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Famine

A Substitution for Wheat

1. BOARD OF AGRICULTURE. *Report of the Committee of the Board of Agriculture, appointed to extract Information from the Country Reports, and other Authorities, concerning the Culture and Use of Potatoes.* Seven engraved plates (several folding). viii, 177 pp. Large 4to, early 19th-cent. half-calf & marbled boards (some scuffing), flat spine gilt, red morocco lettering piece on spine. London: Printed by W. Bulmer for G. Nicol et al., 1795. \$2250.00

First edition of the Board of Agriculture's famous report on the potato. During the final four decades of the 18th century Britain experienced a number of corn harvest failures with a resulting rise in the price of wheat. The Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, the Board of Agriculture, and various private individuals advocated the adoption of the potato as a substitute for wheat, and great efforts were made to popularize the cultivation of this crop.

"This work, illustrated with seven plates, is outstanding for its series of well-informed articles on the subject concerned. Potatoes are here considered for their use in feeding cattle, and also as a food for human consumption."—Henry, II, pp. 613-14 & no. 461.

Nice copy, lacking leaf with table of contents (clearly never bound in). Inscribed on the half-title: "Presented by Joseph Sabine Esq. 22d February 1820." Sabine (1770-1837), natural historian and F.R.S., was one of the original fellows of the Linnean Society, honorary secretary of the Horticultural Society, and active in the work of the Zoological Society. Stamp of the Lawes Agricultural Trust on front and rear paste-downs.

"The Root of Scarcity"

2. COMMERELL, —, abbé de. *An Account of the Culture and Use of the Mangel Wurzel, or Root of Scarcity.* Translated from the French. [Edited by John Coakley Lettsom]. One hand-colored engraved plate. xix, 51 pp. 8vo, attractive antique calf-backed marbled boards (some foxing), spine gilt, red morocco lettering piece on spine. London: C. Dilly & J. Phillips, 1787. \$2250.00

"Second edition" (but see below) of this translation of Commerell's work on the mangel

wurzel, an uncommon beet developed in the 18th century as a fodder crop for livestock and, when harvested young, an excellent source of nutrition for humans. Commerell (d. 1799), chaplain to the Princess of Lowenstein in the German Lorraine and a member of the Société d'Agriculture de Paris, was interested in husbandry and wrote a monograph in French on the mangel wurzel.

Lettsom (1744-1815), physician, philanthropist, and champion of improving projects, was much involved in the introduction of the mangel wurzel in Britain. When seeds of this vegetable were distributed to the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, Lettsom received some, sowed them in his garden at Grove Hill, and found them to be an excellent crop capable of providing food for humans and for cattle. He immediately commissioned a translation of Commerell's book — a copy of which had accompanied the seeds from Germany — and provided a preface. This is the second of three editions to appear in 1787.

Lettsom distributed seeds to farmers and others in Britain as well as in Europe, America, and the West Indies. Today mangel wurzel is widely grown in many countries.

The fine plate depicts the mangel wurzel.

Nice copy. The title-page states this is the "second edition," but Lettsom's preface, dated 15 November 1787, is "to the third edition." Our copy collates like ESTC's second edition but has the plate that seems to accompany only the third edition.

• Fussell, II, pp. 131-32. Henrey, II, p. 297 & no. 555.

3. KIRKPATRICK, Hezekiah. *An Account of the Manner in which Potatoes are Cultivated and Preserved, and the Uses to which they are applied in the Counties of Lancaster and Chester, together with a Description of a New Variety of the Potatoe, peculiarly convenient for Forcing in Hot-Houses and Frames.* 2 p.l., 46 pp. 8vo, attractive antique calf-backed marbled boards, spine gilt, red morocco lettering piece on spine. Warrington: Printed by W. Eyres, 1796.

\$1950.00

First edition of this scarce provincial imprint. During the final four decades of the 18th century Britain experienced a number of corn harvest failures with a resulting rise in the price of wheat. The Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, the Board of Agriculture, and various private individuals advocated the adoption of the potato as a substitute for wheat, and great efforts were made to popularize the cultivation of this crop.

The writer of the present tract was no doubt inspired by a Board of Agriculture report on the culture and use of potatoes, which was published in 1795. Kirkpatrick, who lived near Wigan in Lancashire, a well-established center for potato cultivation, was not a professional nurseryman, but he grew certain plants in his garden that he offered for sale.

"After giving details concerning the cultivation, raising, and storing of potatoes, Kirkpatrick describes their various uses. He points out their value in lessening the consumption of grain, flour, or bread, gives directions of ways of cooking them for humans and also livestock, and includes a receipt for making starch from potatoes. Moreover, he lists the names of [more than 35] different varieties of early and late potatoes grown in the vicinity of Wigan."—Henrey, II, pp. 390, 614-15 & no. 899.

Nice copy with a small paste-on errata slip at the end.

• Fussell, III, pp. 16-17.

4. RICHARDSON, William. *Plan for Reclaiming the Bog of Allen, and the Other Great Morasses, in Ireland; addressed to the Right Hon. Earl of Rosse.* 34 pp. 8vo, attractive antique calf-backed marbled boards, spine gilt, red morocco lettering piece on spine. Dublin: W. Porter,

First edition and quite rare. Richardson (1740-1820), political activist and geologist, devoted his final years to agricultural research. He “experimented with sixteen grasses, as described in *An Elementary Treatise on the Indigenous Grasses of Ireland* (1806). From 1808 he was a zealous advocate of fiorin grass (Gaelic *fioreann*) (*Agrostis stolonifera* L) as food for animals, a preventive of famine, and a means of abating the poor laws. He believed it to be the most nutritious of grasses, with the advantages of late growth and harvesting; he pressed for its universal cultivation.”—ODNB.

Richardson believed fiorin grass should be planted on the various bogs of Ireland as a way of reclaiming the land and making it useful. He provides a most interesting description of the kinds of bogs in Ireland: moor, softer moor, red bog, black bog, and shaking quagmire; he recommends fiorin grass be planted on each.

Cropped presentation inscription on title from the author.

Fine copy.

♣ Fussell, III, pp. 60-62.

Italy's Grain Industry

5. [TARGIONI TOZZETTI, Giovanni, & others]. *Sitologia ovvero Raccolta di Osservazioni, di Esperienze e Ragionamenti sopra la Natura e Qualità dei Grani e delle Farine per il Panificio. Con l'aggiunta di altri Trattati utilissimi agli Agricoltori ed ai Mercanti*. Fine engraved vignette on each title. viii, 160 pp.; viii, 152 pp. Two vols. Large 8vo, orig. limp boards, uncut. Livorno: M. Coltellini, 1765. \$2250.00

First edition of this rare survey on the growing of cereal crops, the grain trade, and the bread industry in Italy. It is a collection of essays on various aspects of cereal and bread production by a number of authors including Targioni Tozzetti, Antonio Cocchi, and Giovanni Gentili.

Targioni Tozzetti (1712-83), was a natural historian, librarian, director of Florence's botanical garden, and professor of botany. He was, after Spallanzani, the most active Italian naturalist of the 18th century and wrote a number of other works on agriculture.

In this comprehensive work, the authors consider the nutritional value of bread, the bread industry, and the laws that govern it. This book was compiled in response to several recent famines in Italy.

Fine set in original state. Stamp of the Rothamsted Experimental Station on each front paste-down.

A Cornerstone of the English Agricultural Revolution

6. [WESTON, Sir Richard]. *A Discours of Husbandrie used in Brabant and Flanders: shewing the wonderful Improvement of Land there; and serving as a Pattern for our Practice in this Commonwealth...* 4 p.l., 27, [3] pp. Small 4to, attractive antique calf (title soiled & a little waterstained), spine gilt, red morocco lettering piece on spine. London: W. du Gard for F. Coles, 1654. \$3500.00

“Third Edition Corrected and Enlarged.” Weston (1591-1652), canal builder and agriculturalist, while already having had considerable successful experience in farming in Surrey, made a series of observations on the agricultural methods of the Low Countries during his exile in Belgium in 1644-45, which changed English agriculture.

“Sir Richard's account of Flemish husbandry was written about 1645, and addressed to

his sons from abroad. This was circulated in manuscript, and there is no evidence that it was printed before 1650, when an imperfect copy was published by Samuel Hartlib, with a dedication to the council of state. Hartlib did not at this time know who the author was. The account is the first English description of the use of a farming rotation including turnips and clover to obtain maximum output from heathlands formerly considered of little agricultural value. Although it is not known to what extent Sir Richard emulated on his own estates what he saw in Flanders, he described a farming system that was to become the cornerstone of the English 'agricultural revolution' a century later."—ODNB.

As mentioned above, the first edition appeared in 1650, published by Samuel Hartlib, and a second edition appeared two years later with the addition of Hartlib's dedication and his two letters addressed to Weston, stating he is the author.

Very good copy.