

**HINTS FROM THE WORKS AND
DAYS, OR, MORAL,
ECONOMICAL AND
AGRICULTURAL MAXIMS AND
REFLECTIONS OF HESIOD**

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Hints from the Works and Days, Or, Moral, Economical and Agricultural Maxims and
Reflections of Hesiod by Horace Hesiod

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HORACE HESIOD

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HINTS FROM THE WORKS AND DAYS.

OR,

MORAL, ECONOMICAL AND AGRICULTURAL
MAXIMS AND REFLECTIONS
OF HESIOD.

TO WHICH IS ADDED

THE PRAISES OF RURAL LIFE,

FROM HORACE.

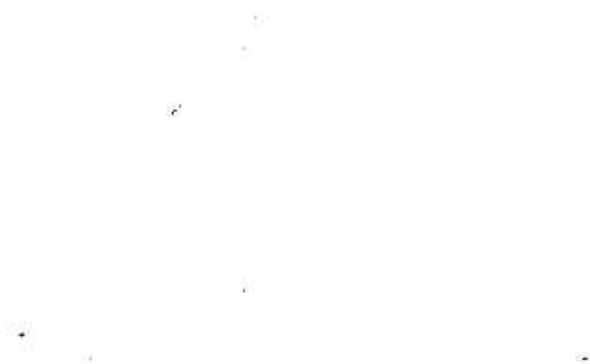
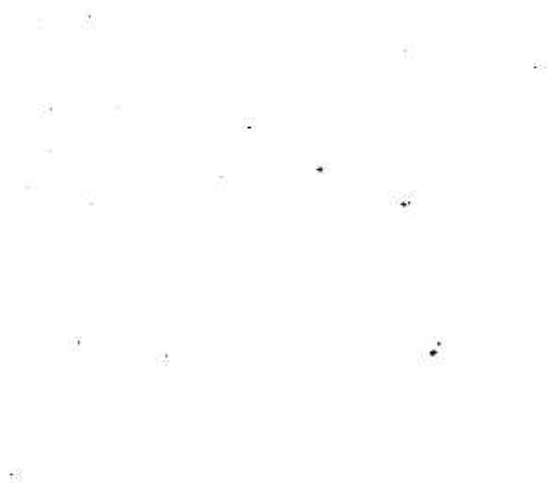
DEDICATED TO THE HUSBANDMEN OF AMERICA.

BY AN OFFICER OF THE U. S. TREASURY DEPARTMENT.

ARARE EST ORARE.

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1882.



PROLOGUE:

*Old Hesiod lived, if there be no misnomer,
As some suppose, about the age of Homer,
And wrote some poems of deserved praise,*
The most esteemed of which, his "Works and Days,"
Is here translated into English verse:
So take it, ye, for better or for worse!
Some closely, some is freely done; and since
'Tis mostly free, I call the version "Hints."
Yet in these hints I trust that you will find
Much to instruct and entertain the mind.
'Twas written for his brother's reformation,
To win him from the paths of litigation,
By showing how true happiness is joined
With rural labors and a virtuous mind.
In such esteem were held his moral rules,
That he was made a text-book in the schools
Of his own country, and was got by heart,
And ranked next Homer in poetic art.
Even the great shepherd of the Mantuan plains
Caught inspiration from his Georgic strains,
And taught old Rome, now freed from civil rage,
Once more to speed the plow, as in her Golden Age.
As for his precepts in regard to farming,
Though rude to us, I always thought them charming;*

* For an account of the life and writings of Hesiod, see Appendix B.
† Virgil. He calls his Georgics "Æneidum Carmen," from Hesiod's birthplace, Aëra.

*But for his moral rules, they're not surpassed
 By any one's, in present age or past.
 Of parts which treat of ancient superstitions,
 Or local customs, I've made some omissions,
 So left the "Days" and other portions out,
 Of whose utility there seemed a doubt,
 Or where arose a question of propriety
 In saying things that might offend society.
 For now-a-days we cannot always speak
 In English what we might have spoke in Greek.
 The "Days," however, will be found appended
 In prose translation, when the poem's ended ;*
 Wherein behold how Superstition flies
 From age to age, and never wholly dies !
 For many, wise and foolish, even now
 Will neither marry, travel, dig nor plow,
 Nor plant, nor sow, nor shear, nor butcher swine,
 Till lucky days or seasons on them shine,
 Or the lady moon doth smile in recognition
 Of this, their fondly-idle superstition.
 But this, I think, was not so with our poet,
 The thing existed, and he did but show it.
 And now, kind Reader, if you have a turn
 For sound instruction, and may choose to learn,
 Your gracious ear to Hesiod's words incline,
 And I'll feel flattered, as if they were mine.*

* See Appendix A.



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GENERAL ARGUMENT OF THE POEM.

A brief analysis of the following poem is thought advisable, in order that the probable influences under which it was written may be better known, and its object and scope better understood. Hesiod, a farmer and shepherd, as well as poet, dwelling upon Mount Helicon, in Greece, had been robbed of his small patrimony, through the connivance of his brother, Perses, who had succeeded in bribing the judges of the Agora, or law tribunals, of his native place. Outraged by this treatment, instead of resorting to the usual methods of retaliation in vogue at that day, he writes a book, in which, in his effort to reform him, he unconsciously embalms the memory of his unnatural brother, and also of the "bribe-swallowing" judges, and holds them up, like flies in amber, to the eternal gaze of his countrymen. It is not probable that he anticipated, himself, the immortality this work was to confer upon him. But as "one touch of nature makes the whole world kin," so the denunciations against wrong in every shape to which he gives utterance, and the almost Christian morals he inculcates, have found an echo in all succeeding ages, not only among his own countrymen, but in countries also which at that time had no existence as nations. Perses, therefore, so far as we are concerned, may be regarded as a sort of ideal reader, and the readers of the present day may all profit by the admonitions and advice given to Perses. The poem has come down to us under the title of "*Works and Days*," and some modern writers have compared it to a sort of "Shepherd Calendar," or "Practical Hints on Farming Operations," "Treatise on Husbandry." Others, again, more strongly impressed by its moral tone, have styled it an open "Letter Remonstrance and Advice," addressed to his brother. It might, perhaps, still more correctly be entitled, "A Poem Praise of Justice and Virtue, and of the Pursuits of Rural Life," for such, in fact, it is; and I have always thought that *these two cardinal virtues* were oftener found traveling har-

in hand with the husbandman, than with any other occupation; and if an honest farmer does not get to heaven for the good he has done, then nobody ever will; whence comes the true saying, "*Arare est Orare*," "To Plow is to Pray." The apparent object of the poem seems to be to counsel Perses to abandon the dishonorable practice of hanging around the Courts of Law, speculating in legal "corners," and endeavoring to enrich himself by robbing others, and to betake himself to the honest and more reputable pursuits of rural life, and to the observance of the laws of justice in his dealings with his fellow man, which, in Hesiod's eyes, constitutes the sum total of all human virtues.

Those who expect, from what has been said, a regularly planned essay on husbandry, or a well-connected discourse on piety and morals, will be disappointed. The first part of the poem, which contains several episodes and fables, by way of illustrating the lessons he strives to inculcate, consists of a series of precepts and reflections in praise of justice, piety, industry and economy, intended for the moral and religious conduct of the husbandman. The second gives a number of rules for the guidance of the practical farmer of his day; although their chief object is to exhort to activity, and to encourage habits of industry and economy, rather than to prescribe detailed regulations for carrying on the operations of farming. Had this latter been intended, the poem would have been too didactic, and would have probably found but few readers at the time, and would find still fewer now. In brief, the entire drift and argument of the poem is this: Be industrious and frugal, and you will be prosperous; be just, be pious, and you will be happy.

That the observance of these rules proved to be the best policy, in the long run, may be learned from the fact that, notwithstanding his loss, Hesiod's habits of industry and economy enabled him to eventually so far recover from the blow as to extend a helping hand to his needy brother, who, by this time, had succeeded in running through with not only his own share of the patrimony, but that also of which he had robbed Hesiod; thus enabling the poet to realize the truth of his own words: