

HOP GROWING IN NEW YORK STATE.

The Editor of the *Homestead*, in a letter from Richmond Springs, N. Y., for his own journal, furnishes the following information on the subject of Hops:—

Hops are the universal crop in this region, there being a few farmers who have not a yard, and some of them cultivating a dozen or more acres. It is the main crop relied on for ready money, and is cultivated by most farmers to the neglect of everything else. Probably more hops are grown in the two counties of Otsego and Madison, than in all the rest of the State, and probably one-third of all the hops grown in the country are raised in this vicinity. It is estimated that there are 2500 acres devoted to this crop, and the yield is from 500 to 2000 pounds to the acre. The whole crop cannot be less than a million of pounds, and some put it a third higher. The soil is well adapted to this crop, and farmers who understand the management, curing and sale of hops, make it profitable. It requires a considerable capital to carry it on, a good deal of skill in curing, and the market price depending upon the European crops fluctuates a good deal. It is an article in which speculators deal largely, and fortunes are made and lost very suddenly.

The poles used by the best growers come from Canada, and are mainly spruce and cedar. They cost about fourteen dollars a hundred, and it takes two hundred dollars to furnish an acre with poles; then every farmer has to build a kiln for the drying of hops, and a room for storing them, and a press for packing them in bales before they can be sent to market. They require manure, and the general objection urged against their cultivation is, that they take all the manure of the farm.

The best land is selected for the hop yard, and it is made the pet of the cultivator. Everything else must be neglected for this. The hops are set out in hills about seven feet apart, and it takes about five bushels of roots to supply an acre. These roots cost 75 cents to \$3 per bushel, according to the price of hops. They are cheap now, as some are disgusted with the fluctuations of the market, and are plowing up their yards.

The rule is to set two poles to each hill, inclining from each other, and to allow two vines to each pole. The whole strength of the root is thrown into these four runners, and all the side shoots on the first half of the pole are plucked off early in the season. The crop is plowed and cultivated between the rows like corn. The plow runs pretty deep in the middle of the seven feet space, and very shallow near the hills. The crop is very light with young vines. A plantation lasts six or eight years.

The picking of hops is mainly done by girls brought from the neighboring village for the purpose. The season only lasts about three weeks, and the wages are about \$2.50 a week. This need of extra help in harvest time is one of the objections to this crop.

The hops are carried in sacks from picking boxes in the field to the kiln, where they are dried by artificial heat. Some of the kilns will dry a thousand pounds at one heat, and it takes about twenty-four hours to dry them. It is the practice to dry at night all that are picked during the day. After drying they are removed to the store room to air, where they remain two or three weeks, and are then packed in bales with the press.

The profits of hop growing were large, when the market price was forty cents a pound, and many went into the business. Two thousand pounds to the acre is not an uncommon crop, and eight hundred dollars from a single acre is not easily made by any other crop. But there are a few farmers who eschew hops on moral grounds, and there are others who doubt their economy in the long run. The temperance men say the crop goes mainly to the brewers, and tends directly to the increase of alcoholic drinks and so to intemperance.

BIRDS' NESTS FOR DINNER.—The bird that supplies this whimsical luxury for the Chinese table is a small swallow the *hirundo esculenta*, which builds its nest on the steep precipices and rocks that overhang the sea. It is found almost only in the Islands of Malaysia. But the price paid to gratify this curious Chinese taste is very high. To procure the delicacy, the risk to life alone is tremendous—from the lofty, deep and dangerous caverns frequented by the swallows—and when brought to the Chinese market, the value is enormous—the finest kind often being sold at £800 for only a hundred weight, or about twice the weight in silver! For this reason it can appear only on the tables of the wealthy, and is not a common dish with other classes.—*Life in China.*

A pomegranate has ripened in the open air in England, on the south side of a wall in a garden in Essex.