



The Field.

Indian Corn.

Maize or Indian corn, belongs to the family of grasses, (*Gramineae*). Its botanical name is *T. Mays*, and is expressive of the life-sustaining property of the grain; *T. Mays* being derived from a Greek verb signifying, to live, while *Mays* is thought to be derived from a Livonic word meaning bread, or "staff of life."

In Britain and on the European continent, the word *corn* is applied indiscriminately to wheat, rye, and bread making grains generally, but in this country the word is exclusively appropriated to maize, and in the United States it has been legally decided that the term is a good and sufficient description of Indian corn.

This plant was unknown to Europeans prior to the discovery of America by Columbus. Among other curiosities of the new world, Indian corn was found to be under cultivation by the Indians. It has greatly improved, and sprouted out into a large number of varieties as the result of the treatment given it by civilized and scientific agriculture. The range of territory over which this plant may be grown is very extensive. It is found from Maine to Oregon, from Manitoba to Patagonia, and while its growth is most rank and luxuriant under tropical climes, yet the yield of grain increases as you journey northwards, the largest product to the acre being obtained in the cooler instead of the hotter sections of its home. It is most extensively cultivated at present in the Middle and Western States. Indeed for many years past it has been the great staple product of the West, where corn may be as truly said to be king as cotton ever was in the South during the palmiest days of slavery. The prairie soil of the West seems peculiarly adapted to this crop, and though it is illustrative of the most prodigal and reckless kind of farming, it is also evidence of the richness of the land and the suitability of the climate, that in many instances, large crops of corn have been grown twenty years and more in succession, without any application of manure. This crop is largely raised in New England, chiefly for the grain—also in New York and Ohio; and in many parts it is highly valued and extensively grown as a forage crop. It has also been used, with the best results, as a manure, ploughed under when in its green and immature stage. In this country corn receives much less attention than it deserves. Where there is an American element in the population, it is more or less cultivated, but old country farmers prefer peas as a fattening food. In this they err, for corn surpasses all the other cereals as a fattener. Eighty per cent. of its composition consists of fat-forming material. It is four times as nutritious as the potato, and inferior only

to wheat in its value for food. While a rich, mellow, sandy loam suits it best, it makes itself at home on all manner of soils. "Indian corn," says the *Farmer's Encyclopedia*, "can be cultivated on land long after it has ceased to afford compensating crops of any other grain. It contends with poverty better than most other plants, and may be advantageously grown in any soil fit for cultivation, not excepting blowing sands or retentive clay." "Corn will grow," says Mr. Joseph Harris, "on all soils from the lightest sands to the heaviest clay, among granite rocks, and on the richest bottoms." The average yield per acre is from thirty to thirty-five bushels, taking the whole range of country over which this grain is raised. But the difference between the average yield and that obtained by the best farmers is very great. There is a vast deal of slovenly, careless corn culture, which lessens the general average, but scores of cultivators in every locality raise their hundred bushels per acre, and even more. The banner crop of this grain was grown in South Carolina some years ago, and amounted to the enormous yield of two hundred bushels and twelve quarts of shelled corn to the acre. While this plant is patient of hardship, and capable of enduring much neglect and poverty, it repays most generously, the bestowal of liberal culture and abundant manuring. Whether as food for man or beast it is well worthy of culture. The ear of corn is a most wholesome and delicious vegetable, the "pop" varieties take the place, both for amusement and dessert, of the nuts of the old world, the grain in a whole state is excellent feed for horses, pigs and poultry, and the meal or flour makes good porridge, puddings and bread. A recent farina known by the name of corn starch, is coming largely into use for jellies, custards, ice-cream and other articles of cookery. Nor is the entire value of this product limited to the grain by any means. The stalk crop is remarkable for its luxuriant growth and large yield. Indeed no part of the plant need be lost, or thrown aside as worthless. Even the cob is ground, and it is considered of special value for some stock feeding purposes. If necessary, sugar of good quality could be obtained from the stalk. Sorghum, from which sugar has been manufactured to a considerable extent, is a variety of Indian corn.

We are inclined to think that some who have experimented with this crop, have arrived at unfavorable conclusions in regard to it, from failure to plant the proper kind of seed. It is useless to expect that the varieties grown in the Middle and Southern States will yield remunerative returns in our northern climate. Some of these varieties will not ripen in our latitude, however favorable the season may be. It will be as well to state, therefore, that the New England Eight-rowed, Canada Yellow, King Philip, Dutton, and such other kinds as are known to be hardy and acclimated to a northern region, are those our farmers ought to plant, for a grain crop.

The culture of Indian corn is very simple. It prefers a deep, rich, and mellow soil, thoroughly tilled. Land should be prepared for it much as for other crops, a thorough and careful ploughing in the first place, being the prime requisite to success. Good crops are often raised on newly-ploughed sod, but this entails more work in the after culture, which is more than repaid, by the excellent state in which the land is left for other uses. After ploughing, the land is marked off in rows about three feet six inches apart each way, when the variety to be grown is a small one, as it must be in this country. It is very necessary to use a corn-marker to mark out the rows. This is merely a huge rake, having teeth the requisite distance apart, and drawn by one horse. Planting is either done by hand, or by a machine, of which there are various kinds in use. Four or five kernels are dropped in a hill. An old agricultural rhyme prescribes six:—"One for the blackbird, one for the crow, one for the cut-worm, and three left to grow." Many cultivators soak the seed for some hours before planting, as a means of preventing the spoliation of insects, birds and squirrels. After soaking, for which purpose tar-water is thought specially useful, the seed is coated with ground plaster, ashes or lime. Drill planting is preferred by some, and generally speaking, larger crops can be got in this way, but the labor of hoeing and cultivation is greater. The seed should be covered from one and a half to two inches in depth. When the plants are two or three inches above ground, the first hoeing should be given them. Three hoeings are usually thought sufficient, but the oftener the soil can be stirred about corn the better. It should be done often enough to destroy all weeds, and keep the land moist and mellow. Hills are usually made around the plants at the last hoeing, though some think level culture the best. It is common to plant pumpkins among corn, but this, there can be but little doubt, somewhat lessens the yield.

Indian corn should be harvested when the ears are glazed, but before they become hard. Some farmers cut the tops above the ears a little before this time to hasten the ripening and setting of the grain. At the proper stage of ripeness, the plants are cut near the ground. A knife made for the purpose is the best tool for this job. The crop is either taken to the barn to be husked, or "stooked" as it is called, for a time in the field, and husked out-of-doors. But the subject of harvesting corn, so as to save both grain and stalk in the best possible condition, is of sufficient interest and importance to deserve a future article. A similar observation might be made concerning the growing of Indian corn as a green fodder crop. For soiling purposes there is no plant so useful as this. Every farmer should have at least a small breadth of green corn to feed the milch cows, when the pastures get bare and burnt in July and August. For this purpose, the grain may be sown