

Potato Starch Manufacture.

In a former number of the *Cultivator* we recommended such of the farmers whose potato crops indicated symptoms of decay, to manufacture them into starch. This advice was given to a friend, about three weeks before any of his crop was effected, which amounted to between five and six thousand bushels. We took a good deal of trouble to point out to him the cause of the disease, so prevalent in this crop, and brought under his notice some hundreds of the black insects, the recently punctured leaves, and those that were completely dead. We almost convinced our friend that our opinions were well founded, but still he could not help but believe that a large portion of his then valuable crop would escape the disease. Our gratuitous advice was unheeded; and the farmer, instead of realising a profit of £300 from his crop, will have to purchase his seed the ensuing spring. The entire crop has proved, as we anticipated, a total wreck.

The manufacture of starch, from the potato, has been carried on to a very great extent during the past ten years, in the State of Maine. To give our readers some idea of the extent of the potato starch business, in that northern, and supposed by some, unproductive region, we copy the following from the Report of the Commission of Patents:—

“Not less than *twenty starch factories* are now being erected in *one county*, viz., that of Franklin; and about one hundred rods from the centre of Merser village, are two starch factories. They are doing a *good business* for the proprietors, and also for the farmers in the vicinity, who find a ready market for their potatoes, which as a general thing, is as profitable a crop as is cultivated.

“The starch made is of first-rate quality. It is principally taken to Massachusetts, where it is readily marketed, and consumed mostly in the calico and cotton factories.

“We are informed that one of these factories manufactured into starch the past season, rising 18,000 bushels of potatoes.

“Starch factories are springing up all over the country. Three are under process of erection in Stark’s, at different points. There are now being completed, and being erected in Somerset county alone, ten starch factories.

“Here are thirty five of these factories, in only four counties of Maine; giving to the farmers in their vicinity a market for their potatoes to the amount of about six hundred thousand bushels yearly, at fair prices, combining the manufacturing and agricultural interests of those counties in a very remarkable degree. The efforts of the proprietors are being crowned with merited success.”

We bring the foregoing facts before our readers at this time, not with a view of recommending a similar course at this particular crisis, but for the purpose of shewing the advantage of a united and energetic movement in carrying out any improvement, whether it be connected with agricultural or manufacturing operations. It must be pretty well known to most of the Canadian farmers, that the writer is of opinion that the potato epidemic is caused by an animalculæ of about the size and appearance of the common black *flea*, and that it is possible to prevent its depredations by the use of strong alkaline substances upon the leaves of the plants, when the first symptoms of disease in the leaf is visible. The habits of this, until recently, unknown insect, is yet but imperfectly understood; it is highly probable, however, that it deposits its larvæ in the tuber; if this should be found to be true, possibly the liberal application of lime to the tubers would be instrumental in destroying the larvæ in the same manner that alkaline substances prevents smut in wheat. It possibly may turn out, that no application that man could employ, would have the influence of destroying the insect in question; and to prevent any serious loss in the cultivation of this crop, it would be wise for the farmers to be cautious and plant only a small portion of land with this crop. In the course of another year the whole problem may be clearly solved, and we strongly advise every farmer who experiments with his potato crop, to do so in a manner that will secure him from sustaining much loss. It is better to be deprived of this valuable edible, rather than cultivate it extensively, with a prospect of sustaining loss. It is our firm opinion, that the cause of the disease may be removed; but as this is only the opinion of an individual, it would be unwise for the public to make large risks, for fear that the results might prove disastrous.

Destroying Rats.—Corks, cut as thin as sixpences, roasted or stewed in grease, and placed in their tracks; or dried sponge in small pieces, fried or dipped in honey, with a little oil of rhodium; or bird-lime, laid in their haunts, will stick to their fur and cause their departure. If the rat be caught, and well rubbed or brushed all over with tar and train-oil, and afterwards put to escape in the holes of others, they will disappear. Poisoning is a very dangerous and objectionable mode.