

THE PLOWING SEASON

Ancient Superstitions of the Tillers of the Soil.

SACRIFICES TO THE GODS.

Customs That Were in Vogue Among the Romans of Old—Ceremonies That Are Observed in India and China—Rites of the Siamese Farmers.

The formal inauguration of the plowing season is very ancient and still is observed in some parts of the world. Among the Romans by the institution of various religious festivals connected with agriculture the seasons came to be regarded with a sort of sacred reverence. Before the old Roman put the plow into the ground he went to the temple of the goddess of earth, Tellus, one of whose priests performed certain propitiatory rites. Virgil in his "Georgics" advises the Roman husbandman to observe the signs on heaven according to the crop he desires to produce. The time to plow for flax, barley and the sacred poppy was when "balance has equalized the hours of day and sleep and halves the world exactly between light and shade. When Taurus ushers in the year with his glided horns and Sirius sits facing the threatening bull is time for beans. For wheat and spelt the Pleiades should hide themselves from your eyes with the dawn. Many have begun before Maria sets, but the desired crop has baffled them with empty ears." But first of all the poet admonishes the farmer to "honor the gods and offer sacrifices to Ceres."

In India there are certain days when it is unlawful to plow. Mother Earth is supposed to sleep six days in every month, and on such days she refuses to be disturbed in her slumber.

In northwest India the cultivator employs a pundit to select an auspicious time for the commencement of plowing. Great secrecy is observed. In some places the time selected is in the night; in others daybreak is the customary time.

The pundit goes to a field, taking a brass drinking vessel and a branch of the sacred mango tree, which is efficacious in frightening away evil spirits that may haunt the field. Prithivi, the broad world, and Sesa Naga, the great snakes which support the world, are supposed to be propitiated and reconciled by this ceremony. The pundit satisfies himself as to the direction in which the great snake is lying, for it occasionally moves about a little to ease itself of the great burden of the broad world which it carries. The pundit then marks off an imaginary line. Five (a lucky number) dots of earth are thrown up, and water is sprinkled in the trench five times with the sacred mango bough to insure productivity. Caution must be exercised lest the charm be broken and prospective fortune imperiled. The farmer must remain secluded during the following day; no salt must be eaten, no money, grain or fire given away.

Among the Karnas before plowing the farmer makes a burnt offering of butter and molasses to his own field and again at the village shrine.

The Chinese begin plowing on the first day of their solar year. Anciently the rites which were celebrated by the Chinese at plowing time were elaborate, but rationalistic sovereigns eliminated one expensive religious rite after another until nothing was left except the Imperial act of homage to heaven and earth and agriculture in the ceremonial plowing.

The Siamese observe a rite called Raakus about the middle of May, which is preliminary to the plowing season, and it is not proper for any one to plow until the ceremony is over. The court astrologers determine the time for it. On the day fixed by them the minister of agriculture, who is always a prince or nobleman of high rank, goes with a procession to a piece of ground some distance from the capital. Where the festivities are to take place a new plow, to which a pair of buffaloes are yoked, is in readiness, decorated with flowers and leaves.

The minister guides the plow over the field, closely watched by the spectators, who are especially interested in the length and folds of the silk of his lower garments, because the prosperity of the season and its characteristics, wet or dry, are to be predicted from these as he follows the plow. If the robe rises from his knee there will

be disastrous rains. If it falls below his ankles there will be a drought. If the folds reach midway between knee and ankle the season will be prosperous.

After a proper number of furrows have been turned old women srew grain of different kinds in them and bulls are released from the yoke and allowed to feast upon the seeds. The grain which the animals eat most freely will be scarce next harvest, and that which they refuse to take will be abundant.

In Yorkshire it was considered unwise to disturb the earth with plow or spade on Good Friday.—Exchange.

A Shipwreck.

Muggins, gazing intently at a dead dog, in a resigned tone at last said: "Here is another shipwreck."

"Shipwreck! Where?" blurted out Juggins.

"Where, my dear friend?" quoted M.

"There is a bark lost forever."

Juggins growled and passed on.—London Fun.

It is impossible for a man attempting many things to do all things well.—Xenophon.

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A Double Headed Bull.
On the occasion of a public reception at Napier, Australia, the school children of the town, after being duly complimented by his excellency from County Tyrone on the hearty manner in which they had rendered the national anthem, were solemnly assured that if they put their shoulders to the wheel they would be sure to reach the top of the tree, upon which a compatriot turned to me and said, "Sure, it was an axletree he meant, brad!"—London Spectator.

Equally Cutting.
"Your voice," said the commanding officer, "is decidedly rasping."
"Yes, sir," said the subordinate, touching his hat, "I have been out roughing it with a file of soldiers all morning."—Chicago Tribune.

Why He Loved Spain.
Gloacchino Rossini, who was a great jester, was once seen embracing a Spaniard with great effusion. Asked the reason, he replied, "Because without Spain we would be the last nation."

The Motive.
Lawyer—What took you to the scene of the murder? Witness—The car. Lawyer—No, no! What motive was it? Witness—The locomotive. Lawyer—You may go.—Pa. Ex-aminer.

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If you want a good load of fir or boxwood, or of coal, ring up Kelly the COAL AND WOOD DEALER. Good household and steam coal delivered at \$7.50. Phone Main 2191, Barn, 12th & Duane.

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Apron And Rug Sale.

Astoria Hive No. 44, L. O. T. M., will hold an apron and rug sale Tuesday afternoon at Red Men's Hall and serve a New England supper in the evening from 5:30 to 8:00; supper, 25 cents.

Out For Superintendent.

H. E. Steffensen hereby makes for-

mal announcement of his candidacy for the nomination for the office of street superintendent of the City of Astoria, before the Republican primaries of said city, to be held on the 9th day of November, 1908.

Chinook and Ilwaco.

The launch Hilda I. will leave on the tide, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, two round trips, for Chinook. Landing at Lurline dock for freight and passengers. Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, for Ilwaco, with freight and passengers. CAPT. JOHN HAAGBLOM. 10-4-tf

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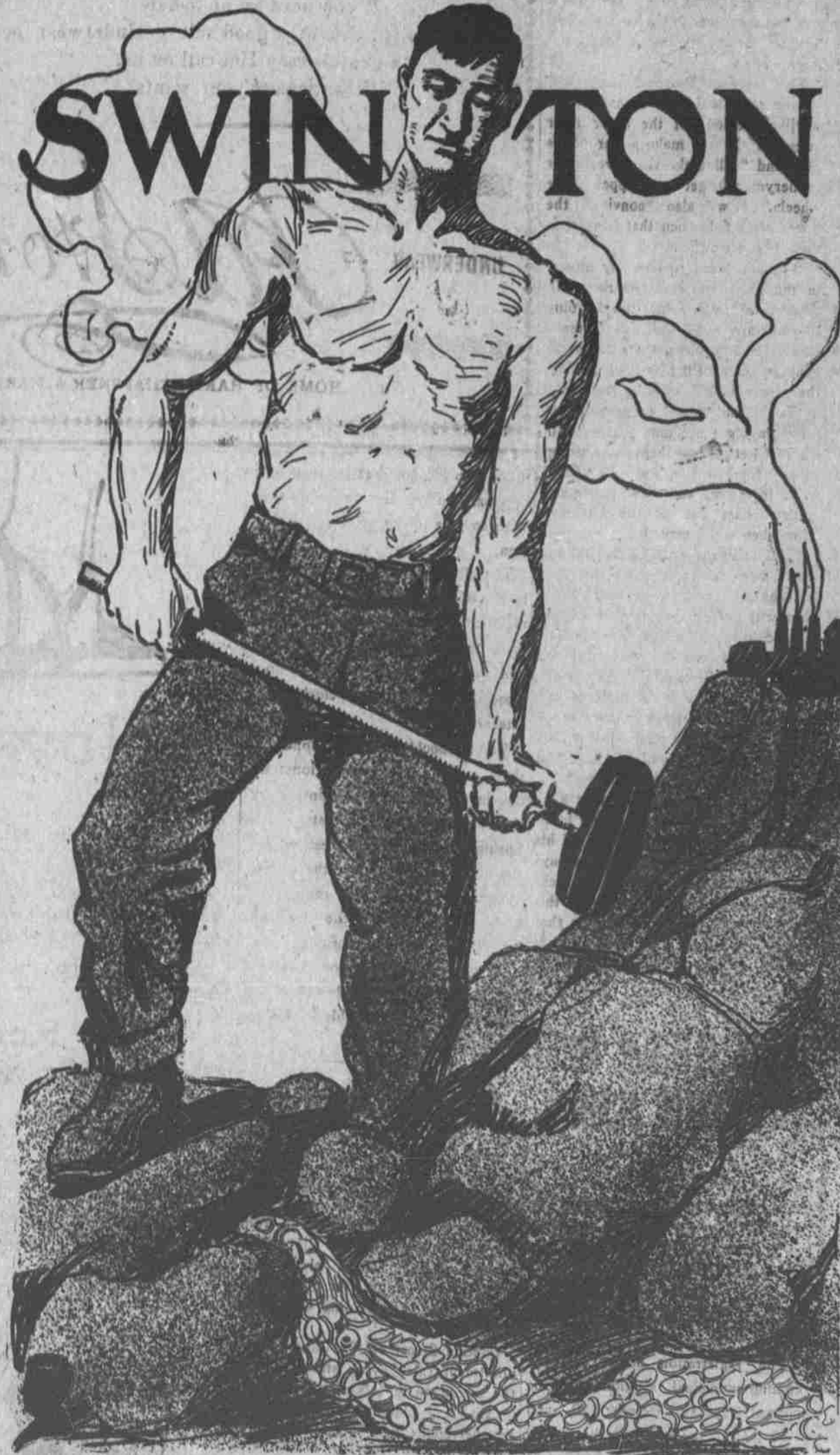
Oysters.

Bay Center Oyster House, 420 Bond street. Oysters wholesale and retail. George Saunders, Prop. 9-27-d

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