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Ancient and Modern Agriculture.

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AS the wealth of a nation is indissolubly connected with its agricultural resources, the growth of these should have a keen interest, not only for those actively engaged in farming pursuits, but for all right-thinking people, who have their own as well as their country's prosperity at heart. A change has in the last half century come over the development of this important natural element—a development chiefly brought about by the invention and application of agricultural machinery, which, from nearly nothing, has in that period risen to the most important adjunct of the farmer.

The blessings of the application of power to the reduction of human labor are prominent and undeniable. The multiplication of manufactures through the use of so powerful a force is a fact which cannot be gainsaid. The reduction of the possibilities of art to an automatic basis, thus relieving the individual mind from tension, and the individual morality from responsibility, offer attractions, while all deductions favor the most wide-spread employment of power and machinery. Thus, the so-called "labor-saving" machinery enables the user of it to save his muscle and improve his mind; though displacing certain kinds of labor, it creates a certain necessity for other kinds, thus bringing about merely a change of relation, and not of existence; it enables the prosecution of vast enterprises, involving only the prosecution of capital; and it increases the capacity for foreign trade. These simple statements are undeniable. Their acceptance involves, by a process of inexorable logic, the acceptance of the largest possible increase of mechanical power and machinery as beneficent agents in the constant improvement of the condition of the race.

In reviewing the agricultural system of the ancients, we find continual allusion to it in the Bible, though we must therefore conclude that the art of agriculture was always with the Jews a most primitive one. The seed was roughly ploughed under and generally left to chance, the harrow seeming to have been comparatively unknown. Yet, if our translations be correct, Job speaks of the harrow, and thus it must be one of the oldest agricultural implements in the world. Of their mode of ploughing we have a Biblical illustration, when, in First Kings, we read that Elijah found Elisha, the son of Shaphat, ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen before him. The early tillers of the

soil delighted to work together in companies, partly for mutual protection, and partly for the love of gossip; and, as they sowed no more ground than they could plough in a day, one sower answered for the entire company. These ploughs made no proper furrow, but merely rooted up and threw the soil on either side, and so any number could follow one another, each making its own scratch along the back of the earth. It seems now hard to conceive how so small a tract of land as the Land of Promise should have been able to contain and to

a million of inhabitants in ease and comfort. Cotton, rice, sugar cane, indigo, and nearly every other valuable product for the use of man, would flourish most luxuriantly. There were, in fact, sugar plantations here long before America was discovered; and it is quite possible that this plant was taken from this very spot to Tripoli, and thence to Spain by the Crusaders, whence it was carried to the West Indies. Palestine indeed possesses all the elements fitting it for a brighter destiny. It is sad to think that in spite of the wide-spread desire to see it a flourishing country, it should in this age of wonders remain practically in the same miserable plight in which it has been for centuries.

Concurring testimony indicates that the systems of cultivation were somewhat similar, in early days, in all the countries bordering on the Mediterranean, which are characterized by arid summers, and autumn and winter rains. The agriculture of Egyptian Palestine to-day is much as it was some four thousand years ago; though, when we consider the teeming population that existed in ancient times in the narrow valley of the Nile, the large standing army that was maintained, the extraordinary works of engineering and architecture still visible

in our day, and the exportation of corn to other nations, we would infer the system of agriculture then pursued to have been even above that of to-day, simple in all respects as it was.

Thus, when the land was dry enough for work, the seed was thrown broadcast by hand in the field, which was then roughly ploughed and left. The



THRESHING SLEDGE IN PALESTINE.

nourish such a multitude of inhabitants as it did, and also to supply other countries with its superior grain. The soil and resources of Palestine were undoubtedly rich and fruitful, and even now in its desolation it is a land flowing with milk and honey. There is no evidence of its climate having changed or deteriorated, nor any reason to suppose that it would fail to support as great a population as it ever did, or, with an improved agricultural system, a much greater; and the Holy Land may well be regarded as a hopeful land for colonization. "The Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of hills and valleys, a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, of olive oil and honey." The Valley of Jordan is a most fertile tract, which, if subjected to the science and modern mechanical appliances of agriculture, might well sustain half



REAPING IN ANCIENT GAUL.