

OF THE HISTORY OF AGRICULTURE IN THE AGES OF ANTIQUITY.

The world, as known to the ancients, consisted of not more than half of Asia, and of a small part of Africa and Europe. During the inundation of the deluge, a remnant of man, and of other animals, is related to have been saved on the top of the high mountain of Ararat, near the Caspian sea, and when the waters subsided, to have descended and multiplied in the plains of Assyria. As they increased in numbers, they are related to have separated, and after an unknown length of time, to have formed several different nations and governments. Of these the principal are those of the Assyrian empire, known as Babyionians, Assyrians, Medes, and Persians in Asia, the Jews and the Egyptians, chiefly in Africa; and the Grecians, chiefly in Europe. Least is known of the nations which composed the Assyrian empire; of the Jews more is known of their gardening and domestic economy, than of their field culture: the Egyptians may be considered the parent nation of arts and civilization, and are supposed to have excelled in Agriculture; and something is known of that art among the Greeks.

OF AGRICULTURE IN EGYPT.

The origin of Agriculture has been sought by modern philosophers in natural circumstances. Man in his rudest state, they consider, would first live on fruits or roots, afterwards by hunting or fishing, next by the pasturage of animals, and lastly, to all of these he would add the raising of corn. Tillage, or the culture of the soil for this purpose, is supposed to have been first practised in imitation of the effects produced by the sand and mud left by the inundations of rivers. These take place more or less in every country, and their effects on the herbage which spontaneously springs up among the deposited sand and mud must at a very early period have excited the attention of the countryman. This hypothesis seems supported by the traditions and natural circumstances of Egypt, a country overflowed by a river, civilized from time immemorial, and so abundant in corn as to be called the granary of the adjoining states. Sir Isaac Newton and Stillingfleet accordingly, considered that corn was first cultivated on the banks of the Nile. Sir Isaac fixes on Lower Egypt; but as Herodotus and other ancient Greek writers assert that, that country was once a marsh, and as Major Kennel in his work on the geography of Herodotus is of the same opinion. Stillingfleet considers it more probable that the cultivation of lands was invented in Upper Egypt, and proceeded downwards according to the course of the Nile.

SUMMER FALLOWING.

This is one of the most important branches of good farming, and upon which has arisen a great variety of opinion and practice. Some farmers are of opinion that the ploughings for a summer fallow, cannot be too frequent, and that all fallow crops are injurious to the land, and particularly to the succeeding crops. Others consider all naked fallows as a waste of expense without any adequate benefit, and insist upon some fallow crops either of turnips, to be fed off by sheep, or of potatoes, to be dug for stock, or of buck wheat, or clover to be ploughed in as a fertilizing crop. Both probably are in an error, and run into the opposite extremes. A strong stiff clay, or a hard gravelly soil, cannot be ploughed too often for a fallow; but a loose sandy soil may be greatly injured by too frequent ploughings. The latter may be tilled to advantage, with a potatoe fallow; and the former by a turnip fallow, to be fed off by sheep; or after several ploughings, with the fertilizing fallows of buck wheat, ploughed in; but a rough stony soil cannot be tilled with a fallow to advantage; this land, and perhaps this only, requires a naked summer fallow. The great advantages to be derived from a summer fallow are