



Vol. XVII.

WINNIPEG, CANADA, JULY, 1912.

No. 7.



THE HARVESTERS. IN HISTORY



EVER since Ruth went glean- ing in Boaz's field, the gathering of grain has occupied a very important position in the history of mankind, and even before this time, long centuries ago, perhaps ten thousand years before history began; the men gathered the seed of wild grass, the women rubbed it out between their hands, and crushed it between rude stones, making it into an edible product. They ate and were satisfied, and little did they care for the future, but as the population of the earth increased, and the leisured class sprang up to feed and feast upon the many, there arose a demand for the edible grain that could not be supplied with the means then at hand. Man further found that he did not have to depend upon nature to plant the seed, but that he could sow it himself, and thereby increase in yield in an artificial way. It is

easy to sow but it was not so easy to reap. The season for planting consisted of many days, but the harvesting season was short, and they that would gather any considerable quantity of grain must do it quickly or lose the greater part of it. Accordingly the more

business like of the grain growers, even in the ancient times saw that for the ever-growing wheat crops they must have something better than the slow, inefficient method of hand labor whereby the stocks were pulled from the ground, and the wheat rubbed out by the hand. Just what this would be they had absolutely no idea, in fact the man with an inventive craze had not

The first step towards a harvesting implement is found in the invention of the sickle itself. One must not for a moment compare the sickle of today with the old crude tool of the ancients, far from it, for we had no steel mills in those days to turn out a razor-like product, but on the other hand every piece of iron must be shaped in the rudest way, and it was impossible to get

a crude contrivance that could be made to gather the yield of wheat. The reports of Roman writers then living show that the machine consisted of a broad and shallow two-wheeled cart having a series of two-edged pointed knives fastened side by side on the front edge of a cart. The cart had two shafts placed behind, and with an ox hitched to the cart, could be pushed

through a field of standing wheat as the cart was pushed forward, the ears of wheat caught between the knives, torn off and swept into the cart. The machine could not have been a success. It was too roughly made to be of real service and it was soon abandoned and would have been forgotten were it not for the reports of the Roman travellers in Gaul who saw it and thought it worth describing as a curiosity seen on their travels. That it was a failure is amply demonstrated by the fact that it was scarce-



Dinner Time in Old Devon.

yet appeared upon the scene, and even if he had it would have been utterly impossible for him to have shaped even the rudest tool with the means then at hand. Those were times when men ate to live and not to satisfy a gluttonous appetite.

a temper that would permit of its being drawn out to anything like a sharp edge. The sickle however, did its work, and did it well, but a desire for something better grew apace, and in the year 70 A. D. we find the wheat growers in ancient Gaul using

ly ever used and for 1600 years after this, for man must have bread, we find the harvester cutting his grain with a sickle in the usual hand way.

We seldom at the present time, in fact never on the American continent, see the hand sickle be-