

AGRICULTURAL.

[FOR THE BEE.]

Mr. Editor,

SIR.—A communication under the signature of "J. W." appeared in a late number of the Bee, which, on its appearance would have received an immediate reply from me, had I not been conscious that the political commotion which then existed among us, would justly have deprived it of a place in your paper, or a perusal by your country readers. But now, that the period of political excitement is drawing to a close, I may with more propriety claim a corner in your agricultural page, for the following reply to the letter referred to.

"J. W.," as he intimates, was prompted to send you his communication by a desire "to put writers and planters right," and he commenced his praiseworthy purpose, by correcting an error committed by me, in classifying tuberous roots and seed together. That his remarks on this point are correct, I readily admit, and tender to him all the credit due for his superior botanical knowledge. But in advancing his theory of the failure of the potatoe crop, and pointing out an antidote, I think he has not taken the most successful way of "setting planters right." He says, "it is a change in the seasons that has caused the failure of the potatoe crop." That the seasons of vegetation have recently been shorter and colder, than formerly, (which has caused the potatoe crop to be housed frequently in an unripe state) every one must, from experience or observation admit. If "J. W." is conscious of any further "change" having been produced, he must advance something more in proof, than mere assertion, before "planters" can rely on his doctrine.

As a remedy for the general failure in the potatoe crop which has recently prevailed, he recommends, that the potatoes be "cut, covered immediately, not deep, and a light roller drawn over them," and asserts that "they will then do as well as ever." Before planters can accede to these assertions, their author will be under the necessity of answering satisfactorily, the following queries, consistently with his own doctrines.—Why will one quality of potatoes fail, while another receiving the same treatment, and planted immediately by their side, will vegetate? Why did potatoes, purchased from a person in this community, by several of his neighbors, invariably fail, while those taken from their own cellars, and planted at the same time and in the same fields, grew as well as usual? Why will potatoes grow on a humid and damp part of a field, while they will immediately rot on a part that is more dry and sandy? Why will potatoes planted in a dry day, under a hot sun, fail, while those of a similar quality planted in the same kind of soil, after a slight shower of rain or a fall of dew, vegetate immediately? Cases such as these have frequently occurred, and if "J. W." can show how the treatment he recommends will produce different results, he will then advance a step towards "setting planters right." But he will still be guilty of injustice to the public, in not imperting to them ere now, the fact, that by his prescribed treatment, the crop "would do as well as ever."

The practice of cutting potatoes before they are planted, ought, I think, for several reasons, to be abandoned altogether. It is a well known fact that whole potatoes will not rot so readily as those that have been cut. It has also been fully proved, that a more abundant crop will be produced when they are planted whole, than when cut into small parts. Of many experiments made in corroboration of this assertion, I shall copy one made by a planter in Scotland, not because it is more conclusive in its results, but on account of the comparative

brevity of the statement. I find it in Chambers' Edinburgh Journal, copied from the Gardener's Magazine: "I planted four plants, containing two eyes to each; four, the crowns containing, perhaps, five or six eyes each; four small potatoes; four large whole ones (or what are termed ware potatoes.) Now for the weight of the produce of each kind. The produce of the first four roots weighed 8lbs., that of the second four, 11lbs., that of the third four, 15lbs., that of the fourth four, 18lbs. I think this will make clear to any one, that the reverse of what is generally followed ought to be practised, namely, to plant crowns, or whole potatoes, in lieu of a plant with two eyes. This is even the second trial I have made, and found it the same; but I was not so particular in the first experiment as in the second, having determined by my eye the difference was so obvious. I think this of the greatest importance to the agriculturalist. If it holds good for an acre, what a difference in the produce! The object of a little extra seed bears no comparison to the produce, and, beside, the labor of cutting is saved."

In conclusion, I would recommend particularly, that various experiments be made in the ensuing spring, with this vegetable, such as the following.—Plant a small quantity of potatoes on dry earth, another portion of the same quality, on a more moist soil; select a few potatoes from the centre, and another quantity from the top or sides, of a heap in the cellar, and plant them near together; plant a part of a row with cut, and another part with uncut, potatoes; plant a quantity of the same kind of seed at different periods, &c. By practical experiments of this nature, and a careful observation of the results, you will probably set yourselves right sooner than either "J. W." or I can do for you.

Yours, &c.

December 1836.

MELVILLE.

TAKE CARE OF YOUR WHITE PINE TREES, AND PLANT MORE.—A writer in the New York Courier & Enquirer, having made a careful investigation of the subject, has affirmed, that unless something occurs to check the destruction, that there is not white pine timber enough north of the Carolinas to supply the domestic demand fifteen years. Boards of this description are already worth \$32 to \$36 per M. in New York and the other seaports, and the price is progressively advancing.

COMPOSTS, MUD FOR MANURE, &c.—"Sir J. Sinclair observes that in making composts it has been ascertained by a number of experiments that two bushels of unslacked lime are sufficient to each cubic yard of earth of a medium quality, and as eighty cubic yards are sufficient to manure an acre, one hundred and sixty bushels is the quantity required." A less quantity, however, will answer a valuable purpose, and no precise rules are necessary; for a compost without lime, or lime not mixed in compost is valuable for manure.

Dr. Deano observed that "a layer of mud will be no bad ingredient in a heap of compost. But it should be contiguous to a stratum of lime, if that can be obtained. But where this is wanting, new horse dung is the best substitute to excite a strong fermentation." And again, the same writer asserts that "with respect to using mud as a manure, the maritime farmer has the advantage over all others. For the sea ooze, which appears on the flats, and in creeks and harbors, along the shores of the sea, has all the virtues of fresh water mud, with that of sea salt superadded, which is one of the most important ingredients in the composition of manures. I might add that it abounds more than any other mud, with putrefied animal substances. Much of these are

contained in the sea itself, and innumerable are the tows and the fishes that have perished upon flats since time began; and the component parts of their bodies have been inclosed by the supervenient slime."

The Albany Cultivator asserts that "composts in which no fermentation takes place, can be of little advantage. There is no volatile matter given off, and no tendency exists to break down and render soluble ligneous or woody matter. Lime operates more powerfully than dung in inducing fermentation in vegetable matter, though it is not prudent to use it in combination with stable dung; I have found by experience that it causes too violent action and dissipates nearly all the putrefying properties. Composts are particularly adapted to all the family of small grains, and for top dressing grass grounds, where this latter practice is tolerated, mere earthy matters add nothing to the compost pile; they merely prevent the waste of other materials, which compose it. In making composts, therefore, for field use, earths should be preferred, which abound in vegetable matter; and the litter, vegetable refuse, urine, soap suds, ashes, &c. should be added, which are ordinarily wasted, and which form annually a large aggregate on a farm."

The too common practice of spreading barn yard manure over mowing or meadow land is very wasteful and extravagant. Most people appear to think that they have nothing more to do than to pile on barn yard manure in great quantity on any soil, and for each and every sort of produce, and their crops and fortunes are made. But the truth is that the application of unmixed dung to land in tillage is sometimes not merely useless but absolutely injurious. We have the assertion of an experienced cultivator that he actually nearly destroyed his grass in a mowing lot by spreading on this soil in the spring a quantity of fresh dung taken from the pig sty.

"The dung," he says, "was of too hot a nature, and caused the turf to be so much scorched by the sun that the grass was burnt up. It is true that fresh dung applied to plough land does not often produce that effect. But the manure in that case, by mixing with the soil forms a compost, and the dung is as it were diluted with earth. Still we hear farmers complain in dry seasons, that the dung, which they apply to their soil does more harm than good, by increasing the injurious effects of drought. But if it were well mixed before it was applied with 2 or 3 times its bulk of earth it would preserve against drought instead of increasing it. A plant will grow no better on a truck heap than on a sand heap; and in some cases pure sand would be a better application to increase the fertility of a soil than unmixed dung.—New England Farmer.

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Nov'r 8, 1836.

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