

## GRECIAN FARMERS.

Professor Felton, of Cambridge, (Mass.) in a lecture on "Life in Greece," gives the following interesting description of rural life among the ancient Greeks.

The love of rural life was one of the deepest passions of the Grecian heart, beyond the realm of *Naxos*, real or ideal. What lovely touches of nature adorn with their exquisite beauty the dialogues of Plato and even the comedies of Aristophanes. Through the whole compass of Greek literature, the sights and sounds of the country, the sweet, calm sunshine, the fleecy cloud, the song of the lark and the nightingale, the rising sun, the rich meadow, the cattle feeding in the pastures, furnished thoughts which moved harmonious members. When the Peloponnesian war opened, the plains of Attica were covered with residences, elegantly furnished, which the inhabitants with regret and tears looked back upon from the walls of the city, while the Spartan armies were laying all waste with fire and sword. The country was tastefully decorated with little temples or chapels, consecrated to the nymphs and rural deities; and the lands were made holy ground, because in them were buried the ancestors of the families residing in the mansions.

The Greek gardens were laid out with lawns, groves, thickets and avenues; while fountains fed meandering rivulets. Beds of asphodel, hyacinth and violets, roses, myrtles and pomegranates, diversified the scene, or wafted perfume to the senses. Here Athenian taste and luxury displayed itself. The Greek as a farmer or city gentleman, is not the Greek of classical associations; and yet, perhaps, just in these relations, he was most intensely Greek.

Homer gives a lively sketch of the primitive country life. Hesiod was a Boeotian farmer, and gives precepts which seem to have been drawn from his experience, concerning lucky and unlucky days, weather, &c. The early Greek philosophers carefully observed the phenomena of the heavens, and were skilled in the arts of the season. The habits of animals, the properties of soils and their adaptation to different kinds of crops, were matters of which they knew. Wagons, carts, plows and harrows were manufactured on the farm or in its vicinity, and the wood used was chosen with care. Corn was ground in a mortar with a pestle, and in later times in a mill. The list of other implements, such as scythes, saws, spades, use of guano, sea-weed, and commoner substances, was perfectly understood. Land was allowed to recover its strength by lying fallow. Scarecrows were set up in the fields to scare away birds; though a "spell" was also used, viz:—having caught a toad they carried him around the field by night alive, and then put him in a jar, sealed him up, and buried him in the middle of the ground when, this representative enemy was buried, the seed was supposed to be safe from enemies. The value of hay was well understood. The time for mowing was carefully determined, and the hayricks made with due precautions against both damp and spontaneous combustion. When the time of harvest came, the laborers of Athens ranged themselves round the *agora* and waited to be employed by the farmers.

The grain was separated from the straw by horses, oxen and mules, in a circular threshing floor, usually placed on an eminence in the open field. A pole was set up in the centre, and the cattle fastened to it by a rope reaching to the circumference. They

moved round it until they were brought up at the centre by the winding up of the rope, and were then turned into the opposite direction till it was unwound. Sometimes a rude threshing machine, toothed with stones or iron, or a flail, was employed. In Homer's time a winnowing machine was used also. When the harvest was completed, the event was celebrated by a festival in honor of Demeter and Dionysius, at which cakes and fruit alone were offered.

The culture of the vine was a subject of importance, and the selection of a spot for a vineyard, the direction of its exposure, the effects of climate and particular winds, were sedulously considered. Hedging, weeding, setting out slips, the treatment of the vine were all described by writers before the time of Virgil. The appearance of a vineyard—composed of tree climbing vines, is beautifully described by Mr. St John, the trees being ash, poplar, maple or elm, and planted one row above another on a declivity, with the lower branches cut off; the vine climbed thirty to sixty feet, according to the depth of the soil, and running out on the high branches arched from tree to tree, or on bridges of reeds.

A series of lofty arches was thus created, beneath which the breezes could freely play, abundant currents of pure air being regarded as no less essential than constant sunshine to the perfect maturing of the grape. The fruit was kept fresh or made into raisins. It would be endless to attempt a description of all the fruits and the methods of raising them. Cider and perry were made from apples and pears. The olive was perhaps most extensively raised, as its oil was used for lights and as the basis of cookery.

The farm yards had their noisy tenants. Geese and ducks often waddled into the kitchen, in one corner of which might be heard the comforting sounds of the occupant of the pig-stye. The art of enlarging the goose's liver for epicures was well known to Greek and Egyptians. *Phalaris*, furnished with roots, were attached to the kitchen so as to receive its smoke, which was supposed to be agreeable to barn-door fowls. Pigeons, peacocks, pheasants, guinea-hens, &c., were to be found at the establishment of wealthier farmers. The laboring animals were much the same as now, except that the horse was comparatively more uncommon in the working of the farm, being reserved for the chase, war, &c. The arrangements of a Greek dairy were much like ours, and though butter was little used in the classical ages, yet cheese was universally eaten, generally white, fresh and soft. Milk was sold in the Grecian markets by women, and it frequently reached the customer in milk and water. A method used for detecting the cheat, was to drop a little on the thumb-nail; if the milk was pure it would remain in its place,—if not it would flow away.

**MAXIMS FOR YOUNG MEN**—Never be idle; if your hands cannot be usefully employed, sit and cultivate your mind. Drink no intoxicating liquors. Always speak the truth. Keep good company. Make few promises. Live up to your engagements. Keep your own secrets. When you speak to a person look him in the face. If any one speaks evil of you, let your life be so virtuous and upright that none will believe him. You had better be poisoned in your own blood than your principles. When you retire, think what you have done during the day. Your character cannot be injured except by your own acts. Keep yourself innocent, if you would be happy.