

THE POP SEASON.—Hop-picking 'as already commenced, but some days must elapse ere it can become general. The first of the hop-pickers' trains from London was run on Sunday by the South-eastern Railway. Seven hundred persons were conveyed on that day, and on Monday morning 600 more arrived in the vicinity of Maidstone which is the centre of the hop-growing districts of Kent. The railway company act in conjunction with the Hop-pickers' Employment Society, and convey the people as nearly as possible to their destination. On Monday large numbers arrived in Maidstone—many of them by road—but, as yet, there has been little of that vagrancy which, in some years, has made the commencement of hop-picking such a nuisance to the town. It is stated that the early sorts of hops this year have a great advantage. Some of them are in ordinary seasons of a coarser quality than the old-fashioned sorts, but this year the season seems to have suited them, and they are of better quality, and have good weight and condition. Unfortunately, to add to the planters' troubles, mould has appeared and is spreading, and this will necessarily hurry operations and cause a deficiency in the weight, as the hops are only partially developed. The late winds have done much injury in many grounds, and the cold has retarded the growth.

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