

THE WATERMELON.

Hon. C. M. Clay, of all fruits, most esteems the watermelon, believing them when fully matured exceedingly healthful, and keeping down tendencies to fever. He says the meat should be red, clear, fine grained, tender and sweet, that but one variety should be planted at a time, but if more are planted they should be set very far apart, as they hybridize very easily, and even at great distance, the wind and the bees convey the pollen of one variety to the flowers of another. He has never succeeded in getting two first-class crops from the same ground in succession, and has found blue grass sod the best for them, and second in desirability newly cleared land. He recommends as fertilizer sand mixed with the vegetable *debris* of forests, or well rotted sods from fence corners or highways. He manages the striped bug and takes care of the vines in the following manner. "As soon as the seed are planted and struck with the shovel to compact the surface, in order to prevent the escape of moisture, I place shingles upon each hill to trap the striped bug, the great enemy of the vines. They seek the shelter of the shingles in the cool nights, when each evening and early morning they must be turned over and the bugs killed with a paddle. Many persons fail to raise melons because of these bugs, which conceal themselves in the ground and suck the juices of the young plants, and may never be seen till the whole crop is destroyed. An old melon raiser told me that he was in the habit of making blazing fires in his melon grounds at night, and that bugs would fall into the flames and be killed; I never tried it, finding the shingle trap sufficient. As soon as the plants are well up you may begin the thinning, till, as they get past the chances of destruction by the bugs and their leaves are well formed, they must be thinned to two plants in a

hill. As the plants advance, the weeds must be kept well under before the vines, but never touch behind them, as the vine will not admit of being handled or moved. I think nearly the same weight of fruit will be produced without topping or shortening the vines, but if large specimens are wanted, after the fruit is set, the ends of the side shoots and the main runner may be pinched off, so as to force all the sap into the few melons left for maturity. It is best to cultivate the vines late in the afternoon, so that the roots injured by the cultivator, plow or hoe, can have the whole night to recover before the sun comes upon them. When ripe they should be gathered early in the morning when cool, for the sun gives them the dull sound which maturity produces. They should be thumped lightly with the finger nail, when, if they sound with a metallic ring, seeming to pass through the whole melon, they are yet green; but if the sound is dull and seemingly confined to the rind, the melon is ripe. When the belly next the ground is white, or the curl of green fresh vines dead, these are also indications of ripeness. As the frequent walking to the hills to kill the bugs solidifies the surface, it ought to be lightly hoed towards the end of this operation. No careless persons should be allowed to enter the melon grounds, as a vine trod upon ceases to be useful; and the one who gathers the fruit should have a long stick to steady himself, and to displace the leaves to find a place for his feet. It also often happens that the vines on clean surfaces find nothing to lay hold of with their tendrils, and are blown over by the winds and severely injured. In such case they should be set upright, and clods placed on the leaves to steady them, or small sticks set near the vines for the tendrils to lay hold of. Avoid walking on the ground when quite wet, and never hill up or