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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE PANTROPHEON; OR, HISTORY OF FOOD, ITS PREPARATION, FROM THE EARLIEST AGES OF THE WORLD ***

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SOYER'S PANTROPHEON.

[Illustration: _Pl. A_]

THE PANTROPHEON OR, HISTORY OF FOOD, And its Preparation,
FROM THE EARLIEST AGES OF THE WORLD.

BY A. SOYER,

AUTHOR OF "The Gastronomic Regenerator" and the "Modern Housewife, or Ménagère," &c. EMBELLISHED WITH FORTY-
TWO STEEL PLATES, ILLUSTRATING THE GREATEST GASTRONOMIC MARVELS OF ANTIQUITY.

BOSTON: TICKNOR, REED, AND FIELDS. MDCCCLIII.

The Author reserves his right of Translating this Work.

[Illustration]

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Contents.

	Page			
PANTROPHEON	3			
I.				
AGRICULTURE	9			
II.				
CEREALS	19			
III.				
GRINDING OF CORN	23			
IV.				
MANIPULATION OF FLOUR	30			
V.				
FRUMENTA	41			
VI.				
GRAINS: SEEDS	46			
VII.				
VEGETABLES	49			
VIII.				
DRIED VEGETABLES	53 Beans	53 Haricots	55 Peas	
56 Lentils	57			
IX.				
KITCHEN GARDEN	59 Cabbage	60 Beet	62	
Spinach	63 Mallows	64 Asparagus	64 Gourd	
66 Turnips	67 Carrots	68 Blit (a sort of Beet)	68	
Purslaine	68 Sorrel	69 Brocoli	69 Artichoke	
70 Pompion	71 Cucumber	72 Lettuce	74 Endive	
75 Onions	76 Leeks	77 Melon	77 Radish	
79 Horse-Radish	80 Garlic	81 Eschalots	82 Parsley	
82 Chervil	84 Water-Cresses	84		
X.				
PLANTS USED IN SEASONING	86 Poppy	86 Sesame	86	
Sow-Thistle	87 Orach	87 Rocket	87 Fennel	
88 Dill	88 Anise-Seed	88 Hyssop	88 Wild	
Marjoram	89 Savory	89 Thyme	89 Wild Thyme	
89 Sweet Marjoram	89 Pennyroyal	90 Rue	90 Mint	
90 Spanish Camomile	90 Cummin	91 Alisander	91	
Capers	91 Asafoetida	91 Sumach	92 Ginger	
92 Wormwood	93			
XI.				
FRUITS	95			
XII.				
STONE FRUIT	97 Olive Tree	97 Palm Tree	100 Cherry	
Tree	102 Apricot Tree	103 Peach Tree	104 Plum Tree	
105				
XIII.				

PIP FRUIT Tree 112 Raspberry Tree 115 Mulberry Tree	106 Quince Tree 108 Lemon Tree 115 Currant Tree 116	106 Pear Tree 109 Orange Tree 115 Strawberry Plant	107 Apple 110 Fig Tree
XIV.			
SHELL FRUIT Nut Tree Pomegranate	117 Almond Tree 120 Pistachio Tree 122	117 Walnut Tree 120 Chesnut Tree	118 121
XV.			
ANIMAL FOOD Butchers	123 Rearing of Cattle 129	127 Markets	128
XVI.			
ANIMALS 146 The Kid	133 The Pig 148 The Ass	133 The Ox 150 The Dog	142 The Lamb 150
XVII.			
POULTRY Hen 150 The Pigeon 168 The Peacock	152 The Cock 155 The Chicken 162 The Guinea Hen 166	153 The Capon 156 The Duck 163 The Turkey Hen	154 The 168 The Goose
XVIII.			
MILK, BUTTER, CHEESE, AND EGGS Cheese	168 Milk 173 Eggs	168 Butter 175	170
XIX.			
HUNTING Deer 189 The Fox The Camel	179 The Stag 184 The Wild Boar 190 The Hedgehog 190 The Elephant	182 The Roebuck 185 The Hare 190 The Squirrel 191	184 The 188 The Rabbit 190
XX.			
FEATHERED GAME 195 The Quail The Starling The Ortolan Sea-Swallow Turtle Dove, and Lark	193 The Pheasant 196 The Thrush 200 The Flamingo 203 The Ostrich 204 The Wood-Hen, Bustard, Water-Hen, and Teal	194 The Partridge 197 The Blackbird 200 Fig-Pecker, or Beccafico 203 The Stork 206 The Woodcock, Snipe, Curlew, Crow,	199 201 204 The
XXI.			
FISH 220 Lamprey Turbot 227 Pike 230 Gold Fish 232 Scate Swordfish Mugil 236 Dragon Weaver Angel-Fish 238 Gudgeon	210 Sturgeon 222 Sea-Wolf 224 Tunny 228 Carp 230 Whiting 233 Salmon 234 Shad 235 Mackerel 237 Loligo 237 File-Fish 238 Herring	216 Red Mullet 223 Scarus, or Parrot-Fish 225 Conger-Eel 229 Eel-Pout 230 Cod Fish 233 Sepia, or Cuttle-Fish 234 Rhombo, or Rhombus 235 Haddock 237 Sole 237 Pilchard 239 Anchovy	218 Sea-Eel 223 226 Eel 229 Trout 231 Perch 234 235 236 Tench 237 238 Loach 240
SHELL-FISH Mussel 247 Lobster 249	241 Oysters 245 Scallop 247 River Crayfish	242 Sea-Hedgehog 246 Tortoise 248 Crab	245 246 Sea-Crawfish 248 Frogs
XXII.			
THE COOK	251		

THE KITCHEN 259

XXIII.

SEASONINGS

Salts

275 Cinnamon

Verjuice

282

266 Salt
269 Garum 275 Cloves
277 Vinegar

267 Brine
269 Honey 276 Pepper
278 Truffle

268 Digestive
273 Sugar 277
279 Mushrooms

XXIV.

PASTRY 284

XXV.

WATER 293

XXVI.

BEVERAGES

312

299 Tea

306 Coffee

310 Chocolate

XXVII.

DRINKING CUPS 316

XXVIII.

WINE 322

LIQUEUR WINE 332

XXIX.

REPASTS 339

XXX.

VARIETY OF REPASTS 354

XXXI.

THE DINING-ROOM 363

XXXII.

THE TABLE 368

THE TABLE SEATS 372

XXXIII.

THE SERVANTS 376

XXXIV.

THE GUESTS 380

XXXV.

A ROMAN SUPPER 386

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES 399

MODERN BANQUETS 401

TABLE OF REFERENCES 413

TABLE OF RECIPES 444

INDEX 449

List of Illustrations.

Page PLATE A.

FRONTISPIECE--PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR.

PLATE B.

HEAVEN AND EARTH.

PLATE B.*

VICTUA, OR THE GODDESS OF GASTRONOMY.

PLATE I.

EGYPTIAN LABOURERS.--No. 1, Egyptian Labourer. No. 2, Sketch of a Plough. No. 3, Basket. No. 4, Egyptian with Sickle, drawn by Horses
12

PLATE II.

GREEK AND ROMAN PLOUGHS.--Nos. 1 and 2, Greek and Roman Ploughs. No. 3, Plough, turned once or twice. No. 4, Plough, as used by the Gauls
14

PLATE III.

AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTS.--No. 1, Plain Sickle. No. 2A, Plough, from the Georgics of Virgil. No. 3, Scythe. No. 4, Spade. No. 5, Pick-axe. Nos. 6 and
7, Mattocks
16

PLATE IV.

ALCINOUS'S HAND-MILL 25

PLATE V.

JUMENTARIÆ MILLS 26

PLATE VI.

PLAUTUS'S HAND-MILL 27

PLATE VII.

CAPPADOCIA BREAD.--No. 1, Loaf of Bread. No. 2, Pastry Mould. No. 3, Cappadocia Bread. No. 4, Mould for ditto 38

PLATE VIII.

SCALES AND WEIGHTS 130

PLATE IX.

VARRO'S AVIARY 198

PLATE X.

APICIUS AND EPICURUS 201

PLATE XI.

REMAINS OF KITCHEN STOVES.--No. 1, Kitchen Stove. No. 2, Stock Pot. No. 3, Ditto. No. 4, Ladles. No. 5, Brazier 259

PLATE XII.

STOCK POTS AND BROKEN STEWPAN 261

PLATE XIII.

KITCHEN UTENSILS.--No. 1, Boiler, of Bronze. No. 2, Flat Saucepan. No. 3, Kettle. No. 4, Gridiron. No. 5, Trivet	262
PLATE XIV.	
CHAFING-DISH AND SILVER CUP.--No. 1, Chafing-Dish. No. 2, Silver Cup	263
PLATE XV.	
SPOON, FORK, KNIFE, SIMPULUM, &c.--No. 1, Roman Silver Spoon. No. 2, Brass Knife. No. 3, Simpulum. No. 4, Ditto. No. 5, Fork	264
PLATE XVI.	
ROMAN SILVER KNIFE-HANDLE, SILVER SPOON, AND DEEP DISH.--No. 1, Silver Knife-handle. No. 2, Spoon. No. 3, Dish	265
PLATE XVII.	
ROMAN AND EGYPTIAN PAILS.--No. 1, Pail, of Bronze. No. 2, Pail, with Two Handles (Egyptian)	297
PLATE XVIII.	
DRINKING-CUPS.--No. 1, Drinking-Cups (Shaded). No. 2, Ditto, Pig's Head and Dog's Head	316
PLATE XVIII.A	
DRINKING-CUPS.--No. 3, Ram's Head. No. 4, Boar's Head	317
PLATE XIX.	
DRINKING-HORNS.--Nos. 1 and 2, Drinking-Horns. No. 3, Horn, Aztec's Head	318
PLATE XX.	
CRYSTAL VASE	319
PLATE XXI.	
MURRHIN CUP	321
PLATE XXII.	
RELICS FROM HERCULANEUM.--No. 1, Wine Press. No. 2, Diogenes. No. 3, Beast of Burthen (a toy)	325
PLATE XXIII.	
COLUM NIVARUM	327
PLATE XXIV.	
VESSELS FOR HOLDING WINE.--No. 1, Amphora. Nos. 2 and 3, Smaller Dolium. No. 4, Long-neck Bottle	328
PLATE XXV.	
VASES FOR WINE.--No. 1, Large Vase. No. 2, Glass Vase. No. 3, Glass Bottle, with Cup	363
PLATE XXVI.	
VASES FOR WINE.--No. 1, Glass Vase. No. 2, Ditto. No. 3, Etruscan, Three Handles. No. 4, Large Silver Vase. No. 5, Cantharus	364
PLATE XXVI.A	
CURIOUS ORNAMENTAL TERRA-COTTA CUPS.--No. 1, Goose. No. 2, Teapot. No. 3, Jupiter's Head	365
PLATE XXVI.B	
HOUSE OF BRUNSWICK'S VASE	366
PLATE XXVII.	
VASES FOR WINE.--No. 1, Etruscan Flat Vase. No. 2, Marble Vase. No. 3, Metal Vase. No. 4, Greek Etruscan Drinking Vase	370
PLATE XXVIII.	

PLATE XXIX. ROMAN SUPPER 386

PLATE XXX.

No. 1, Greek Etruscan Vase. No. 2, Greek Terra-Cotta Vase. No. 3, Etruscan Terra-Cotta Vase. No. 4, Glass Amphora, for Falernian Wine. No. 5, Terra-Cotta Amphora, for Falernian Wine 390

PLATE XXX.*

CRATER, OR DRINKING CUP 391

PLATE XXXI.

No. 1, Curious Silver Dish. Nos. 2 and 3, Silver ditto 392

PLATE XXXII.

NERO AND HELIOGABALUS 398

PLATE XXXIII.

YORK BANQUET 404

PLATE XXXIV.

WILD BOAR A LA TROYENNE, AND THE HUNDRED GUINEA DISH 406

PLATE XXXV.

THREE SILVERED GLASS CUPS 407

THIS WORK

Is Dedicated by the Author

TO THE

GENIUS OF GASTRONOMY.

[Illustration]

PANTROPHEON.

"I did feast with Cæsar." SHAKSPERE.--"Julius Cæsar," Act iii., _Sc._ 3.

"Dis-moi, ce que tu manges, Je te dirai ce que tu es." BRILLAT-SAVARIN.--"Physiologie du Goût."

Thanks to the impressions received in boyhood, Rome and Athens always present themselves to our minds accompanied by the din of arms, shouts of victory, or the clamours of plebeians crowded round the popular tribune. "And yet," said we, "nations, like individuals, have two modes of existence distinctly marked--one intellectual and moral, the other sensual and physical; and both continue to interest through the lapse of ages."

What, for instance, calls forth our sympathies more surely than to follow from the cradle that city of Romulus--at first so weak, so obscure, and so despised--through its prodigious developments, until, having become the sovereign mistress of the world, it seems, like Alexander, to lament that the limits of the globe restrict within so narrow a compass its ungovernable ardour for conquest, its insatiable thirst of *opima spolia* and tyrannical oppression. In like manner, a mighty river, accounted as nothing at its source, where a child can step across, receives in its meandrous descent the tribute of waters, which roll on with increasing violence, and rush at last from their too narrow bed to inundate distant plains, and spread desolation and terror.

History has not failed to record, one by one, the battles, victories, and defeats of nations which no longer exist; it has described their public life,--their life in open air,--the tumultuous assemblies of the forum,--the fury of the populace,--the revolts of the camps,--the barbarous spectacles of those amphitheatres, where the whole pagan universe engaged in bloody conflict, where gladiators were condemned to slaughter one another for the pastime of the over-pampered inhabitants of the Eternal City--sanguinary spectacles, which often consigned twenty or thirty thousand men to the jaws of death in the space of thirty days!

But, after all, neither heroes, soldiers, nor people, can be always at war; they cannot be incessantly at daggers drawn on account of some open-air election; the applause bestowed on a skilful and courageous *_bestiarius_* is not eternal; captives may be poignarded in the Circus by way of amusement, but only for a time. Independently of all these things, there is the home, the fire-side, the prose of life, if you will; nay, let us say it at once, the business of life--eating and drinking.

It is to that we have devoted our vigils, and, in order to arrive at our aim, we have given an historical sketch of the vegetable and animal alimentation of man from the earliest ages; therefore it will be easily understood why we have taken the liberty of saying to the austere Jew, the voluptuous Athenian, the obsequious or vain-glorious senator of imperial Rome, and even to the fantastical, prodigal, and cruel Cæsars: "Tell me what thou eatest, and I will tell thee who thou art."

But, it must be confessed that our task was surrounded with difficulties, and required much laborious patience and obstinate perseverance. It is easy to penetrate into the temples, the baths, and the theatres of the ancients; not so to rummage their cellars, pantries, and kitchens, and study the delicate magnificence of their dining-rooms. Now it was there, and there alone, that we sought to obtain access.

With that view we have had recourse to the only possible means: we have interrogated those old memoirs of an extinct civilisation which connect the present with the past; poets, orators, historians, philosophers, epistolographers, writers on husbandry, and even those who are the most frivolous or the most obscure--we have consulted all, examined all, neglected nothing. Our respectful curiosity has often emboldened us to peep into the sacred treasure of the annals of the people of God; and sometimes the doctors of the Primitive Church have furnished us with interesting traits of manners and customs, together with chance indications of domestic usages, disseminated, and, as it were, lost in the midst of grave moral instruction.

The fatigue of these unwonted researches appeared to us to be fully compensated by the joy we experienced on finding our hopes satisfied by some new discovery. Like the botanist, who forgets his lassitude at the unexpected sight of a desired plant, we no longer remembered the dust of fatidical volumes, nor the numberless leaves we had turned over, when by a happy chance our gastronomic enthusiasm espied a curious and rare dish.

Thus it is that this work--essay, we ought to call it--has been slowly and gradually augmented with the spoils of numerous writers of antiquity, both religious and profane.

We have avoided, as much as possible, giving to this book a didactic and magisterial character, which would have ill-accommodated with the apparent lightness of the subject, and might have rendered it tedious to most readers. We know not whether these researches will be considered instructive, but we hope they will amuse.

When we compare the cookery of the ancients with our own--and the parallel naturally presents itself to the mind--it often betrays strange anomalies, monstrous differences, singular perversions of taste, and incomprehensible amalgamations, which baffle every attempt at justification. Apicius himself, or perhaps the Cœlius of the 3rd century, to whom we owe the celebrated treatise "*_De Opeoniis_*," would run great risk--if he were now to rise from his tomb, and attempted to give vogue to his ten books of recipes--either of passing for a poisoner or of being put under restraint as a subject decidedly insane. It follows, then, that although we have borrowed his curious lucubrations, we leave to the Roman epicurean and to his times the entire responsibility of his work.

The reader will also remark, in the course of this volume, asserted facts of a striking oddity, certain valuations which appear to be exaggerated, some descriptions he will pronounce fabulous or impossible. Now, we have never failed to give our authorities, but we are far from being willing to add our personal guarantee; so that we leave all those antique frauds--if any--to be placed to the account of the writers who have traitorously furnished them.

We think, however, that most persons will peruse with some interest (and, let us hope, a little indulgence) these studies on an art which, like all arts invented by necessity or inspired by pleasure, has kept pace with the genius of nations, and became more refined and more perfect in proportion as they themselves became more polite.

It appears that the luxury and enchantments of the table were first appreciated by the Assyrians and Persians, those voluptuous Asiatics, who, by reason of the enervating mildness of the climate, were powerless to resist sensual seductions.

Greece--"beloved daughter of the gods"--speedily embellished the culinary art with all the exquisite delicacy of her poetic genius. "The people of Athens," says an amiable writer, whom we regret to quote from memory, "took delight in exercising their creative power, in giving existence to new arts, in enlarging the aureola of civilisation. At their voice, the gods hastened to inhabit the antique oak; they disported in the fountains and the streams; they dispersed themselves in gamesome groups on the tops of the mountains and in the shade of the valleys, while their songs and their balmy breath mingled with the harmonious whisperings of the gentle breeze."

What cooks! what a table! what guests! in that Eden of paganism--that land of intoxicating perfumes, of generous wines, and inexhaustible laughter! The Lacedæmonians alone, those cynics of Greece, threw a saddening shade over the delicious picture of present happiness undisturbed by any thought of to-morrow.

Let us not forget that an Athenian, not less witty than nice, and, moreover, a man of good company, has left us this profound aphorism: "*_La viande la plus délicate est celle qui est le moins viande; le poisson le plus exquis est celui qui est le moins poisson._*"

Rome was long renowned for her austere frugality, and it is remarked that, during more than five centuries, the art of making bread was there unknown, which says little for her civilisation and intelligence. Subsequently, the conquest of Greece, the spoils of the subjugated world, the prodigious refinements of the Syracusans, gave to the conquered nations, says Juvenal, a complete revenge on their conquerors. The unheard-of excesses of the table swallowed up patrimonies which seemed to be inexhaustible, and illustrious dissipators obtained a durable but sad renown.

The Romans had whimsical tastes, since they dared serve the flesh of asses and dogs, and ruined themselves to fatten snails. But, after all, the caprices of fashion, rather than the refinement of sensuality, compelled them to adopt these strange aliments. Paulus Æmilius, no doubt a good judge in such matters, formed a high opinion of the elegance displayed by his compatriots in the entertainments; and he compared a skilful cook, at the moment when he is planning and arranging a repast, to a great general.

We were very anxious to enrich our “PANTROPHEON” with a greater number of _Bills of Fare_, or details of banquets; but we have become persuaded that it is very difficult, at the present day, to procure a complete and accurate account of the arrangement of feasts at which were seated guests who died two or three thousand years ago. Save and except the indications--more or less satisfactory, but always somewhat vague--which we gather on this subject from Petronius, Athenæus, Apuleius, Macrobius, Suetonius, and some other writers, we can do little more than establish analogies, make deductions, and reconstruct the entire edifice of an antique banquet by the help of a few data, valuable, without doubt, but almost always incomplete.

One single passage in Macrobius--a curious monument of Roman cookery--will supply the place of multiplied researches: it is the description of a supper given by the Pontiff Lentulus on the day of his reception. We present it to the amateurs of the magiric art:

“The first course (_ante-cœna_) was composed of sea-hedgehogs, raw oysters in abundance, all sorts of shell-fish, and asparagus. The second service comprised a fine fatted pullet, a fresh dish of oysters, and other shell-fish, different kinds of dates, univalvular shell-fish (as whelks, conchs, &c.), more oysters, but of different kinds, sea-nettles, beccaficoes, chins of roe-buck and wild boar, fowls covered with a perfumed paste, a second dish of shell-fish, and purples--a very costly kind of Crustacea. The third and last course presented several _hors-d’œuvre_, a wild boar’s head, fish, a second set of _hors-d’œuvre_, ducks, potted river fish, leverets, roast fowls, and cakes from the marshes of Ancona.”

All these delicacies would very much surprise an epicurean of the present day, particularly if they were offered to him in the order indicated by Macrobius. The text of that writer, as it is handed down to us, may be imperfect or mutilated; again, he may have described the supper of Lentulus from memory, regardless of the order prescribed for those punctilious and learned transitions to which a feast owes all its value.

Let us, we would say, in addressing our culinary colleagues, avoid those deplorable _lacunes_; let us preserve for future generations, who may be curious concerning our gastronomic pomp, the minutiae of our memorable magiric meetings, prompted, almost without exception, by some highly civilising idea--a love of the arts, the commercial propagandism, or a feeling of philanthropy. The Greeks and Romans--egotists, if there ever were any--supped for themselves, and lived only to sup; our pleasures are ennobled by views more useful and more elevated. We often dine for the poor, and we sometimes dance for the afflicted, the widow, and the orphan.

Moreover, a most important ethnographical consideration seems to give a serious interest to the diet of a people, if it be true, as we are convinced it is, and as we shall probably one day endeavour to demonstrate, that the manners of individuals, their idiosyncrasies, inclinations, and intellectual habits, are modified, to a certain extent, as taste, climate, and circumstances may determine the nature of their food; an assertion which might be supported by irrefragable proofs, and would show the justness of the aphorism: “Tell me what thou eatest, and I will tell thee who thou art.”

[Illustration: _Pl. B_

VICTUA _or_ THE GODDESS OF GASTRONOMY]

I.

AGRICULTURE

Every nation has attributed the origin of agriculture to some beneficent Deity. The Egyptians bestowed this honour on Osiris, the Greeks on Ceres and Triptolemus, the Latins on Saturn, or on their king Janus, whom, in gratitude, they placed among the gods. All nations, however, agree that, whoever introduced among them this happy and beneficial discovery, has been most useful to man by elevating his mind to a state of sociability and civilization.[I-1]

Many learned men have made laborious researches in order to discover, not only the name of the inventor of agriculture, but the country and the century in which he lived; some, however, have failed in their inquiry. And why? Because they have forgotten, in their investigation, the only book which could give them positive information on the birth of society, and the first development of human industry. We read in the Book of Genesis that: “The Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it and to keep it”[I-2] And, after having related his fatal disobedience, the sacred historian adds: “Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.”[I-3]

Would it be possible to adduce a more ancient and sublime authority?

If it be asked why we take Moses as our guide, instead of dating the origin of human society from those remote periods which are lost in the night of ages, we invoke one of the most worthy masters of human science--the illustrious Cuvier--who says:--

“No western nation can produce an uninterrupted chronology of more than three thousand years. Not one of them has any record of connected facts which bears the stamp of probability anterior to that time, nor even for two or three centuries after. The Greeks acknowledge that they learned the art of writing from the Phœnicians thirty or thirty-four centuries ago; and for a long time after that period their history is filled with fables, in which they only go back three hundred years to establish the cradle of their existence as a nation. Of the history of western Asia we have only a few contradictory extracts, which embrace, in an unconnected form, about twenty centuries. The first profane historian with whom we are acquainted by works extant is Herodotus, and his antiquity does not reach _two thousand three hundred years_. The historians consulted by him had written less than _a century_ previous; and we are enabled to judge what kind of historians they were by the extravagances handed down to us as extracts from Aristæus, Proconesus, and some others. Before them they had only poets; and Homer, the master and eternal model of the west, lived only _two thousand seven hundred_, or _two thousand eight hundred, years ago_. One single nation has transmitted to us annals, written in prose, before the time of Cyrus: it is the Jewish nation. That part of the Old Testament called the _Pentateuch_ has existed in its present form at least ever since the schism of Jeroboam, as the Samaritans receive it equally with the Jews, that is to say, that it has assuredly existed more than _two thousand eight hundred_ years. There is no reason for not attributing the Book of Genesis to Moses, which would carry us back _five hundred_ years more, or _thirty-three centuries_; and it is

only necessary to read it in order to perceive that it is, in part, a compilation of fragments from antecedent works: wherefore, no one can have the least doubt of its being the oldest book now possessed by the western nations.”[I-4]

The descendants of our first parents--and, first of all, the Hebrew people, who, as a nation historically considered, must occupy our foremost attention--devoted all their energy to agricultural labour.

The chief of the tribe of Judah as well as the youngest son of the tribe of Benjamin followed the plough, and gathered corn in the fields. Gideon was thrashing and winnowing his corn, when an angel revealed to him that he should be the deliverer of Israel;[I-5] Ruth was gleaning when Boaz saw her for the first time;[I-6] King Saul was driving his team of oxen in the ploughed field, when some of his court came and apprized him that the city of Jabesh was in danger;[I-7] and Elisha was called away to prophesy while at work with one of his father's ploughs.[I-8] We could multiply these incidents without end, to prove what extraordinary interest the Jews took in agricultural occupations.

Moses regarded agriculture as the first of all arts, and he enjoined the Hebrews to apply themselves to it in preference to any other: it was to the free and pure air of the fields, to the strengthening, healthy, and laborious country life, that he called their first attention. The sages of Greece and Rome held the same opinion: in those republics the tradesman was but an obscure individual, while the tiller of the soil was considered as a distinguished citizen. The urban tribes yielded precedence to the rustics, and this latter class supplied the nation with its generals and its magistrates.[I-9] Our present ideas on this point have materially changed with the times, and our modern Cincinnati very seldom return to the field to terminate the furrow they have commenced. The Israelites did not possess this excessive delicacy: they preserved the taste for agriculture with which their great legislator, Moses, had inspired them, and which the distribution of land naturally tended to strengthen. No one, in fact, was allowed to possess enough ground to tempt him to neglect the smallest portion; nor had any one the right to dispossess the Hebrew of his father's field,--even he himself was forbidden to alienate for ever land from his family.[I-10] This wise disposition did not escape the notice of an ancient heathen author,[I-11] and various states of Greece adopted the same plan; amongst others, the Locrians, Athenians, and Spartans, who did not allow their fathers' inheritance to be sold.[I-12]

The plan which we have adopted for our guidance in this work hardly justifies us in casting more than a glance at the Mosaic legislation; we shall, therefore, pass over all those prescriptions, all those memorable prohibitions, which the reader must have so often admired in the Books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, and content ourselves with observing that Moses knew how to find in agriculture an infallible means of developing the industry of his people, and that, by imposing the necessity of giving rest to the land every seventh year,[I-13] he obliged them, by the generality of this repose, to have stores in reserve; and consequently to employ every means of preserving portions of the grain, fruit, wines, and oil which they had gathered in the course of the six years preceding.

Ancient casuists of this nation enter into the most minute details on tillage and sowing, and also on the gathering of olives, on the tithes which were paid to the priests, and the portion set aside for the poor. They also mention some species of excellent wheat, barley, rice, figs, dates, &c., which were gathered in Judea.[I-14]

The soil of this delicious country was astonishingly fertile,[I-15] the operation of tillage was easy, and the cattle here supplied a greater abundance of milk than anywhere else;[I-16] we will just remark that even the names of several localities indicate some of these advantages. For instance, Capernaum signified a beautiful country town; Gennesareth, the garden of the groves; Bethsaida, the house of plenty; Nam was indebted for its sweet name to the beauty of its situation; and Magdela, on the borders of the sea of Galilee, to its site, and the happy life of its inhabitants.

Next to the Hebrews, in agriculture, came the Egyptians, a strange and fantastical people, who raised the imperishable pyramids, the statue of Memnon, and the lighthouse of Alexandria, and who yet prayed religiously every morning to their goddess--a _radish_, or their gods--_leek_ and _onion_.[I-17] Whatever there may be of folly and rare industry in this mixture, we cannot but agree that the art of agriculture was very ancient in Egypt, as the father of the faithful--Abraham--retired into that country at a time of famine;[I-18] and, later, the sons of Jacob went there also to purchase corn.[I-19]

We know that the Romans called this province the granary of the empire, and that they drew from it every year twenty million bushels of corn.[I-20] If we are to believe the Egyptians, Osiris, son of Jupiter (and hence a demi-god of good family), taught them the art of tilling the ground by aid of the plough.[I-21] This instrument, we may easily believe, was much less complicated than ours of the present day; there is no doubt that in the beginning, and for a great length of time afterwards,

DESCRIPTION OF PLATE No. I.

No. 1. Represents an Egyptian labourer tilling the ground with a pickaxe of a simple form; drawn at Thebes, by Mons. Nectoul, member of the commission of the French expedition in Egypt, from paintings in the subterranean vaults of Minich.

No. 2. Is a sketch of the plough, which a great number of Egyptian figures hold as an attribute; this was taken from the subterranean vault of Eileithya; it represents the plough guided by a labourer, and drawn by oxen tied by the horns, and whipped by a second labourer, whilst a third, placed by the side of the oxen, throws before them the seeds which are to be covered by the ploughed earth.

No. 3. A basket to carry the seeds. On the tombs of the kings of Thebes is seen painted a sower, with a basket like this, an attribute which is seen hanging on the back of the divinity Osiris.

No. 4. Represents an Egyptian with a sickle, much like in shape to a scythe; and Denon, of the French expedition, proved that corn was also cut with a scythe.

[Illustration: _Pl. 1_]

it was nothing but a long piece of wood without joint, and bent in such manner that one end went into the ground, whilst the other served to yoke the oxen;[I-22] for it was always these animals which drew the plough, although Homer seems to give the preference to mules.[I-23]