



The Field.

New Varieties of Potatoes.

Now that the seed catalogues are beginning to be disseminated, it may be as well to put our readers on their guard against becoming unduly excited over new varieties of potatoes. The sudden popularity and rapid spread of the Early Rose, and the large sums of money made out of it during the period of its comparative scarcity, very naturally led cultivators of a speculative turn of mind, to experiment with a view of originating other varieties from which also a golden harvest might be reaped. The wish for success in this direction has, no doubt, been father to the thought, that success had really been achieved, in some instances. But it is quite safe to say that so far, no such acquisition as the Early Rose has been obtained, if we except the Late Rose, which would seem to be a sort of sub-variety or sport of the Early Rose. Again and again, we have had potatoes announced, earlier than the Early Rose, and better in quality, but none of them, so far as we know, have stood the test of a fair competition with that excellent variety. For the present, at any rate, we may be content to let well enough alone, so far as an early potato is concerned. For speedy maturity, size, flavor, healthfulness and prolificacy, it certainly has no superior, and its introduction formed a sort of era in the history of our staple esculent. It were unwarrantable to conclude that "we ne'er shall look upon its like again." There is great encouragement to continue experimenting upon new sorts, and the fact that the potato needs renewal periodically, by growing fresh seed from the ball, seems to necessitate this course being taken. But it is very undesirable that there should be anything like a potato mania, or that people should get into a fever over new candidates for public favor. If a potato really has good and substantial claims to popularity, as was the case with the Early Rose, it will soon be discovered, and a general demand will spring up for it. But it is wise and well, we think, to be chary of paying a dollar a pound for comparatively untried varieties, merely because extravagant things are said of them in a price-list, seed catalogue, or advertisement.

These remarks have been suggested mainly by the perusal of a paragraph or two in a Canadian Seed Catalogue just issued, wherein the transcendent excellencies of a new potato are set forth in most glowing terms. "Eight hundred and twenty-six bushels per acre," and "thirteen bushels from one pound of tubers planted," are among the statements made concerning the wonderful productiveness of this novelty. Furthermore, we are told under this head that "yields from 12 to 20 pounds per hill are reported by the hundreds, and in one instance, 28½ pounds were dug from one hill." Generally speaking, the most prolific potatoes, are not the choicest as to

flavor, mealsness and whiteness. But this new sort is declared to be an exception, and we are informed that "thousands have testified that they never ate a better potato." Its uniform mealsness of grain, combined with the purest flavor, and its snowy whiteness of flesh, which is not the least affected by its blue skin, cannot fail to make it highly valued as a family potato. "All very fine, Mr. Ferguson." We hope it is true, every word of it. No one would hail the new acquisition more cordially than we, if all these eulogies are deserved. It would beat the Early Rose hollow, and leave all other varieties far in the background. But we hardly think we shall invest a dollar in a pound of these extraordinary tubers, unless it be to test them for the special and exact information of the readers of this journal. We are rather sceptical about this novelty for several reasons. One is that the laudation is overdone. We are not prepared to deny that eight hundred and twenty-six bushels to the acre, or what is more likely, a small patch at that rate, may have been grown under peculiar conditions and highly favorable circumstances, but that it is the habit of this potato to yield at that rate under fair, ordinary cultivation, we certainly are not prepared to believe. Then, if such large yields per hill are, as we are told, "reported by the hundreds," and if thousands have testified "that they never ate a better potato," it must already have been diffused somewhat widely. "Though the seedsman from whose catalogue we quote, say, 'we now offer it to the public for the first time,' others must have offered and sold it, more or less, and if the wonderful things already enumerated were true, the agricultural journals would have chronicled the advent and achievements of the novelty, and we should have known something about it from the perusal of our exchanges. A correspondent of the *Country Gentleman* says of it.—"though originating in this county, it is not introduced much, and all we know of it is through Messrs.—" (naming a prominent seed firm.) "The high price at which it was held, and our previous experience, has made us shy of investing in it." It is hardly credible that so superior a potato as this is represented to be, such a prodigy among tubers, could remain so unappreciated as to justify the remark, "it is not introduced much" in the very neighborhood where it originated, and would be likely to be best known.

Seedsman, like auctioneers, are beginning to be looked upon as untrustworthy, from the extravagant and unscrupulous manner in which they eulogize their wares. An immense amount of disappointment and loss result year by year from these over-fulsome advertisements. If seedsman for the sake of a transient run of business, will resort to this description of puffery, the duty is devolved on the agricultural journalist of cautioning the public, though in so doing he may have to reflect on a class of people, who while in the main, quite as honest as their neighbors, are equally liable to an over-keen pursuit of the "almighty dollar."

Deep Tillage.

An animated controversy has been going on for some time in the New York Farmer's Club on the above important subject. It would be tedious to attempt a recital of the facts and arguments *pro* and *con*, which have been adduced by the disputants, but it may be useful to note a few points brought out in the course of the discussion. A heavy crop of corn reported in the *Country Gentleman* of December 11th, 1873, has been made a great deal of by the advocates of shallow ploughing. It was grown on a field which had been in sod for eighteen years, and pastured with sheep most of that period. It was ploughed from 2½ to 3 inches deep, as early in the spring as the frost would allow, and harrowed six times just before planting. The soil was well and frequently stirred during the early growth of the corn. At harvest time, the yield was found to average 169 bushels of shelled corn to the acre. This fine crop speaks volumes in favor of sheep husbandry and a thorough working of the soil, but does not bear particularly on the question of deep *versus* shallow ploughing, because it is well known that corn is a plant which finds most of its nutriment near the surface, while the roots incline to spread at the top of the ground, so much so as to need the process of hilling to keep them thoroughly covered.

Several instances of the disastrous results of deep ploughing have been brought forward in the course of this interesting discussion. In one case, a field intended for corn was divided into two equal parts, one half of it being ploughed six inches deep, and the other a foot. It was all well manured, harrowed, and planted. Throughout the season, the advantage was visibly in favor of the shallow ploughed half, and the difference in the yield was as 2 to 5. It should be noted that the deeply ploughed half of this field was not sub-soiled, but just turned over, in the same way as that which was only ploughed to the depth of 6 inches.

Another case was that of a farmer who owed a mortgage debt on his land, which he was anxious to pay. Reading in the *N. Y. Tribune* that by ploughing a foot or more in depth he might double his crops, he determined to try this method of raising the money he wanted. The next season he ploughed nearly his whole farm as deeply as possible. His crops were failures and he was sold out by the sheriff.

It is worthy of note that crops of corn are mostly cited in proof of the benefits of shallow ploughing, and that a sudden deepening of the soil—turning it topsy turvy, and burying the top-soil under the sub-soil, is what is combatted as deep ploughing. As in most controversies, there is plainly visible in this one a frequent mistaking of the real issue, while there is obviously some truth on both sides. There is no doubt that it is poor policy to bury a good top soil beneath a hungry barren sub-soil, and no intelligent agriculturist would recommend such a course being