

THE VEGETABLE GARDEN.

History of the Potato.

It seems scarcely credible that only one hundred years have elapsed since the general introduction of this now well-known and universally cultivated esculent into Europe. But such is the fact, and it has been proposed to hold a jubilee in Germany in this year, 1874, in honor of the centennial of the potato.

When the Spaniards conquered Peru, in the sixteenth century, they carried some potatoes to Europe and sent them to the Pope. The raw plant was cultivated a little in Spain, Italy, Burgundy and the Netherlands, and from a certain resemblance to the truffle, an esculent fungus growing in the earth, the Italians gave them the name of *Turista*, or *Turatsfoli*, whence the Germans derive their word *Kartoffel*. The French called them "Apples of the earth," *Pommes de terre*, while in Austria and portions of Germany the equivalent expression *Erda-äpfel* is used.

John Hawkins first introduced them into England in 1565. Walter Raleigh brought them there 1584, and finally, Admiral Drake in 1586. The latter sent some to a friend to plant, with the remark that the fruit was excellent and nutritious, so that it would be very useful in Europe. His friend actually planted the tubers, and they grew nicely. But when the seeds were ripe, he took these instead of the tubers and fried them in butter, and, sprinkling sugar and cinnamon over them, placed them before some company as a great rarity. Of course these balls tasted disgustingly, and the assembly concluded that the fruit would not ripen in Europe. The gardener pulled up the plants and burned them. The gentleman, who chanced to be present, stepped on one of the baked potatoes as it lay in the ashes, when it broke open, and he noticed that it was white as snow, and mealy, and had such an agreeable smell that he tasted it and found it very palatable. The new vegetable was thus rescued, but for a century after it was only cultivated in his garden, and in 1600 the Queen of England made the remark in her household book that a pound of potatoes cost two shillings (about 50 cents).—*Jour. of App. Chem.*

PRUNING TOMATOES.—That tomatoes are benefited by pruning we have not the slightest doubt, and we yearly practice it in our own garden. Some recommend and others practice cutting off all the tops of the plants, to which we most strongly object, as we are satisfied that such a course is very injurious to the plants, as well as to the perfect ripening of the fruit. As the tomato begins to grow, select say three or four of the strongest shoots, pinch all the others out, should there be any, by the finger and thumb, close to the stem. When these four bunches begin to show fruit, a small lateral will show itself immediately at the next joint. These should all be pinched out as fast as they appear, letting no shoots grow at any time, but the four main branches referred to; by so doing, whether the plants are tied to stakes or laid on the ground, we have always found that we secured a larger, finer, and at the same time a heavier crop than we could by any other process.—*Briggs & Bro's Catalogue.*

ONION MAGGOT.—An onion-grower, of considerable experience, says that he destroys the onion maggot in the following manner:—As soon as the maggots are discovered to rank, remove the soil from the sides of the bulbs, by making a shallow trench with the corner of a hoe; then pour into this trench soap-suds made by dissolving two or three gallons of soft soap in a barrel of water, previously adding one pound of copperas to the soap.—*Rural New Yorker.*

ANALYSIS OF THE POTATO.—It has been found by analysis that in 100 parts of potato there are water, 70.00; starch, 24.00; azotic matter, 1.60; fatty matter, .10; sugar, 1.60; skin, 1.65; mineral matter, (salts), 1.56; total, 100.00. The potato produces at least 30 per 100 of dry matter, 1.65 of which must be subtracted for the skin which reduces the food part to 28 per 100, 24 parts of which are starch.

California Grown Seeds.

EDITORS PRESS:—I lately read with much interest an excellent article in your paper on "California Raised Garden Seeds." The writer, of San José, says: "We are not willing to admit that our favored clime and soil will not produce as good seeds as can be raised on any other portion of the cultivated land."

My opinion, the result of many years' experience in horticulture, coincides with his. For the first few years I was impressed with the idea that eastern seeds must be obtained every spring, to insure fine flowers, but meeting with some disappointment, and possessing considerable of the Yankee desire of experimenting, I considered to raise my own, and the result has been very satisfactory, none of my varieties having degenerated, while not a few have greatly improved, some of which last summer were perfect marvels of beauty. But in raising good seeds, much care is required, and none but the finest flowers allowed to remain and ripen. I believe that in her productions of fruits and flowers California has no rival. Her elevated mountainous localities; her warm, bright, ever-blooming valleys, are especially favorable to endless variety; and her long summers and rich soils, to an almost fabulous yield. Our initiation into the real agricultural resources of California is only in its infancy, so much have we yet to learn, and so many of our preconceived opinions to cast aside; prominent among which is the erroneous idea that California cannot grow her own garden seeds. Pentz, Jan. 11, 1874. M. P.

INCREASING THE FELTING PROPERTY OF HAIRS BY THE USE OF CHEMICALS.—According to *Reinhold's Farber Zeitung*, a mixture of nitric acid and treacle is now proposed as a substitute for the use of mercury dissolved in nitric acid, formerly employed for enhancing the felting properties of rabbit's hair in the manufacture of felt hats.

GOOD HEALTH.

Hints for Nurses.

The following sensible suggestions are from the pen of Florence Nightingale: "Conscience and decision are, above all things, necessary with the sick. Let your thought expressed to them be concisely and decidedly expressed. What doubt and hesitation there may be in your own mind must never be communicated to theirs, not even (I would rather say especially not) in little things. Let your doubt be to yourself, your decision to them. People who think outside their heads, the whole process of whose thought appears, like Homer's, in the act of secretion, who tell everything that led them towards this conclusion and away from that, ought never to be with the sick.

Irresolution is what all patients most dread. Rather than meet this in others, they will collect all their data and make up their minds for themselves. A change of mind in others, whether it is regarding an operation, or rewriting a letter, always injures the patient more than the being called upon to make up his mind to the most dreaded or difficult decision. Further than this, in very many cases, the imagination in disease is far more active and vivid than it is in health. If you propose to the patient change of air to one place one year, and to another the next, he has, in each case, immediately constituted himself in imagination, the tenant of the place, gone over the whole premises in idea, and you have tired him as much by displacing his imagination, as if you had actually carried him over both places.

Above all, leave the sick room quickly, and come into it quickly, not suddenly—not with a rush—but don't let the patient be wearily waiting for when you will be out of the room, or when you will be in it. Conscience and decision in your movements, as well as your words, are necessary in the sick room, as necessary of absence of hurry and bustle. To possess yourself entirely will insure you from either falling, either loitering or hurrying. If a patient has to see, not only to his own, but also to his nurse's punctuality, or perseverance, or readiness, or calmness, to any or all of these things, he is far better without that nurse than with her, however valuable and handy her services may otherwise be to him, and however incapable he may be of rendering them to himself.

THE PULSE.—The pulse of a healthy grown person beats seventy times in a minute; there may be good health down to sixty; but if the pulse always exceeds seventy, there is a disease—the machine is working too fast; it is wearing itself out; there is a fever or inflammation somewhere, and the body is feeding on itself, as in consumption, when the pulse is quick, that is, over seventy, gradually increasing with decreased chances of cure, until it reaches one hundred and ten or one hundred and twenty, when death comes before many days. When the pulse is over seventy for months, and if there is a slight cough, the lungs are affected. Every intelligent person owes it to himself to learn from his family physician how to ascertain the pulse in health; then by comparing it with what it is when ailing, he may have some idea of the urgency of his case, and it will be an important guide to the physician. Parents should know the healthy pulse of each child, as now and then a person is born with a peculiarly slow or fast pulse, and the very case in hand may be that peculiarity. An infant's pulse is one hundred and forty; a child of seven, about eighty; and from twenty to sixty years it is seventy beats a minute, declining to sixty at four score. There are pulses all over the body, but where there are only skin and bone, as at the temples, it is most easily felt.—*Home and Health.*

DANGER FROM WET CLOTHES.—Few persons understand fully the reason why wet clothes exert such a chilling influence. It is simply this: Water, when it evaporates, carries off an enormous amount of heat in what is called the latent form. One pound of water in vapor contains as much heat as nine or ten pounds of liquid water, and all this heat must, of course, be taken from the body. If our clothes are moistened with three pounds of water—that is, if by wetting they are rendered three pounds heavier, these three pounds will in drying, carry off as much heat as would raise three gallons of ice-cold water to the boiling point. No wonder damp clothes chill us.

TO REMOVE ADHESIVE PLASTER.—Every surgeon, doubtless, is familiar with the appearance of a part which has been enveloped in adhesive plaster, after the straps have been removed. The appearance is not one in very good keeping with a cleanly and neat surgical dressing. The portion of the plaster which is left adhering to the skin may be quickly and completely removed by the use of oil of turpentine and sweet oil. Use a little more than half turpentine. This compound, carefully rubbed over the parts with a bit of cloth or sponge, and then washed off with warm soapsuds, will leave the surface as clean as nature ever intended.—*Exchange.*

FEVER AND AGUE PROPHYLACTIC.—We hear that several of the officers upon Sir Garnet Wolseley's staff provided themselves before starting with the prescription for bilious remittent fever so strongly recommended by Dr. Livingstone. It will perhaps be remembered that in his interesting volume on the Zambesi expedition, the Doctor published the ingredients of a pill which was found to be of the greatest service to every one accompanying him. The formula includes resin of jalap, powder of rhubarb, quinine and calomel, and was always administered previous to the employment of quinine.

CHAPPED HANDS.—The easiest and simplest remedy is found in every store-room. Take common starch and grind it with a knife until it is reduced to the smoothest powder. Take a clean box and fill it with starch thus prepared, so as to have it continually at hand for use. Every time hands are taken from the suds or damp, wipe them, and, while they are yet damp, rub a portion of starch thoroughly over them, covering the whole surface. The effect is magical. The rough, smarting skin is cooled and healed bringing and insuring the greatest degree of comfort and freedom. From this by no means insignificant trial.—*Artisan.*

TO STOP BLEEDING AT THE NOSE.—It is worth while to know how to stop the bleeding from the nose when it becomes excessive. If the finger is pressed firmly upon the little artery that supplies the blood to the side of the face affected, the result is accomplished. The two small arteries branching up from the main arteries on each side of the neck, and passing over the outside of the jawbone, supply the face with blood. If the nose bleeds from the right nostril, for example, pass the finger along the edge of the right jaw till the beating of the artery is felt. Press hard upon it, and the bleeding will cease. Continue the pressure five minutes, until the ruptured vessels in the nose have time to contract.

Water Tanks and Health.

San Francisco depends principally for its water supply on the Spring Valley Water Company's Works. The water from this source is introduced into houses in two different methods. The first is by direct communication between the main pipes and the emission faucets in the houses. The water is thus supplied directly by direct pressure from the lead of the reservoir. But in many parts of the city this pressure is too great for the convenience of consumers. Another method of introduction is accordingly extensively resorted to. In order to moderate the force of the stream, tanks are built on the tops of houses. These receive the water from the street mains, and it is then conducted through the houses by the usual pipes. To regulate the supply in tanks and prevent overflow, an ingenious device is used, which quite fulfills its purpose, but is open to a serious objection from a hygienic point of view, viz., that in interrupting the free and constant flow of fresh water from the reservoir, it creates a little lake of stagnant water on every house-top where it is employed. The water is detained in the tank by not being steadily drawn out and exposed to the rays of the sun for indefinite periods of time, and all the organic operations of vegetable and animal germination and decomposition have the same opportunity to occur as in stagnant pools. Months, sometimes years, elapse, and no thought is given to cleaning and sanitizing the tanks. These remarks are equally applicable to those larger tanks in the Mission plain, which are elevated the air and filled from wells by the aid of windmills. In these latter the water often remains for a long while, for the owners are induced to economize the water in order to maintain their supply, when during the summer season there is often quite a length of time in which the wind does not blow strong enough to work the windmill.

Attention has, at different times, been called to these facts by physicians, and also to the danger of generating disease which ensues. Housekeepers do not, however, appear to have been sufficiently warned to induce them to take steps to obviate the difficulty. Following is a portion of a paper on "Water Tanks on the Tops of Houses," which was recently read by Arthur B. Stout, M. D., member of the State Board of Health, before the San Francisco Microscopical Society. It deserves the attention of all who are interested in the matter:

It not infrequently happens that these house-top tanks are inaccessible, except at considerable trouble and expense, and are not supplied with covers. Housekeepers, who otherwise would be careful, are consequently deterred from taking the proper precautions to sanitize their tanks. Persons unacquainted with these facts, and finding the water impure would be disposed to incupate the reservoir of the Spring Valley Water Company; when in truth the noxious swamp is on the roof of their own houses.

The question of the purity of water, and strictly careful analysis of the various ingredients which the analytic chemist can detect, are from time to time urged upon the public, doubtfully appreciative of the scientific skill displayed; but let any housekeeper, not too lazy to take the trouble, enter a search into the contents of the tank on his house roof; let him collect a bottle full of its soil, and put one drop of it under a proper microscope, and then pronounce—having seen it with his own eyes—upon the soup which he drinks.

Many observers know that these house-top tanks are the birth-place of mosquitoes, like many other swamps, only on a smaller scale, and that their offspring migrate into the apartments below them; that various devices of window screens and mosquito nets are resorted to, and that one house will be infested, while adjacent ones are exempt—and yet, the hint of the mosquito, truly poignant, fails to awake them to the quality of their beverage.

The water when first drawn from the tank may appear clear and pure, but in a short time it becomes cloudy, emits a faint odor and soon turns to a greenish color. After a time green vegetable matter forms, some of which floats on the surface and also gathers on the bottom of the containing vessel. This vegetable growth now becomes the nidus or home-stead of innumerable microscopic animalcules of many different species. In due time these plant and animal creations die and decompose, adding thereby another noxious ingredient to the water. Air and water for human use should be pure, or nearly so. Anything short of purity is an incentive to gastric disorder and unfavorable digestion. We may not be able to specify with precision if all these vegetable and animal products are actually poisonous when taken into the stomach; nor yet how far the heat of the organ may destroy them, and the gastric juice assimilate them like other vegetable and animal food, but we do know that such infected water, when drunk, produces nausea very promptly. The stomach revolts and indicates to the mind that something unhealthy has been swallowed. We also know that certain of them escape destruction in the stomach and are absorbed into the blood, and give rise to toxemia. It is not our object here to discuss these questions, but accepting the well-admitted fact that water under the above conditions is unwholesome, to show that these tanks, when neglected, are the prolific generators of septic fevers and other diseases of anemic type not necessarily, febrile.

COFFEE WATER AS A REMEDY FOR GOUT.—Dr. Monchaux, in the *Revue de Therapeutique*, gives the following: Put a tablespoonful of green tea, in unroasted—coffee in a half a tumbler of pure water, at the temperature of the surrounding air, and after allowing it to stand for twenty-four hours, drink off the liquid immediately upon getting up in the morning. Fill the glass with water again as before, and again drink the liquid as before, so that the same coffee serves twice. The liquid obtained is of green color, more or less tinged with blue, according to the kind of coffee used. I do not know the chemical composition of the water, but the grains well considerably, and sometimes sprout, throwing off little bubbles of gas, which I suppose to be carbonic acid. I have not observed very long relative to this remedy upon the uric acid diathesis. If I am to give an opinion upon it, I am at present inclined to think that it attacks rather the effects of the malady than the disease itself, suppressing the malarial from day to day, if I may so express myself, while the latter remains. It will be, therefore, necessary to continue the daily use of the remedy as above.

FOOD MEDICINE.—Dr. Hall relates the case of a man who was cured of his biliousness by going without his supper and drinking freely of lemonade. Every morning, says the Doctor, this patient arose with a wonderful sense of rest and refreshment, and feeling as though the blood had been literally washed, cleansed and cooled by the lemonade and fast. His theory is that food can be used as a remedy for many diseases successfully. As an example, he cures spitting of the blood by the use of salt; epilepsy by watermelons; kidney affections by celery; poison, olive or sweet oil; erysipelas, pounded cranberries applied to the part affected; hydrophobia, onions, etc. So the way to keep in good health is really to know what to eat—not to know what medicines to take.

POTATOES PROSCRIBED.—Several German writers upon races predict that nations, far from improving, will deteriorate both in physical and mental characteristics, if potatoes become a principal article of diet. The celebrated Carl Voigt says that "the nourishing potato does not restore the wasted tissues, but makes our proletarians physically and mentally weak." The Holland physiologist, Mulder, gives the same judgment when he declares that the excessive use of potatoes among the poorer classes and coffee and tea by the higher ranks, is the cause of the indolence of nations. Leidenfrost maintains that the revolutions of the last three centuries have been caused by the changed nourishment; the lowest workman, in former times, ate more flesh than now, when the cheap potato forms his principal subsistence, but gives him no muscular or nervous strength.

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