

UNRIPE POTATOES FOR SEED.

BY HENRY WARD BEECHER.

In reply to an enquiry in the *Country Gentleman*, whether unripe potatoes are as good or better for planting than perfectly matured ones, may not some light be thrown upon the subject by the parallel case of seeds?

It is well known that many kinds of seeds, if they are to be planted immediately, will come up quicker and make equally good plants if they are gathered before all the processes of maturation are perfected. In one sense a seed is ripe as soon as its embryo is perfectly formed. It is competent to perform all the functions of a seed except one, and that one is to preserve itself against the attack of wet and cold during the winter.—For this last purpose, after the seed is *planting-ripe*, nature goes on storing up carbon in the form of starch, or other elements, but not for the sake of adding anything to the germinant power of the seed:—it is simply for the preservation of the seed. If I were of Irish descent, I should say that nature first ripens the seed, and then puts on an internal overcoat to protect against the wet and cold to which, in a state of nature, it must be liable.

Indian corn is often cut off by premature frosts; but if the ears are well glazed, though not merchantable, farmers know that they will do for planting.

It is probable that the same law holds with bulbs, corns, and tubers. Several years ago I received a large lot of gladiolus as late as the first of July. They blossomed well, but, when gathered in autumn, the corns were less ripe than my average crop. But the ensuing season they thrived best of all. Another season was so unfavorable to gladiolus that my stock seemed ruined; but the next year proved them entirely good for planting purposes.

This may throw light upon the fact that in selecting gladiolus bulbs, the small and medium-sized are reputed better than the very large ones.—They are less mature, at least in many cases.

Strawberries set in September will yield a half, not a whole, crop next year.

No farmer really owns more land than he cultivates well. Ownership is in use. Large farms are often no farms.

Fall ploughing is for heavy clays which pulverize with frost, not for soils which melt in the rain and become like mortar beds.

Tender raspberries and flowers do better at Quebec than at New-Orleans, because they have winter protection of snow.

All roots should have room. If standing thick, they should be thinned without mercy. Unless on newly cleared land they grow best in drills, for they can be cultivated.

Fine, well rotted manure, applied to the surface, gives the wheat plant strength to go well through the winter, and it fits the ground for receiving clover seed early in spring.

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