

FARM IMPLEMENTS.

The condition of Agricultural mechanics in a county is the best possible criterion by which to estimate the character of its cultivation—for this must be carried to a high pitch before a demand can exist for well constructed and efficient, but necessarily expensive implements; and thus the improvement which has of late years taken place in British Agriculture, is in nothing more satisfactorily apparent than in the superiority of our present farm implements over those formerly in use. Scarifiers and cultivators have now, for many purposes, taken the place of the tedious plough; drilling machines, as well as machines for scattering seed broadcast, have taken the place of manual labour; and the threshing machine has been substituted for the flail; and chaff-cutters and turnip-cutters are generally used where such implements were formerly unknown.

Although these substitutions have not all been affected within the last few years, yet any one who has had the opportunity of attending the annual meetings of the English Agricultural Society, and of comparing the implements there exhibited from year to year, must acknowledge that great improvements have taken place in the Mechanics of Agriculture, even within the still short period of that Society's existence. Speaking of the exhibition of implements at Derby in 1843, the Editor of the *Gardeners' Chronicle* last year made the following observations:—"The most rapid strides have been made in this department. The show of implements at Oxford was not very good; nothing very new or perfect was exhibited there. At Cambridge it was much better; Liverpool and Bristol surpassed the preceding; and at Derby there was the greatest collection of every kind of implements—from the simple plough to the portable steam-engine—which had ever been brought into one spot. For three days we spent many hours delightfully in following the new inventions and the improvements pointed out by the different makers; and many more days would have been required to notice all that was worth the attention of the Agricultural mechanician."

Our report, some weeks ago, of the exhibition at Southampton, shows how far this rapid progress of improvement has been sustained.

Those who have been unable to visit the show-grounds of the Society at its annual meetings, may easily estimate the extent of this improvement by comparing the works which have been published on the subject. The latest of these, that by Mr. J. Allen Ransome, Ipswich, is incomparably the best that has appeared; it is descriptive of a greater variety of better implements than any of its predecessors, and it exhibits a thorough acquaintance with the principle on which the efficiency of the different machines depends. We shall have opportunity in the course of future articles on Agricultural mechanics, of noticing Mr. Ransome's opinions on various farm implements; and it is therefore unnecessary at present to refer particularly to his descriptions of them. In illustration, however, of the improvement in them to which we have been alluding, we take the liberty of extracting the following remarks on their condition centuries ago:—

"In our own island ploughs were, during the early and dark ages of its history, rudely constructed, intolerably heavy, and of all kinds of shapes; a result which might have been reasonably anticipated, for, by an old British law, every ploughman was required to make his own plough. The harrows, and other agricultural implements, were

equally ill-shaped. Drills were utterly unknown, until about the sixteenth century, and when, about the year 1730, the celebrated Jethro Tull endeavoured to banish the flail from the barn, his neighbours loaded him with execrations. The tradition of the neighborhood of Prosperous Farm, near Hungerford, which Tull cultivated, still is, that he was 'wicked enough to construct a machine, which, by working a set of sticks, beat out the corn without manual labor.' This is the first traditional notice of a threshing-machine with which I am acquainted."

The chapter on threshing-machines in this work—one of the best in the book—details the successive steps in this improvement since that period. We shall endeavour hereafter to describe, and fairly to estimate the value of the various farm implements now used, in the condition to which they have been brought by that process of improvement to which we have been alluding; and we are glad to be able to say, that in preparing these descriptions, and in forming these estimates, we have been promised the assistance of many eminent manufacturers—that of Mr. Ransome among others.—*Agricultural Gazette.*

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