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## The Romance of the Farm

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Farming in the prairie country of Canada and the Northwestern states is as different from the farming of a generation ago as is travel in a fast, modern Pullman train from journeying by stage-coach.

Many dwellers in big cities do not know this, having an idea that in the country there is a settled order of things and that the farmer plows and sows and reaps and garners according to the customs of his ancestors.

People whose ideas of farming are derived from the literature of Thos. Hardy and George Eliot would find themselves in a strange world indeed on a modern prairie demesne, for the farm has been the stamping ground of wizards and the changes worked by the magic of invention are every bit as startling in the rural neighborhoods as are the more spectacular achievements of the busy geni who have worked their spells in the industrial world of the great centres of population.

It is interesting indeed to study the development of agricultural implements in the matter of efficiency. Few fields have offered more difficult problems to the inventor and in few have the results been greater. The march of progress in industrial affairs in the cities has been equalled, perhaps excelled, so far as pure ingenuity is concerned in the developing and perfecting of machinery for use on the farm.

The story of the harvester reads like a romance, consequently a little of its early history may be interesting.

From the oldest records that remain we find that the people of that early time were provided with crude hand tools for the reaping of grain. These primitive sickles, or reaping hooks, were made of flint and bronze, and are found among the remains left by

the older nations. Upon the tombs at Thebes, in Egypt, are found pictures of slaves reaping. These pictures were made 1400 or 1500 B.C. The form of the Egyptian sickles varied somewhat, but consisted generally of a curved blade with a straight handle.

The scythe is a development from the sickle and differs from it in that the operator can use both hands instead of one. The Flemish people developed a tool known as the Hianault scythe.

of the stroke. With the addition of the fingers the tool was given a new name, that of the Cradle Scythe, or the Cradle. And it was in this tool that the first American development took place. The colonists, when they settled in this country, probably brought with them all of the European types, and the American cradle was simply an improvement over the old country tools. The time of the introduction of the cradle has been fixed by Professor Brewer, of Yale, in

practicable and where the cradle has still work to do. Again, there are parts of the world where the reaping machine has never been introduced and where the sickle and the cradle are the only tools used for reaping. It seems incredible that any people should be so backward as to be using at the present time these primitive tools, yet it is to be remembered that even the most advanced nations used them for centuries, and apparently did not think of anything in the way of improvement.

History records several early attempts toward the invention of a machine for harvesting, but none reached a stage where they were practical until the eighteenth century. Pliny describes a machine used early in the first century which stripped the heads of grain from the stalk. The machine consisted of a box mounted upon two wheels, with teeth to engage the grain at the front end. It was pushed in front of an animal yoked behind it. The grain was raked into the box by the attendant as the machine was moved along. It is further stated that it was necessary to go over the same areas several times.

There were several attempts at the design of a reaping machine before 1806, but none were successful. They need not be considered in this discussion. It was in 1806 that Gladstone invented a machine which added many new ideas. In his machine the horse walked to the side of the grain, and hence the introduction of the side cut. It had a revolving cutter and crude form of guard. It did, however, have a new idea in an inside and outside divider. The grain fell upon a platform and was cleared occasionally with a hand rake. As a whole, this machine was not successful.



The original binder

It has a wide blade 2 feet long, having a handle about 1 foot in length. The handle is bent at the upper end and is provided with a leather loop into which the forefinger is inserted to aid in keeping the tool horizontal. The grain was gathered by a hook in the left hand. This tool was displaced later by the cradle. Development in scythes has consisted in making the blade lighter, lengthening the handle, and adding fingers to collect the grain and to carry it to the end

an article written for the Census Report of 1880, as somewhere between 1776 and the close of the eighteenth century.

The American cradle stands at the head of all hand tools devised for the reaping of grain. When it was once perfected, its use spread to all countries, with very little change in form. It has been displaced, it is true, by the horse reaper almost entirely; yet there are places in this country and abroad where conditions are such that reaping machines are im-