

regarded as being lower in degree than the mercenary who followed the standard of the paltriest commander; even then the Agriculturist was treated with high respect; Emperors and Nobles labored in their fields; orators, poets, philosophers and legislators acknowledged the importance, and in their several spheres advanced the interests of husbandry.

From the whole tenor of the sacred writings, in the Old Testament it is evident, that Agriculture was generally understood, and practiced with considerable success; the Eastern nations would seem to have been supplied with all the necessaries and luxuries of life, afforded by the richest and best cultivated soils. When the descendants of Abraham became resident in Palestine, husbandry made up the chief employment, not only of the lowest branch of the family of Benjamin, but also of the chiefs of the tribe of Judah:—of Uzziah, the powerful king of Judah, wise and prosperous at the time, and unstained as yet with the impiety and leprosy which shrouded the close of his career—it was emphatically said, “he loved husbandry.”

The Chaldeans, who inhabited the country in which Agriculture had its birth, cultivated their lands with unceasing assiduity; and having discovered means to restore fertility to an exhausted soil, secured to themselves a permanent position and prosperity.

In Egypt, where the fertility of the soil was regularly enriched by the overflowings of the Nile, vast quantities of corn were annually raised; and so sensible were the people of this country to the great advantages of Agriculture, that, in their ignorance of the true God, they worshipped the inventor of this art in the person of Osiris. Isis, their second deity, was regarded as the discoverer of wheat and barley, at least, of the adaptation of these to the purposes of food.—Indeed the superstitious gratitude of the Egyptians carried them so far, that they worshipped the animals employed in tillage, and the produce of their lands, as leeks, onions, &c.

The divine honors which in India were rendered to Bacchus came from the same source.

In Persia, even when some other arts were practiced among the people in great perfection, particularly those of needlework and embroidery, the Princes of the country laid aside their grandeur once in every month, to eat with husbandmen; the Priests or Magi included the practices of agriculture in their religious teachings, and it became a maxim of their Zendavesta, that he who sows the ground with care and diligence acquires a greater degree of religious merit than he could have gained by the repetition of ten thousand prayers.

The Phœnicians, (Scripture Philistines) were remarkable for their success in Agriculture, and when disturbed by the Israelites, carried their knowledge into the Mediterranean Islands, through which they distributed themselves.

The Carthaginians distinguished themselves in this employment; and Mago, a famous general

among them, wrote twenty-eight books on the subject which were afterwards translated by the special order of the Roman Senate.

Sicily, the birth-place of Ceres, afterwards deified and worshipped as the Goddess of Plenty, was very fruitful in corn; and husbandry was esteemed so honorable that the Kings of the Island practised it with their own hand.

The descendants of Noah, who first took possession of Greece, were wretchedly uncivilized, and fed on roots, herbs and acorns; indeed it would seem that Pelasgus, who taught them to cultivate the oak, and use acorns for food, had divine honors paid him for a service considered so signal. The Athenians, however, soon learned the knowledge of corn, and taught it to the rest of the Greeks, and Triptolemus was in turn worshipped for a more palatable bread.

Hesiod is supposed to have been the first Greek who wrote on the subject of Agriculture; he was followed by many illustrious countrymen, among whom we notice Xenophon, Democritus, Aristotle, and Theophrastus. Among the monuments of Greek antiquity, several sorts of wheel ploughs, threshing implements, and a reaping machine have been discovered.

The ancient Romans held the pursuit of Agriculture in such high honor, that their most illustrious Senators and distinguished Generals applied themselves to this profession in every interval of duty.—Regulus, when in Africa, asked to be recalled lest his farm should suffer in his absence; Cato, the censor, who had governed extensive provinces and subdued many warlike nations, wrote a treatise on Agriculture which is still extant; Varro also employed his pen on the same subject; Virgil, in his *Georgics*, has clothed the precepts of husbandry with the finest imagery and most polished diction of classic poetry; and Constantine Proganatus, after his conquest of the Saracens and Arabians, prepared and published his *Geoponics* with his own hand.

One capital principle in all Roman Agriculture was, “to sow less and plough better”; this rule was illustrated by many short stories and sayings:—Pliny mentions a freed man who made his vineyards produce crops so much larger than those of his neighbours that they brought him to trial for witchcraft. When he appeared in the forum, he produced a stout daughter and some excellent implements, as iron spades, shears, &c., and presenting these, together with his oxen, to the Senate, he said—“These, Romans, are my charms.” He was acquitted with honor.

The corruption and luxury immediately succeeding the Christian æra, the civil wars at the end of the second century, the tyranny of the Emperors in the third, and the removal of the seat of Government to Constantinople in the middle of the fourth, prepared the way for the incursions of the Goths, and the consequent disturbance of every peaceful art.—Agriculture fell into neglect.