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TILLAGE IMPLEMENTS.



PROF. Primrose McConnel contributes a most interesting paper on this subject to the last journal of the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland. He tells us that the origin of tillage husbandry is lost in the mist of ages, though we are able to infer from ancient Egyptian monuments that some forms of implements were in use more than 5,000 years before the Christian era; and though these were comparatively rude in construction, they contained the germ and principles of most modern forms.

The origin and evolution of the plough are first traced by the author in an ingenious manner. The modern plough—the implements for turning over a furrow slice—is of comparatively recent evolution, and was preceded for ages by the use of a manual tool resembling a sort of large hoe or pick. To this the Romans gave the name of *sarcle*.

Jethro Tull was of opinion that men must have got the first idea of cultivation from the rooting of their hogs. Antedeluvian swine had enormously long snouts, and prehistoric man noticed that where the pigs rooted around, there seeds afterwards sprouted and grew best. Thus he came to think that if he dug up the soil with a stick and planted seed, the same results would follow; and in this way arable farming began. The *sarcle* was an improved form of stick, used exactly like a pick, and it broke up and pulverised the soil most efficiently. Work with it could, however, only be done on a small scale, and it became necessary to find some way of working

the *sarcle* with less trouble and in a more expeditious way. This led to the lengthening of the handle of the pick or *sarcle*, yoking an ox to it, and making the animal drag the digging point along through the ground. For the purpose of keeping the implement steady in the soil, a handle was fitted on to the heel or angle of the implement,—and thus became evolved the first plough.

The material of the first plough was undoubtedly the forked branch of a tree, cut to the form and size desired. At the best, however, a plough of this description could only tear out a jagged rut along the ground. The ancient implements known as the *Caschrom* was simply the branch of a tree sharpened at one end and shod with iron. Beyond this point it is unnecessary to trace the evolution of the plough so far as our native implements are concerned, for after this came the attempts at a mould-board or wrest which turned over all the torn-up or cut-out soil to one side—this state of development the Sinhalese plough never reached.

It is remarkable, says Prof. McConnel, that to the present day the most primitive forms of implements are adhered to throughout the East; and, he asserts, "though the progress of agriculture has undoubtedly been slow, it is doubtful, if it had been left to those Eastern peoples, whether it would have progressed at all!"

We have already indicated our views with regard to native implements in Ceylon. Their improvement, as we then stated, must be taken in hand after carefully considering the matter in all its bearings. It is just here that we feel the need of an Agricultural Department in Ceylon, or even of a properly organized Agricultural Association, for deliberations on all matters connected with the native agriculture of the country. That agriculture is in a backward condition among the indigenous population no one can truthfully deny, but the pity is that it has not yet been thought fit to appoint even a representative Board of Agriculture, that should have a well-thought-out scheme, for fostering and improving the methods and means, of cultivation among the natives of the Island.