

## NOTES ON POTATO GROWING AND HANDLING.

By J. BEVERLEY, Assistant Agriculturist.

### HARVESTING AND STORAGE.

THIS being the season for harvesting and storing the potato crop, it may be well to deal firstly with that part of the subject. Degeneration in seed-potatoes is brought about more quickly by improper storage than from any other cause.

The death of the haulm is the signal for digging the main crop. For the early market potato-growers do not wait for this, but are governed by the market price and the size of the tubers. As long as any portion of the haulm is green the tubers can continue to grow, and the longer the haulm is kept green and free from blight the better the crop will be. Experiments have shown that more than one-third of the merchantable crop is made during the last month of growth. In harvesting the crop it pays to handle the tubers carefully, as any injury affects their keeping-qualities. It is a mistake to allow potatoes to stand in sacks for any length of time in the open field after lifting, as the edible tubers get green and unnaturally heated if the weather is hot, and when carting them to the store they get bruised. Far better is it when lifting the crop for the pickers to have baskets and empty the contents into a cart moving along with them. With a stand-cart and a go-cart the work proceeds without any loss of time.

When the load of potatoes arrives at the clamp or pit or potato-cellar it should be backed into position and tipped. The clamp or pit should never be more than 5 ft. wide at the base—perhaps the best width for the base of a potato-clamp is 4 ft. 6 in., with a height of 3 ft. 6 in. After the potatoes are tipped they should be placed into position with a sippet. This tool shovels up the tubers without damage when lying on the ground; the sides of a clamp are also formed with the sippet. As soon as the clamp is a few yards long a start should be made to cover the sides with straw. The straw should be long, strong, and clean, and placed on the sides to a thickness of at least 4 in. After the two sides are covered straw should be placed on the apex, or top, and bent over. It is best not to cover the sides all over with soil immediately, but to leave spaces here and there for the heat to escape. In a few days the sides may be covered with soil, leaving about 12 in. of straw at the top uncovered. It is not necessary to cover the top with soil unless very severe frosts are experienced during the winter.

Never put potatoes in clamps or pits on the same place in succeeding years. In this way sources of disease-infection may be avoided to a certain extent. Avoid covering potatoes with wet straw, and do not forget that the tubers should be ripe if they are to be pitted. When a potato is ripe and lifted in fine weather, clamped upon dry and well-drained soil, not in too considerable a bulk, well covered with straw, and ventilation provided, there ought to be no cause for loss to any extent.