

BRIEF NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF BRITISH AGRICULTURE.

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In 1562 Thomas Tusser published his "Five hundred Points of Husbandry." This work was intended to embody all the rules of agriculture in short rhymes, for easy remembrance; and although it was written in a very quaint style and in doggerel verse, as a proof of its truthful descriptions and popular merit, it went through several editions. The author mentions Carrots, Turnips, and Cabbages, as having been recently introduced into gardens as "kitchen herbs." In subsequent editions were appended "The Points of Housewifery, united to the Comforts of Husbandry." This is a most amusing work, abounding in quaint verse, embodying the principal duties of housekeeping. The subjoined extract will afford some idea of the character and style of the work, which was printed in black letter:—

Wheat, rye, or else barley, and wheat that is gray,
 When the land out of comfort, and soon to decay;
 After another, no comfort betweene,
 Crop upon crop, as will quickly be seene.
 One crop upon crop many farmers do take,
 And reape little profit for greedinesse sake."

In this way, with much quaintness, the rules of husbandry were given, and few things are known omitted. The truth conveyed in the above quotation, farmers in all countries, especially such as have been recently settled, (as I have had among the rest,) have been slow to recognise. The lesson conveyed, however, is the utmost importance, and essential to every improving system of husbandry.

Tusser was succeeded, after about 30 years, by Barnaby Googe, who makes mention of many writers contemporary with Fitzherbert, whose works have not descended to us. Great stress was usually laid by the olden writers on the effects of the moon and wind upon germination and maturity of plants, as well as upon the thrift and fecundity of animals. In Googe's "Book of Husbandry," published in 1577, farmers are told that in ploughing the ground, it is necessary to "looke the wind be westerly, and the moon in the wayne." This advice is repeated in "The Perfect Husbandman," 1657, and it is therein remarked that "this observation (of the moon and wind) helpeth greatly to the bettering of the ground." From the same work we learn that although there was a general agreement on the influence of the moon upon vegetation there were differences of opinion as to the most favourable periods for securing that influence:

In sowing, some think you must have respect to the moone, and to sow and set in the

increase, and not in the wane. Some again thinke it best from that she is four days old, till she be eighteen;—some after the third, others from the tenth to the twentieth; and best (as they all suppose,) the moone being aloft and not set."

The same author observes, with regard to the planting of trees, that "if the tree be planted in the increase of the moone, it groweth to be very great; but if in the wane, it will be smaller, yet a great deal more lasting."

In those days it was a common belief of the medical profession, that not only the moon, but also the stars (that is the planets) exercised a considerable influence over diseases, and such herbs as were fitted to effect their cure. Hence some plants were assigned to the moon, others to Jupiter, some to Saturn, Mars, &c., and it was believed that these plants should be gathered when their respective astral patrons were in a particular point of the heavens, as on or near this meridian, as their medicinal properties were then in the greatest perfection. We need not wonder, therefore that the farmer and gardener should have looked to similar observances and influences, in conducting their operations. In fact this belief has come down to periods coincident with our own, and traces of it may yet be discovered among the older inhabitants of the more remote districts of the British Islands, and we dare say in other countries of Europe. We have known ourselves several individuals who observed the age of the moon in sowing seeds, especially in the garden, and likewise in killing pigs. To kill a pig during the wane of the moon, it was believed that the bacon would be inferior, and that the fat or pork would be wasted in the art of boiling; that is it would possess properties similar to what we designate on this side the Atlantic as beech-mast pork. It is probable that a strict attention to such matters, however fallacious, by our honest fore-fathers, paved the way in some degree for that more patient, varied, and enlarged sphere of observation, which led slowly to the discovery of agricultural principles, upon which alone can be based all sound agricultural practice. It was slowly learned that the chief influences affecting vegetation apart from the condition of the soil, was the warmth and moisture of the surrounding atmosphere; till at length those very useful instruments, the barometer and thermometer became the inmates of almost every farm house.

In the year 1594, Sir Hugh Platt contributed some works to the literature of husbandry. Sir Hugh is described as being the most ingenious husbandman of his age," and as having "held a correspondence with all lovers of agriculture throughout the kingdom." We, therefore, turn to his work, "The Jewell House of Art and Nature," with considerable interest. The motive of the