

Some do it with shovels,¹ and others even with wooden hooks.² The common instrument used by the negroes of Gambia for turning the earth, is a kind of wooden shovel, like their oars.³ Others have nothing but a sort of trowels.⁴ The negroes of Senegal go five or six of them into a field and turn the soil over with their swords.⁵ The original inhabitants of the Canaries performed this work with the horns of oxen.⁶

The people who used these bungling methods must have lost all traces of this art. Several nations in the very first ages after the dispersion were acquainted with machines, which, by turning up the earth in an expeditious and effectual method, saved them much toil, and procured them far more abundant harvests. It appears from scripture that the practice of ploughing was established in Egypt in the time of Joseph.⁷ It was as ancient in Palestine. The Phœnicians, the first inhabitants of that country, ascribed the invention of the plough to Dagon, said to be the son of heaven.⁸ We have just now mentioned, that when Isaac was in Palestine, he sowed and reaped an hundred-fold; a fact which necessarily supposes that the art of tillage was well known in that country. We see too, that in the days of Job, they ploughed with oxen in Arabia.⁹ In a word, the Chinese pretend that they received the plough from Chin-nong, the successor of Fo-hi.¹⁰

The structure of the first ploughs was very simple. That machine originally consisted only of one beam of wood, so bent that one end of it sunk into the ground, and they yoked the oxen to the other: They had only added one handle, by which the ploughman directed and turned it as he pleased. Such was the ancient plough of the Greeks.¹¹ Such at this day is that of the inhabitants of La Concepcion in Chili; their plough consists only of a crooked branch of a tree, and is drawn by two oxen.¹²

The manner of reaping is a matter of great importance. It would not be very

difficult to invent some instrument fit for cutting several ears at once. The sickle, or something like it, is extremely ancient. All old traditions speak of the sickle of Saturn.¹³ It is true, this supposes the art of working metals, which in these ages was known to very few nations. The others would supply this want by different contrivances. We may judge of this by what modern authors tell us of several nations. The people of Paraguay cut down their corn with a cow's ribs instead of sickles.¹⁴

It must have cost mankind much thought and many trials, to contrive an easy method of separating the grain from the ear. The most common practice of antiquity was to prepare a place in the open air, by making it very hard and smooth; on this they spread their sheaves, and then turned in oxen or other animals, and drove them backwards and forwards upon it for a long time. Others made use of heavy planks, stuck full of sharp pegs or pointed flints, which they dragged over the sheaves: This is practised by the Turks. Lastly, some bruited the ears by means of heavy carriages, such as carts, sledges, &c. In Gascoigne and Italy they use carts and sledges for this purpose at present. In China they perform this work with a heavy roller of unpolished marble. All these methods are still in practice in most hot countries. They make no use of the flail in the east,¹⁵ where agriculture first began.

¹ *Macrob. Sat. l. 1.*

² *Lett. Edif. t. 1. p. 420.*

³ *Cabinet, t. 4. part. 2.*

ON THE NOURISHMENT OF VEGETABLES.

[From Hunter's *Georgical Essays*.]

THE art of Husbandry boasts an origin coeval with the human race. Its age, however, seems to have contributed but little towards its advancement, being at present extended but a few degrees beyond its primitive institution.

Until the Philosopher condescends to direct the plow, Husbandry must remain in a torpid state. It is the peculiar happiness of this age, that men of a liberal education begin to cultivate this art with attention. We cannot say too much in praise of the respective societies lately established in this island, and in France, for the improvement of Agriculture. They have raised a noble spirit of emulation among

¹ *Lett. Edif. t. 12. p. 10.*

² *Leislerberg, p. 934.*

³ *Hist. gen. des voyag. t. 3. p. 188.*

⁴ *Ibid. t. 5. p. 67.*

⁵ *Ibid. t. 5. p. 67.*

⁶ *Ibid. p. 229, 252.*

⁷ *Gen. c. 45. v. 6.*

⁸ *Sanchon. ap. Euseb.*

⁹ *C. 1. v. 14.*

¹⁰ *Martini Hist. de la Chine, l. 1. p. 32.*

¹¹ *Hesiod. op. v. 443.*

¹² *Voyag. de Frezier, p. 70.*