

the transportation of farm products in Nebraska to a distant market.

The potato is a nutritious and valuable tuber. It has been a universal bene-

A Vegetable Benefaction.

factor. Since its introduction to Europe, from its

native home in Peru, it has perhaps accomplished more as a preventive of hunger and starvation among the poor in Ireland, in France and in other lands than any other one staple food product of the soil. In the "Story of a Peasant", written by those charming authors, Erckmann and Chatrian, entitled "The States General", is described the introduction of the potato for cultivation among the peasantry of France. It was in 1789.

Round the table in the large room were people from Les Baraques, waggons from Alsace, Nicole, Madame Catherine, and Father Benedict. Maitre Jean in the middle of them, was showing them a great bag full of what looked like parings, and explaining that they came from Hanover, that they produced most excellent roots, and in great quantity, so that the poor would have something to eat all the year. He was trying to persuade them to plant them, assuring them they would never be in distress at Les Baraques again, which would be a real blessing to everyone.

Maitre Jean told them this in a most solemn tone. Chauvel stood behind, listening with little Margaret.

Some took these husks or parings in their hands, looked at them, smelt them, and then put them back again in the bag, with a laugh, as much as to say—

"Whoever heard of planting husks? It is contrary to common sense."

Some nudged the others, as if to laugh at my godfather. All on a sudden Father Benedict, with his great nose and little screwed-up eyes, turned around and burst out laughing.

"They are brought by a heretic," cried Father Benedict; "How can Christians sow them or the Lord bless them?"

"You would be very thankful to have one of my roots to put under your own nose when they come up", cried Maitre Jean, in a rage.

"When they do come up," cried the Capucin, holding his hands together with an air of pity; "when they do come up! Believe me, you have not land enough for your cabbages, turnips, and radishes. Let these husks alone, they will produce you nothing. I, Father Benedict, tell you so."

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You would hardly credit all the jokes we had to put up with before the crop came. The greater fools people are, the greater pleasure they have in laughing at those who are wiser than they, when they get a chance; and the Baraquins thought they had a good one. Whenever the Hanoverian seed was mentioned all these fools began to laugh.

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In summer, when the moon was at the full, all the family worked at the door to save the beech-mast oil. When in the far distance we could hear the

town clock strike ten, father would rise, put by the brooms and the willow twigs, and then, looking up at the sky, white with stars, he would say—

"My God! My God! How great Thou art! Oh let Thy goodness rest on Thy children!"

No one uttered these words so well and so tenderly as my poor father; it was clear he knew and felt these things better than our monks, who paid as much attention to the Paternoster or the belief, while they repeated it, as I do to a pinch of snuff when I take one.

Then we went indoors and the day's work was over.

So passed May and June. Barley, rye and oats grew perceptibly; but in Maitre Jean's field nothing was yet visible.

My father had often talked to me about the Hanover roots, and I explained to him all the good this plant might do us.

"God grant it, my child," he would say; "we want it all, distress becomes greater every day; taxes are too heavy, and the corvees take up too many of our days work!"

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One morning between four and five in the beginning of June, I was walking down the street as usual to awake Nicole, fodder the cattle, and take them out to graze. A good deal of dew had fallen in the night and towards Quatre-Vents the sun was rising hot and red. As I passed by the inclosure, before knocking at the door, I just looked over the wall, and what did I see? Tufts of white threads spreading right and left everywhere. The dew had softened the ground, and the shoots of our roots were coming up by the thousands.

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Now I must tell you about our potatoes coming into flower, and the crop which brought Jean Leroux into greater repute in the country than he had ever enjoyed before.

In July the field of Maitre Jean looked from the Mittelbron side like a great green and white bouquet; the rows were nearly as high as the wall.

While the great heat lasted, while everything was dried up in the fields, it was a pleasure to look at our fine plants spreading larger and larger; they only needed a little morning dew to keep them fresh, and we used to picture to ourselves the roots beneath gaining in size.

We dreamt about them all day; in the evening we talked of nothing else. We even forgot the gazettes, for the affairs of the great Turk and the Americans had less interest for us than our own.

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"Chauvel told us to dig them in October. On the first of October we will try a plant or two, and if we must then wait, we will wait."

The first of October was a foggy morning. About ten Maitre Jean left the forge, went into the kitchen, took a fork from behind the door, and went into the potato field.

We went after him.

At the first row he stopped and plunged his fork in, and when he had shaken off the clods of earth, and we saw those beautiful pink potatoes dropping about,

when we saw that every plunge of the fork brought up as many, and that in the length of five or six feet we had half filled a basket, we looked at one another with astonishment. We could hardly believe our eyes.

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"They are much better than turnips; you can eat them all sorts of ways," said Chauvel. "You may well believe, if I had not thought it was a good plant, and a useful one for you and for everyone, I should not have put these cuttings in my basket. It was heavy enough without that. Nor should I have advised you to plant your field with them."

"Without doubt; but I must have my say. I am like Saint Thomas—I must touch and I must see," said Maitre Jean.

And the little Calvinist, with a quiet smile, answered—

"You are quite right, and now you can touch. Nicole has got the dinner on the table; you wont wait long."

Everything was ready.

In those days master and servant dined together, but the maid and the mistress waited at table; they only sat down after the others had dined.

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All I remember now of that day is, that after the omelette Catherine brought the potatoes on in a basket. They were boiled, white, the skins bursting, the flowery part dropping from them. M. Christopher leaned over them and asked—

"What is that, Jean? Where does it come from?"

My godfather having told us all to taste them, we found them so nice that everyone said—

"We never ate anything so good."

The cure, when told that these were the roots which all the country had despised, and that they produced fifteen sacks to the quarter of an arpent, would not believe it.

"It is too good to be true," said he; "It is not possible."

Then Madam Catherine gave us some milk to help eat them. At last M. Christopher laid down his spoon and said—

"Enough Jean, enough; one might overeat one's self, they are so good."

We were all of the same opinion.

Before he left the cure would see our bit of land; he made Chauvel explain to him how these Hanoverian roots were cultivated, and when he told them that they grew still better in the sandy soil of the hills than in the strong land of the valley, he cried—

"Listen, Chauvel; when you brought these cuttings in your basket, and you, Jean, when you planted them, in spite of the folly of the Capucins and other silly people, you did more for our country than all the monks in the three bishoprics have done for ages past. These roots will be the poor man's bread!"

Now it so happened that my first edibles from the soil of the territory of

First Fruits. Nebraska were potatoes grown at

Arbor Lodge in the summer of 1855. They were of the pink-eyed variety, and, as during the long autumn of 1854 and through the succeeding winter months of that year and the beginning of 1855 potatoes had been so scarce as to have become a rare luxury, we were as curious and solicitous about our pioneer potatoes as the peasants of France were as to their first planting in 1789. But