. Not that we can materially mend the defects of climate; but if the origin of the plant had been studiously remembered, the treatment might have been more in accordance with the necessities of the case.

Potatoes entirely disease proof there may be, though we are not sanguine of such being discovered, but this much we are convinced can be accomplished—viz., that by more careful treatment the evils of disease may be greatly alleviated. Mr. Dimmick complains reasonably of the method of storing the seed, of stowing them up in large heaps, so that they are encouraged to sprout as soon as vegetation sets in. Then comes the rubbing off of the sprouts, which weakens the seed to an extent to all appearance imperfectly realized. Not only the storing but the selection of the seed is of great importance. The seed should be chosen when the crop is being dug, and medium-sized tubers, fully ripened, ought to be selected. The picked potatoes must be carefully handled, and special storing provision made. Mr. Dimmick lays great stress on this point, remarking that on every farm or garden where potatoes are grown a potato house is as necessary as a garner or fruit-room. "My potato-house," he says, "which has been in use nearly twenty years, is 20 feet long and 12 feet wide, and it will accommodate about 60 bushels of potatoes. At the sides and ends are racks, the shelves of which are formed of strips such as are used by builders for slate strips. The strips are nailed on, a little distance apart to allow passage for air, yet not wide enough to let the smallest-sized potato pass through. This will help to green and harden the tubers, and hinder them from growing out too much before the planting season arrives." The potatoes are placed on the shelves in single file, and the walls of the house may be built of moss or stones, but must be thick enough to keep out frost. Where very large quantities are grown the system of housing all the seed over winter could not be easily carried into effect. But it might be done as far as possible, and

special field storing bestowed on the remainder. The essentials, we are told, in storing seed potatoes are—(1) They should be kept dry; (2) they should be kept free from frost; (3) they should not be kept in the dark; (4) they should have plenty of air in mild weather.

Too much attention cannot be given, and more should be devoted, to the choice of those varieties which have been found to resist the disease most successfully. These need not be exclusively, but principally grown. There is fortunately not disease every year to ward off. In Scotland, Paterson's Victoria Regents have come through the last few trying years with less scathe than any other variety. We have recently had extensive opportunities of ascertaining the varieties on which the scourge made least impression in different districts of Scotland, and in almost, if not every case the variety named yielded by far the largest proportion of safe tubers. In some cases Rocks stood next, while Blues, a favorite potato, proved very susceptible of disease. Such facts as these ought not to be lost sight of.

Planting is the next important consideration. The densest soil about the farm, as mostly every farmer knows and practises, ought to be put under potatoes. Comparatively light land suits best, if it is in good heart. The planting of potatoes with very stimulating manures newly applied is objectionable for the constitution of the tuber. On this matter Mr. Dimmick says:—"The best of all land for the purpose is such as was manured for other crops the previous year, and if it be good it is far better not to add any fresh manure; but if manure be really necessary, let it be such as the root can feed upon, without being unnaturally stimulated. Just as light, nourishing food is the best for a man who is enfeebled by disease, so are light, nourishing manures best for the potato in its enfeebled condition." Early planting is commendable. In the finer climates March is the best time, but in colder parts of the country April is early enough. The seed, if not deposited early, is much weakened by sprouting and rubbing off of the sprouts. The first shoots should be preserved. The seed, we are told, ought on no account to be cut, cutting involves a waste of the substance and vigor of the plant. Whole sets are advocated, and if the tubers show many shoots, the seed may be placed rather farther apart. It is, says the author already quoted "contrary to nature to cut potato seed, because the tubers when whole form a store of aliment enclosed in its own skin; it is therefore specially better for the health of the potato not to cut it." While many farmers are careful about the nature of the seed they plant, we know many stand in their own light by selecting the small and weak sets. It is a mistake either to depend on the smallest tubers whole, or larger ones cut into too many pieces.

Potatoes for seed should neither be dug before they are ripe, nor allowed to remain in the drills after maturity has been reached. Just as in the case of many other crops, if the tubers are left at the stem after they ripen, injury to the constitution of the plant is apt to be sustained. Why should not every grower be as watchful to secure this esculent when it is ripe as farmers are their grain crops when they arrive at maturity? To cope as successfully as is, in the circumstances, possible with the disease, we would advise growers to select the strongest seed, preserve it till the date of planting as carefully as opportunities admit, plant the varieties, such as those named, which have been found to offer the greatest resistance to the disease, choose dry, warm soil, in good manurial condition, plant early and seasonably, and endeavor to dig when the tubers are fully matured.—*North British Agriculturist.*