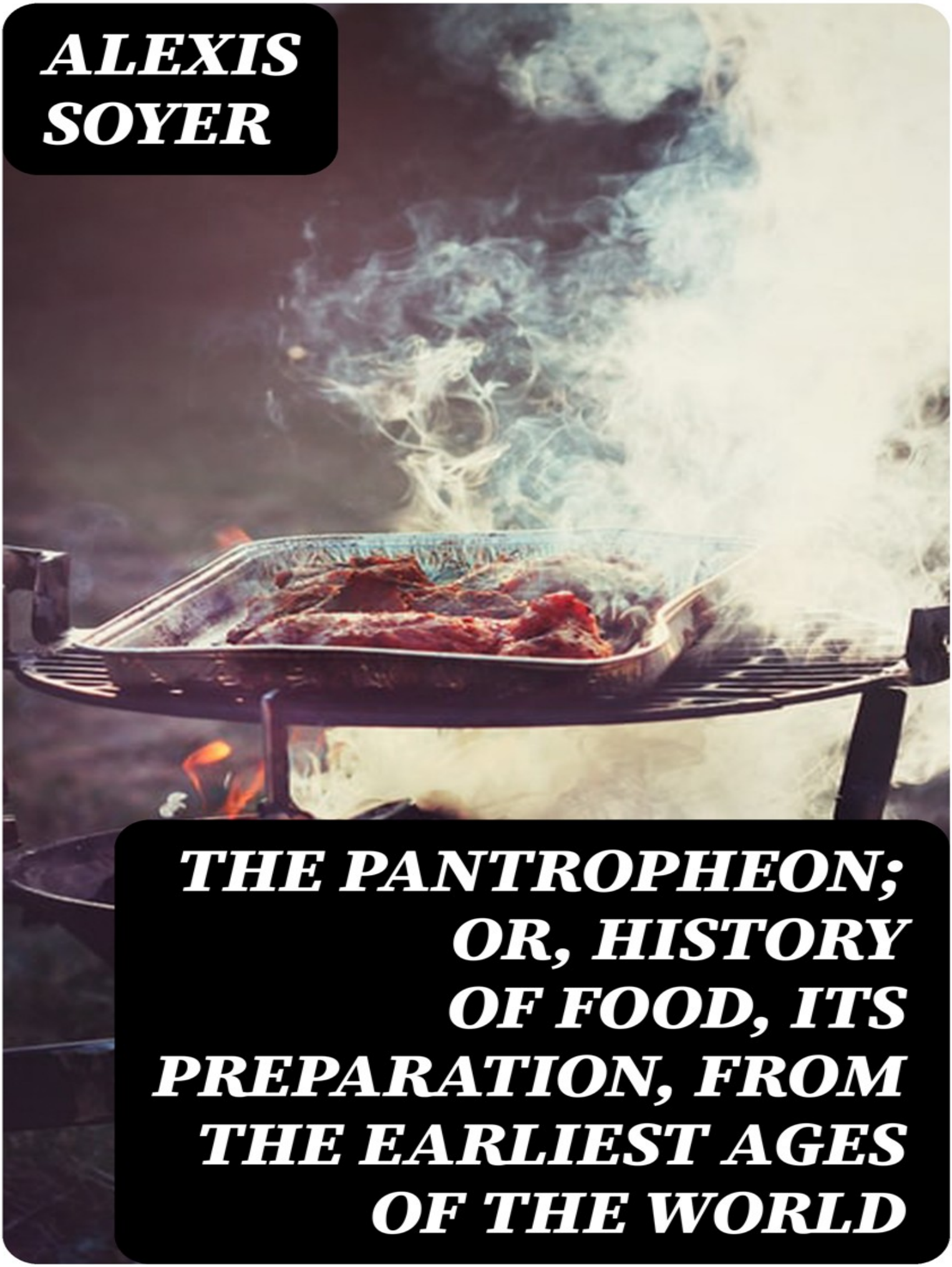
ALEXIS SOYER



THE PANTROPHEON; OR, HISTORY OF FOOD, ITS PREPARATION, FROM THE EARLIEST AGES OF THE WORLD

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The Pantropheon; Or, History of Food, Its Preparation, from the Earliest Ages of the World

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“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 amphiteatres, 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-accorded 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, chines 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 minutiæ 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.”

VICTUA

or

THE GODDESS OF GASTRONOMY

I.

AGRICULTURE

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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.

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]

The Greeks, clever imitators of the Egyptians, pretended that Ceres taught them the art of sowing, reaping, and grinding corn; they made her goddess of harvest, and applied themselves to the labour of agriculture with that rare and persevering ability which always characterised these people, and consequently was often the cause of many things being attributed to them which they only borrowed from other nations.[I_24]

The Romans, future rulers of the world, understood from the first that the earth claimed their nursing care; and Romulus instituted an order of priesthood for no other object than the advancement of this useful art. It was composed of the twelve sons of his nurse, all invested with a sacerdotal character, who were commanded to offer to Heaven vows and sacrifices in order to obtain an abundant harvest. They were called *Arvales* brothers;[I_25] one of them dying, the king took his place, and continued to fulfil his duty for the rest of his life.[I_26]

In the palmy days of the republic, the conquerors of the universe passed from the army or the senate to their fields; [I_27] Seranus was sowing when called to command the Roman troops, and Quintus Cincinnatus was ploughing when a deputation came and informed him that he was appointed dictator.

Everything in the conduct of the Romans gives evidence of their great veneration for agriculture. They called the rich, *locupletes*, that is, persons who were possessors of a farm or country seat (*locus*); their first money was stamped with a sheep or an ox, the symbol of abundance: they called it *pecunia*, from *pecus* (flock). The public treasure was designated *pascua*, because the Roman domain consisted, at the beginning, only of pasturage.

After the taking of Carthage, the books of the libraries were distributed to the allied princes of the republic, but the senate reserved the twenty-eight books of Mago on agriculture.[I_28]

We shall briefly point out the principal processes of this art in use among the Greeks and Romans, or at least those

which appear to us most deserving of interest. Like us, the ancients divided the land in furrows, whose legal length (if we may so term it) was one hundred and thirty feet.[I_29] Oxen were never allowed to stop while tracing a furrow, but on arriving at the end they rested a short time; and when their task was over they were cleaned with the greatest care, and their mouths washed with wine.[I_30] The ground being well prepared and fit to receive the seed, the grain was spread on the even surface of the furrows, and then covered over.[I_31]

The primitive plough, already mentioned, was of extreme simplicity. It had no wheels, but was merely furnished with a handle, to enable the ploughman to direct it according to his judgment; neither was there any iron or other metal in its construction. They afterwards made a plough of two pieces, one of a certain length to put the oxen to, and the other was shorter to go in the ground; it was similar, in shape, to an anchor. Such was the style of plough which the Greeks used. [I_32] They also very often employed a sort of fork, with three or four prongs, for the same purpose.[I_33] Pliny gives credit to the Gauls for the invention of the plough mounted on wheels. The Anglo-Norman plough had no wheels;[I_34] the ploughman guided it with one hand, and carried a stick in the other to break the clods.

The Greeks and Romans had not, perhaps, the celebrated guano of our days, though we would not positively assert it; but they knew of a great variety of manures, all well adapted to the various soils they wished to improve. Sometimes they made use of marl, a sort of fat clay;[I_35] and frequently manure from pigeons, blackbirds, and