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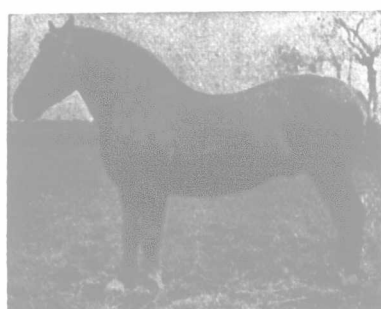
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practice of leaving lands fallow every other year in certain localities and with certain soils. He gives precise rules for a rotation of crops. Wheat should be followed by pulse—peas, beans, etc. Never, he warns, should flax be put in after a year of wheat. So unpoetical a subject as the use of manures he does not pass over. He advises a liberal sprinkling of wood ashes on certain soils. He says the burning of the long stubble gives a higher tone to the land. It would seem that "the wisdom of a thousand years" lies in most of his agricultural precepts.

The farming utensils as compared with ours were certainly primitive. Most frequently mentioned are plows, harrows and "slow-rolling wains." The plow was usually constructed of three different kinds of wood in its different parts. The support of the share was elm. For other portions linden and beech were commonly employed. Directions are given for using both plows and harrows. The mention of the "glittering share" shows that the farmer cared for his tools. Steers were the draught animals most in use. The Italian farmer is recommended to mellow hard fields by plowing them four times in a fallow year. "Rule your land imperiously and give it frequent exercise," advises the farmer-poet.

Interesting, indeed, are his cautions regarding the selection of seed. If the quality of the grain is not to degenerate you must each year cull out the largest. The seed should be artificially prepared for the soil. If you steep the grain in salt-petre and black lees of oil you will have a bigger crop. This is surely the forerunner (two thousand years ahead of time) of our steeping peas before sowing in a weevil-killing liquid, or our soaking of legumes in a mixture charged with millions of bacilli whose function is to draw nitrogen from the air.

The Italian farmer had an infallible soaking of legumes in a mixture charged with millions of bacilli whose function is to draw nitrogen from the air.

The Italian farmer had an infallible and picturesque almanac flaming across the sky. He knew well the constellations and the planets, and the first magnitude stars, and his times and seasons were measured by these heavenly beacons. The signs of the Zodiac, the twelve constellations through which moves the sun, determined mainly the period of farming operations, sowing and reaping. "Sow barley and flax when Libra makes the hours of day and night equal." "Sow millet when the Bull rises and the Dog-star sets." Virgil's astronomical directions are very numerous. "Sow wheat when the Pleiades set." "Sow vetches and kidney-beans and lentils when Bootes sets." That word "sets" tells a tale. By the "setting" of a star was meant its going down in the west just before the sun rose in the east. The farmer in summer was always up before the dawn. He knew the stars of the morning, but before the stars of evening had assumed their brilliancy he was sleeping the sleep of the tired. Fall plowing began when Arcturus rose in September. The fiery Scorpion, the Kids, the Dragon, all had their intimations for the up-gazing husbandman of old.

After the grain is up Virgil recommends that in certain conditions it be fed down to the level of the soil by the cattle to prevent too luxuriant growth.

The important question of rain and moisture for the growing crops is considered. The gigantic scheme of C. P. R. irrigation in Alberta had its primitive example in Europe two thousand years ago. If the summer is not moist, declares the poet, you must divert the streams and rills over the sown fields. "Gurgling waters allay the thirsty lands, therefore decoy the torrents over the plains."

Weeds there were in abundance in old Italy. Although there was no James Fletcher to write a volume on the Farm Weeds of Italy, Virgil gives us a short catalogue of the most noxious. All of Virgil's list but one I find mentioned in Mr. Fletcher's recent volume: wild sorcery, the lazy thistle with its horrid spikes, burs, dandel, wild oat, caltrop. Reverent Virgil gives as the cause of the prevalence of weeds "the himself willed that the ways of weeds should not be easy."

The growing crops had other enemies

besides weeds. Mildew ate the stalks. Storms levelled the standing grain. Destructive birds ravaged the fields from the day the seed grain went into the soil until the new grain was safely housed.

The poet gives a vivid description of a harvest storm that "sweeps away the joyful corn and the toil of the steers." He gives the farmer various signs of the coming storm: the foreboding flight of cranes, ravens and crows—the snuffing of the heifer, the fluttering of the swallows—the croaking of frogs, the activities of the ant, "carrying her eggs,"—the moon's horns obscured—the sun rising or setting with face dimmed.

Precepts are given for occupations during bad weather. Sharpen your plow-share; stamp marks on your sheep; number your grain sacks; sharpen stakes for the vines; weave baskets; parch your grain; make snares for birds; drive your flock of sheep into the river.

Instructions for making a threshing floor are explicit. Level with a roller and consolidate with chalk. Get rid from the threshing-room of mice, moles, bats, weevil, ants, and other pests.

One solitary picture are we vouchsafed of a farmer going to market. He walks by the side of his ass, which is laden with oil and apples.

Virgil was always a deeply religious poet, and in his work on farming there are many touches that indicate how thoroughly and continuously he believed in the power and influence of the Roman gods. One of the most impressive passages in the Georgics is a brief injunction at the end of a list of precepts: "Above all venerate the gods and renew to great Ceres (the goddess of grain) the sacred annual rites." Here we have the counterpart of our annual Thanksgiving Festival, the expression of gratitude for bounteous crops and plenteous fruits.

At a time in the history of our Province when the movement of population from country to town and city is assuming menacing proportions it is fitting that emphasis should be laid on the satisfactions and pleasures of rural life. Nowhere in the literature of the world can so fine a passage be found in praise of the country as in the second Georgic. I take the liberty of paraphrasing it somewhat freely and of omitting some unimportant particulars:

"O who will place me in the cool valleys and shelter me with the spacious shade of overhanging boughs? Happy is the man who has been able to come close to nature and to examine the causes of things, and to put beneath his feet all fears and inexorable destiny and the terrors of the lower world. Blest, too, is the man who worships the rural gods; him neither the rods of authority nor the purple of kings can disturb, nor perplexing discord, nor invading foes, nor the affairs of the great city, nor the downfall of states. Such a man grieves not too much at the miseries of the poor, nor does he envy the state of the rich. He gathers the fruits from the trees and the grain from the willing lands. He knows nothing of cruel laws and the maddening forum and the public courts. Various are the occupations and ambitions of men, but for me the country. The farmer cleaves the earth with the curved plow; then follow the labors of the year by which he supports his country and his home, his herds of kine and his fine steers. There is no cessation in his gains, for the year produces now apples, now the young of the flocks, now the corn sheaf. The furrows are pregnant with increase and the barns are full to bursting. The autumn in its turn lays down its varied offerings; high on the sunny rocks the mild vintage is ripened. When winter comes the olive is pounded in the oil presses, the pigs come home grunting with pleasure at their fill of corn. In the country the sweet children hang around their parents' knees, the coveted kiss to share; the housewife preserves its purity; the cow secures their udders full of milk; the piglets disport on the cheerful green. The life the ancient Sabines lived of old. By such a life Etruria grew strong. Thus, too, became Rome so great and the beauty of the universe."—J. E. WETHERALL, B. A. in A. O. C.