

THE DAILY RECORD-UNION.

QUINTUPLE EDITION.

ANNALS OF AGRICULTURE AS PRACTICED PREVIOUS TO THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

Chronological History of the Development of Husbandry—Some Interesting Details.

(By M. H. Durst.)

The history of agriculture may be considered chronologically, politically, geographically or physically. Chronologically, as practiced by the different nations which existed during different periods of the world; politically, as influenced by the different forms of government in vogue during those periods; geographically, as affected by the different climates; and physically, as affected by the different kinds of soil. We will confine ourselves to a merely general view of the chronological history of the development of agriculture. Inasmuch as the development of agriculture has occupied the time of four epochs, we may say that its history is divided into four parts. First we have the antiquarian agriculture, or that which was practiced from the time of the deluge to the establishment of the Roman Empire, about two centuries B. C. Secondly, we have the agriculture of the Romans from the second century B. C. to the fifth century of our era. Third, is the history of agriculture as practiced during the middle ages, from the fifth century of this era to the seventeenth century of the modern time. Fourth, we have the practices of the agriculturists of the modern time, from the seventeenth century to the present time.

THE WORLD KNOWN TO THE ANCIENTS.

Consisted only of about one-half of Asia and small portions of Africa and Europe. Tradition has it that during the deluge a small remnant of man and other animals were saved in the ark, which rounded on Mount Ararat, near the Caspian sea. After the subsidence of the waters they descended into the plains of Assyria. Here they multiplied and multiplied, the population becoming somewhat dense, it is presumed that they had an extensive family quarrel (which had habit has been handed down to posterity), and separated, forming various nations. The principal of these were the Assyrian Empire, which consisted of the Babylonians, Assyrians, Medes, Persians; the Jews and Egyptians, who were mostly in Africa; and the Greeks of Europe. Of these nations probably the least civilized was the Assyrian Empire. The Egyptians are undoubtedly the parent nation of the arts and civilization, and if they were not the first to practice agriculture they at least excelled in it. It is for this reason that we will consider first the practices of the agriculturists of the Nile.

ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE PRACTICES OF THE ANCIENTS.

And here, though in an indirect way, we find him gaining his sustenance by pasturage; by gradual stages, from the use of the water, and the necessity of laying up a store of food for a winter supply. Here originated the gathering of the flocks of the Nile. The tillage of the soil is supposed to have originated from the observations of the efforts of nature in producing plant life, and especially in connection with the effects produced by sedimentary deposits from rivers. Although all rivers, to a greater or less extent, deposit sedimentary deposits, the Nile exceeded all others both in the amount and quality of this deposit, and in the regularity of its overflows. Every year, about two months, from the 1st of August to the 1st of November, the valley of the Nile, which was about seven or eight miles wide and about two hundred miles long, was covered with water. It is without doubt owing to this deposit left by the Nile that the land made every year for the long time. With this yearly fertilization by the river, and the almost tropical climate of Egypt, it is no wonder that the land of the Pharaohs became the granary of the East.

THE CULTIVATION OF THE SOIL.

It was in Upper Egypt that the cultivation of the soil is supposed to have originated, and in time to have proceeded down toward the mouth of the Nile. Upper Egypt consisted of a valley a few leagues wide, bounded on each side by a chain of mountains, and sloping gently toward the river which runs through it. This inclination of the land facilitated the irrigation of the water, after the river began to recede, so that in a very short time after the subsiding of the river the land was dry and in full condition to receive the seed. It was in this deposit of sediment, which would fully compensate the soil for the loss of the nutritive substances taken from it by the yearly crops. From the

SPONTANEOUS GROWTH OF PLANTS.

After the receding of the Nile, it must have been noticed by the natives that it was only necessary to scatter the seed, and to water by stirring the soil, in order for them to vegetate. They must soon, too, have found that the crop was increased by keeping the soil clear of weeds. At this time Lower Egypt was a marsh formed by the depositions from the river, but in a few centuries it supplanted the upper country, fertility for the Nile failed to time, the yearly inundations of the Nile failed to water sufficiently the upper part of the country, and the inhabitants have recourse to artificial irrigation. The inhabitants of Egypt were in advance of their contemporaries in their methods of agriculture. Embankments, dikes and drainage were practiced to a very considerable extent. History tells of the extensive repairs done to the canals and waterways during the time of Sesostris, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries before Christ. During the war season all surplus water was impounded in the upper country, and was carried off by means of extensive systems of canals it was used to irrigate the ground during the summer. Use was made of wheels turned by oxen to elevate water, and by this means plateaus, and even hillsides, were thoroughly irrigated. Almost all the grain was carried on water works, in which was stored a supply of water for domestic purposes. The area of cultivatable soil has been greatly decreased by the encroachment of the sand from the desert. High embankments were built to protect the land from these sand-storms, but most of them have succumbed, and are now entirely buried under the sand. The mass of the Egyptians were

TILLAGE OF THE SOIL.

And until the eighteenth century B. C. the farmer was the virtual owner of the land he cultivated, but about that time the greater part of the land was transferred to the Government, and from that time on, at least the time of Moses, an annual rental of about one-fifth was exacted by the king from the husbandman. Little is known of the animal and vegetable products of the Egyptian agriculture of this time. The ox seems to have been the animal of burden. Rice was the principal grain cultivated, and it should be given one in two years, but giving the new to get the old one back before giving a new one; he also recommends that there be given once in two years. It is quite evident that the laborers did not lack advice from, and instructions from, the part of philanthropic individuals, but it is not to be supposed that they acquired any more substantial benefit from these philanthropists than does the laborer from those of the present time. The men were fed on bread, wine and salt-fish, with a sparing allowance of olive oil, and were naturally indolent and fond of idleness to work, while others became totally extinct owing to their being no issue, the land was gradually accumulated by the more thrifty families. This accumulation of land gave rise to the

THE LANDS OF THE ROMANS.

Of later times, as well as to the forming of two castes of people—land-owners and non-land-owners. Some lands near the towns were enclosed, but the greater part were in common use as a sort of community grazing lands. Both oxen and asses were used in the cultivation of the soil, but Moses forbade the yoking of an ox with an ass, for as each probably best known to himself. Camels were then, as now, the beasts of burden and long journeys, while the horse was used solely for luxury and war.

THE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS OF THE JEWS.

The agricultural productions of the Jews were the same as those of the Egyptians, except that they raised the swine, pigs were abundant and general use; grapes grew of great size, both of bunch and fruit, and melons and gourds were indispensable articles, especially the former, as many of the domestic articles were made of gourds. Corn, as a general thing, yielded good crops, but as no provisions were made during the years of famine, the people often suffered from a dearth of food. The Bible often speaks of the plow and the flail of threshing floors and of the winnowing of corn. After being winnowed, it was sifted and ground in a mill for domestic consumption. In the Bible story of the reapers, where Ruth and Boaz figured so conspicuously, we see the will of the fair sex practiced in a manner not differing very essentially from the methods of the present day. First we have the antiquarian agriculture, or that which was practiced from the time of the deluge to the establishment of the Roman Empire, about two centuries B. C. Secondly, we have the agriculture of the Romans from the second century B. C. to the fifth century of our era. Third, is the history of agriculture as practiced during the middle ages, from the fifth century of this era to the seventeenth century of the modern time. Fourth, we have the practices of the agriculturists of the modern time, from the seventeenth century to the present time.

THE ORIGINAL INHABITANTS OF GREECE.

Not generally attributed to the agriculturists of this time. Most of the details in regard to Greek agriculture have been derived from the writings of Hesiod, who flourished in the sixth century B. C. Property among the Greeks was absolute in the owner, and on his death was divided in equal portions among his sons. There was a law forbidding the unlimited purchase of land. Lands with natural springs and wells were highly valued; and laws were enacted regulating the depths and distance from each other of wells, and providing for the settlement of all questions, in regard to the water, in such a manner as to prevent contentions about water. The reign of Solon seems to have been prolific in regulations enacted for the welfare and government of the people in all matters relating to the occupancy and tillage of the soil. The operations of agriculture were generally adapted to the seasons; summer plowing was in vogue and the land was often plowed three times. The invention of manure, which was first used by the Greek King Agaveus; and Homer speaks of having found an old King "mauring his fields with his own hands." The practices of agriculture among the Greeks were essentially the same as those of their contemporaries, the Jews and the Egyptians. Their implements of husbandry, however, somewhat better than and in advance of those of the other nations. The beasts of labor mentioned by Hesiod are the mule and the ox; these last were yoked by the horns. Shelter and food were provided for the stock during the severe weather. Hay is supposed to have been discovered by the natural grasses of the meadows and commons; among which were the mistle, lucern and other clovers. The products of agriculture were the vine, olive, fig, date and other fruits; the live stock consisted of sheep, goats, cattle, mules, asses and horses.

THE OLIVE AND FIG.

Were not only a staple product of food, but were the principal sources of oil among the Greeks. Almost every citizen was a husbandman, and a portion of land which he cultivated with the help of his family and a few slaves. The productions of the farm were mostly manufactured at home into food and clothing for its occupants. Hesiod, speaking of the qualifications of a good plowman, says: "The most desirable axe and go to work very early, and have a sort of annual feast, good food, and a clothing consisting of a pair of shoes, worsted socks and half-boots of ox hides in winter. He must not let his eyes wander about while at the plow, but he must keep his mind fixed on the mind while sowing the seed, lest he sow the same furrow twice. This shows a much greater consideration for the needs and welfare of the farm than is shown by many of our enlightened and well-to-do farmers of the present time.

THE CULTIVATION OF OTHER ANTIQUARIAN NATIONS.

Little of definiteness is known, but it is probable that the practices among them, though less perfect, resembled those of the Greeks, and that they were broken. We will now glance at the agriculture of the Romans, who were the furthest advanced of any of the nations of the world in the second epoch of which we spoke, viz., from the second century B. C. to the fifth century of our era. The Roman agriculture was considered by the Romans as an honorable profession. This is demonstrated by the fact that some of their greatest men devoted themselves to the study and practice of it, and that their most renowned warriors, during the interim of war, devoted their time to the cultivation of the soil. Numerous Roman authors wrote treatises on agriculture, prescribing the methods of the soil, and the manner of sowing the seed, and the manner of raising the crops. The Roman agriculture was considered by the Romans as an honorable profession. This is demonstrated by the fact that some of their greatest men devoted themselves to the study and practice of it, and that their most renowned warriors, during the interim of war, devoted their time to the cultivation of the soil. Numerous Roman authors wrote treatises on agriculture, prescribing the methods of the soil, and the manner of sowing the seed, and the manner of raising the crops.

TREATISES ON AGRICULTURE.

And some of these, as the works of Cato, Varro, Virgil, Columella, Pliny and Palladius, have been transmitted down to the present time. These authors wrote mostly in the two centuries preceding the Christian era. The Roman agriculture was considered by the Romans as an honorable profession. This is demonstrated by the fact that some of their greatest men devoted themselves to the study and practice of it, and that their most renowned warriors, during the interim of war, devoted their time to the cultivation of the soil. Numerous Roman authors wrote treatises on agriculture, prescribing the methods of the soil, and the manner of sowing the seed, and the manner of raising the crops.

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