

Successful Methods with Strawberries and Tomatoes

J. C. Inman, Eden, Ont.

A DOZEN years ago a school teacher in southern Ontario began to study the complex problem of living and coming out in the end with enough hard cash to tide over the winter of old age. School teaching, while one of the most important branches of national upbuilding, was not what could be called a money-making occupation.

Viewing things from this attitude the school teacher began to search for some employment which would yield larger monetary returns. After careful study, he decided on farming. In the back yard of his simple home he had some money from a small piece of land, and by using the ordinary act of multiplication he had determined the amount he should make from a ten acre lot.

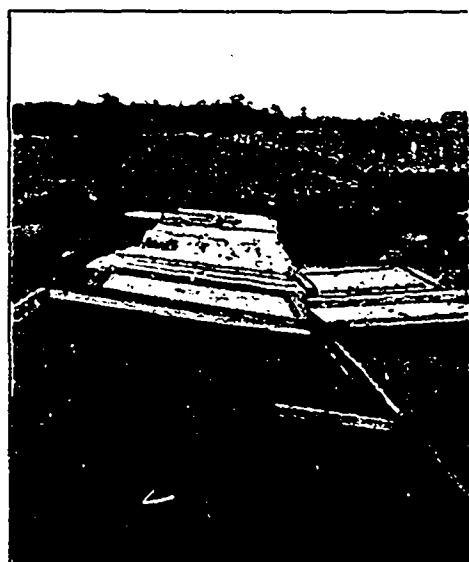
In due time this school teacher, who, we might state, is Mr. William Walker, of Port Burwell, Elgin, Ont., moved to a twelve acre lot on the edge of Port Burwell, which, after taking out the ground occupied by the buildings and waste land contained about ten acres. To his friends the idea of making a living from ten acres was as new as it was absurd. Although Mr. Walker did not know a great deal about his new vocation, he did know that the sandy hilltop soil on the edge of the town was adapted for the production of small fruits and tomatoes, which were just then coming into publicity. He had also observed that the hilltop was the last piece of land to get hit with the frost in the early autumn.

A part of the ten acre farm was what is commonly known as "a low spot." It had never produced much under the old management, but it had been left as nature designed it. In wet years it was practically useless. Mr. Walker felt sure that the low spot should be drained and made productive. He had an idea, too, that it would improve the whole farm if it were properly tiled. So he put in what is known as a deep drain twenty rods apart, over the whole ten acres. While it cost considerable, he has not kicked since about "wet spots," or a cold unnatural soil.

One of Mr. Walker's next steps was to contract with the two town livery men for all the manure produced in their stables. It comprised a lot of fertilizer, but he thought that he knew what he was doing, so he spread it all on the little ten acres just as fast as it came. This was done in spite of repeated warnings from kind friends who feared that he would sour the soil. The first year he did not do much but fit the land up although he did plant some of the ordinary farm crops, from which he secured some wonderful returns.

The preliminary work was money and time well spent. When a small patch of tomatoes was planted the next year they produced a crop that gave Mr. Walker some new ideas regarding making a living off ten acres. The strawberries also did well, and as there was a good market for them he planted out more the next year and began to feel the genuine pride of the man who grows things and gets well paid for his labor.

The story so far is much the same as



Mr. Walker's Tomato Starting Bed

It is not very artistic but has proved decidedly efficient as a money-maker.

any other story of its kind, so we may as well skip ten years and come up to 1913. Last season the crop was as follows: Strawberries, two and a half acres, tomatoes four acres, and three and a half acres in raspberries, cauliflowers, cabbages and potatoes. The returns from this three and a half acres were not kept track of except in a general way, but they paid for the general expense of running the farm, such as hired help, repairs, interest on investment, and living expenses. It may hardly seem possible to make three acres do all this, but that it did will not be doubted when the exact proportions of the other six and a half acres is given.

Taking the strawberries first: the two and a half acres produced seven hundred and sixty four crates or three hundred and five and three-fifths crates per acre, which sold at an average of two dollars and sixty cents a crate at the farm. After deducting fifty cents per crate for crates, picking, and so forth, we get sixteen hundred and four dollars as the income from two and a half acres.

The tomatoes returned two thousand one hundred and fifty-two bushels. At thirty-five cents that equals seven hun-

red and fifty-three dollars, besides seventy-four dollars for early tomatoes. This brings the total up to eight hundred and twenty-seven dollars and twenty cents, and a grand total of twenty-four hundred and thirty-one dollars for the six and a half acres.

The method of strawberry culture followed is perhaps not a great deal different from the average but it is at least worth outlining. The first requirement is to have the land well fertilized with manure and an occasional application of the commercial product. The plants come next, and although he may be old fashioned Mr. Walker sticks by the old stand-by (Williams) because he believes he can get no better. He selects the largest and healthiest plants and places them in rows four feet apart, and two feet apart in the row. He has also experimented with the block system but as yet prefers the rows as they require less work in proportion to the returns. The rows are allowed to become two feet wide and are kept from fruiting the first season. An application of manure is given in the fall, and the plants covered with a good straw mulch, in which condition they are left through the winter. When the first real warm days of spring arrive the straw is raked between the rows and acts as a weed preventative and as a knee rest in picking. The plants are kept from spreading as much as possible in order to force the growth into the berries to get them as large and uniform as possible. This is very important as it is the well formed, good colored and uniform fruit which commands the top price regardless of market conditions.

Only one crop is taken off as it has been found rather risky to depend on a crop the second year, as if the season is dry, the berries will dry up and the crop will be practically a loss. The following spring the plants are dug up and sold to future strawberry growers at a good profit and the area put into tomatoes.

Tomato growing is different from strawberry growing but the two crops have grown together admirably. The waste strawberry plants and wheat strawberry form a good mixer for the soil, and put every foot of it in truck garden condition.

The plants which are raised in a hot house until eight or ten inches in height are planted about the middle of May, or after all danger of frost is over. The method followed may be a little new and startling to most people. The plant is set in a hole, partially filled with good manure. The plant is laid flat on the ground, as it has been found that the