

JOHN ASHTON

THE HISTORY OF BREAD
FROM PRE-HISTORIC TO
MODERN TIMES

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Содержание

PREFACE	4
CHAPTER I	5
CHAPTER II	11
CHAPTER III	16
CHAPTER IV	30
CHAPTER V	40
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	45

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PREFACE

It seems extraordinary, but it is, nevertheless, a fact, that, up to this present time, there has not been written, in the English language, a History of *Bread*, although it is called ‘the Staff of Life,’ and really is a large staple of food.

There have been small *brochures* on the subject, and large volumes on the Chemistry of Bread, its making and baking; and long controversies as to the merits of whole meal, and other kindred questions, but no History. It is to remedy this that I have written this book, in which I have endeavoured to trace Bread from Pre-historic to Modern Times.

John Ashton.

CHAPTER I

PRE-HISTORIC BREAD

Man, as is evidenced by his teeth, was created graminivorous, as well as carnivorous, and the earliest skull yet found possesses teeth exactly the same as modern man, the carnivorous teeth not being bigger, whilst in many cases the whole of the teeth have been worn down, as if by masticating hard substances, such as parched grain.

In the history of bread, the lake dwellings of Switzerland are most useful, as from them we can gather the cereals their inhabitants used, their bread, and the implements with which they crushed the corn. The men who lived in them are the earliest known civilised inhabitants of Europe – by which I mean that they cultivated several kinds of cereals – wove cloth, made mats, baskets, and fishing nets, and, besides, baked bread.

The cereals known to us, and made use of, are the result of much cultivation, improved by selection; and Hallett's pedigree wheat would be hardly recognised when put by the side of its humble progenitor of pre-historic times. We now use wheat, barley, oats, Indian corn or maize, rye, rice, millet, and Guinea corn, or Indian millet, besides such odds and ends as the sea lyme grass (*Elymus arenarius*), which, though uncultivated, affords seed which is used in Iceland as a food, for want of something

better.

We have been enabled to trace with certainty the cereals used by pre-historic man, as they have been found lying in the lake mud, or buried under a bed of peat several feet thick, when they had to be collected out of a soft, dark-coloured mud, which formed the ancient lake-bottom, and is now called the relic bed. Dr. Oswald Heer, in his *Treatise on the Plants of the Lake Dwellings*, says: ‘Stones and pottery, domestic implements and charcoal ashes, grains of corn and bones, lie together in a confused mass. And yet they are by no means spread regularly over the bottom, but are frequently found in patches. The places where bones are plentiful, where the seeds of raspberries and blackberries, and the stones of sloes and cherries are found in heaps, probably indicate where there were holes in the wooden platform, through which the refuse was thrown into the lake; whilst those places where burnt fruits, bread, and plaited and woven cloth are found, indicate the position of store rooms in the very places where they were burnt, and thus the contents fell into the water. The burnt fruits and seeds, therefore, unquestionably belong to the age of the lake dwellings; and a portion of them are in very good preservation, for the process of burning has not essentially changed their form. Many of the remains of plants, however, have been preserved in an unburnt state.’

He gives the following list of cereals that have been found, and it is a somewhat extensive one: ‘(1) Small lake-dwelling barley (*Hordeum hexastichum sanctum*), (2) Compact six-

rowed barley (*Hordeum hexastichum densum*), (3) Two-rowed barley (*Hordeum distichum*), (4) Small lake-dwelling wheat (*Triticum vulgare antiquorum*), (5) Beardless compact wheat (*Triticum vulgare compactum muticum*), (6) Egyptian wheat (*Triticum turgidum*), (7) Spelt (*Triticum spelta*), (8) Two-grained wheat (*Triticum dicoccum*), (9) One-grained wheat (*Triticum monococcum*), (10) Rye (*Secale cereale*), (11) Oat (*Avena sativa*), (12) Millet (*Panicum miliaceum*), and (13) Italian millet (*Setaria Italicum*).’

Of these Nos. 1 and 4 were the most ancient, most important, and most generally cultivated, and next to them come Nos. 5, 12, and 13. Nos. 6, 8, and 9 were, probably, like No. 3, only cultivated, as experiments, in a few places. Nos. 7 and 11 appeared later, not until the Bronze Age, whilst No. 10 (rye) was entirely unknown amongst the lake dwellings of Switzerland.

At the lake settlement at Wangen a remarkable quantity of charred corn was dug up. Mr. Löhle believes that, altogether, and at various times, he has collected as much as 100 bushels. Sometimes he found the entire ears, at other times the grain only. Any of my readers can see for themselves some of this wheat, and also some raspberry seeds, found at Wangen. In the same case in the Prehistoric Saloon of the British Museum may be seen specimens of beans, peas, charred straw, acorns, hazel nuts, barley in the ear, millet in ear, in seed, and made into cakes, one showing the pattern of the bottom of a basket, and another the impress of a rush mat. The cakes or bread of millet are very solid,

and are made of meal coarsely crushed.

We know how this was crushed, for we have found their corn-crushers and mealing-stones. Of these the rude corn-crushers are undoubtedly the earliest. These stones, with their rounded ends, for a time somewhat puzzled the archæologist as to their use; but that was at once apparent when they were taken in conjunction with the hollowed stones. They were corn-crushers, which were used for pounding the parched corn or raw grain to make a thick gruel or porridge.

Later on they improved upon them by using mealing-stones, which ground out the meal by rubbing one stone on another, accompanied with pressure. The stones are in the British Museum. Such mealing-stones were used by the Egyptians and Assyrians, as we shall see, and are employed to this day in Central Africa. 'The mill consists of a block of granite, syenite, or even mica schist, 15in. or 18in. square and five or six thick, with a piece of quartz or other hard rock about the size of a half-brick, one side of which has a convex surface, and fits into a concave hollow in the larger, and stationary, stone. The workwoman, kneeling, grasps this upper millstone with both hands, and works it backwards and forwards in the hollow of the lower millstone, in the same way that a baker works his dough, when pressing it and pushing from him. The weight of the person is brought to bear on the movable stone, and while it is pressed and pushed forwards and backwards one hand supplies, every now and then, a little grain, to be thus at first bruised, and then ground on the

lower stone, which is placed on the slope, so that the meal, when ground, falls on to a skin or mat spread for the purpose. This is, perhaps, the most primitive form of mill, and anterior to that in Oriental countries, where two women grind at one mill, and may have been that used by Sarah of old when she entertained the angels.¹

To these mealing-stones succeeded the quern. This was a basin, or hollowed stone, with another – oviform – for grinding. The quern has survived to this day. In London, at the west end of Cheapside, by Paternoster Row, was a church, destroyed by the Great Fire of 1666, and never rebuilt, called St. Michael le Quern. It was close by Panyer Alley, so called from the baker's basket, and a stone is still in the alley on which is sculptured a naked boy sitting on a panyer. Querns have been found in the remains of the lake dwellings in Switzerland, and in the Crannoges, or lake dwellings of Scotland and Ireland. They are still in use in out-of-the-way places in Norway, in remote districts in Ireland, and some parts of the western islands of Scotland. In the latter country, as early as 1284, an effort was made by the Legislature to supersede the quern by the water-mill, the use of the former being prohibited, except in case of storm, or where there was a lack of mills of the new species. Whoever used the quern was to 'gif the threttein measure as multer²;' and the

¹ *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambesi and its Tributaries*, by David Livingstone. Lond. 1865, p. 543.

² Mulcture – fine.

transgressor was to 'time³ his hand mylnes perpetuallie.' Querns were not always made of stone, for one made of oak was found in 1831, whilst removing Blair Drummond Moss. It is 19 in. in height by 14 in. in diameter, and the centre is hollowed about a foot, so as to form a mortar.

To sum up this notice of pre-historic bread, I may mention that at Robenhausen, Meisskomer discovered 8lbs. weight of bread, and also at Wangen has been found baked bread or cake made of crushed corn exactly similar. Of course, it has been burnt, or charred, and thus these interesting specimens have been preserved to the present day. The form of these cakes is somewhat round, and about an inch to an inch and a half thick; one small specimen, nearly perfect, is about four or five inches in diameter. The dough did not consist of meal, but of grains of corn more or less crushed. In some specimens the halves of grains of barley are plainly discernible. The under side of these cakes is sometimes flat, sometimes concave, and there appears no doubt that the mass of dough was baked by being laid on hot stones, and covered over with glowing ashes.

³ Lose.

CHAPTER II

CORN IN EGYPT AND ASSYRIA

The ancient Egyptians had as cereals three kinds of wheat—*Triticum sativa*, *zea* and *spelta*; barley, *Hordeum vulgare*, and doura, *Holcus sorghum*, specimens of which may be seen in the Egyptian Gallery at the British Museum. The so-called ‘mummy-wheat’ is a fallacy, as far as its name goes; it is the *Triticum turgidum compositum*, cultivated in Egypt, Abyssinia, and elsewhere.

In this fertile land the cultivation of corn was very primitive; the sower had his seed in a basket, which he held in his left hand, or suspended it either on his arm or by a strap round his neck, and he threw the seed broadcast with his right hand. According to the paintings in the tombs, he immediately followed the plough, the light earth needing no further treatment, and the harrow, in any form, was unknown. Wheat was cut in about five months after planting, and barley in about four. We have here a representation of harvesting, showing the reaping, with the length of stubble left, and its being tied up into sheaves, or rather bundles. We next see the bundles being made into pyramidal stacks.

Here it remained until it was required for threshing, and then it was transported to the threshing floor in wicker baskets, upon asses, or in rope nets borne by two men. These threshing floors

were circular level plots of land, near the field, or in the vicinity of the granary; and, the floor being well swept, the ears were laid down and oxen driven over it in order to tread out the grain, which was swept up by an attendant.

And, like their modern brethren, they were merry at their work and sang songs, several of which may be seen in the sculptured tombs of Upper Egypt. Champollion gives the following, found in a tomb at Eileithyia:

‘Thresh for yourselves (twice repeated),
O oxen,
Thresh for yourselves (twice repeated);
Measures for yourselves,
Measures for your masters.’

Sometimes the cattle were bound by their horns to a piece of wood, which compelled them to move in unison, and tread the corn regularly. But it was also threshed out by manual labour, with curious implements. The next operation was to winnow the corn, which was done with wooden shovels; it was then carried to the granary in sacks, each containing a certain quantity, which was determined by wooden measures, a scribe noting down the number as called by the tellers, who superintended its removal. Herodotus (book II., 14) says that the Egyptians trod out their corn by means of swine.

Besides the growing and gathering of wheat, the doura is also represented in paintings in tombs at Thebes, Eileithyia,

Beni-Hassan, and Saggára. Both it and wheat are represented as growing in the same field, but the doura is the taller of the two. It was not reaped, but was pulled up by the roots by men, and sometimes women, who struck off the earth which adhered with their hands, bound it in sheaves, and carried it to a place where it was rippled, as flax is done.

In the ordinary life of the Egyptians, the woman mealed the flour – in as primitive a form as the prehistoric man – and in the British Museum are two wooden models, which show the first process of converting the cereal into meal; and then we have two figures of men kneading dough – from the Museum at Ghizeh (formerly at Boulak). The bread itself was both leavened and unleavened – as may be seen by the many examples – round, triangular, and square – in the British Museum, some of which must have been a foot across, and over an inch thick; the three examples given on page 27 being 5in. in diameter, and 1/2in. thick; 7 ditto and 1/2 ditto; whilst the ornamented cake is 3-1/2in. in diameter and 3/4in. thick.

But there were professional bakers in Egypt, as we see in some of the tomb-pictures. In the Biblical story of Joseph we find that ‘the butler of the King of Egypt and his baker had offended their lord the King of Egypt’; and the Rabbi Solomon says their offences were the butler not having perceived a fly in Pharaoh’s cup, and the baker having got a stone into the royal bread, so that Pharaoh thought they were conspiring against his life. We know they were put in prison with Joseph, and related their dreams to

him. The dream of the Opheh, or chief baker, was that he 'had three white baskets on his head, and in the uppermost basket there was all manner of bake meats for Pharaoh.' The Bible story of Joseph goes on to tell us how, in the years of plenty, he providentially stored up the excess of corn to meet the years of famine, and how the Israelites sent to Egypt for food, and subsequently abode in that land.

Thanks to Assyrian art, and to the enduring qualities of bronze, we are able to see how that ancient people made their bread (at least in the camp) during the reign of Shalmaneser II., son of Assur-nasir-abli, who began to govern Assyria about the year 860 B.C., and died in 825 B.C. On the bronze bands of the great gates of Balawat are recorded the warlike doings of Shalmaneser II. in detail. In almost every camp that is represented are men depicted as preparing bread against the return of the, of course, victorious soldiery: we see them mealing the corn, kneading the dough, making it into flat, round cakes, and, finally, piling these up in large heaps ready for the hungry warriors.

These gates were found in the year 1877 by Mr. Hormuzd Rassam, who, whilst excavating for the Trustees of the British Museum on the site of ancient Nineveh, began also excavations at a mound called Balawat, about 15 miles east of Mosul, and nine miles from Nimroud. Having received, as a present, before his departure for the East, some fragments of chased bronze, said to have been found in this mound, he naturally had the greatest

wish to follow up the indication of a new store of antiquities. He experienced some difficulty from the villagers of Balawat, as the mound had been used by them for some years as a burial ground, and their scruples having been overcome, the result was the finding of these beautiful bronzes in fragments. They were skilfully restored at the British Museum, where they now are, and rank among the best of Assyrian antiquities.

The old Assyrians knew the value of irrigation in growing their crops, and the remains of aqueducts and hydraulic machines which remain in Babylonia bear witness to an advanced civilisation; these are constructed of masonry, which slanted up to the height of two feet, and, disposed at right angles to the river, they conducted the water from 200 to 2000 yards into the interior.

The food of the poor seems to have consisted of grain, such as wheat, or barley, moistened with water, kneaded in a bowl, rolled into cakes and baked in the hot ashes.

CHAPTER III

BREAD IN PALESTINE

Of the bread of the ancient Hebrews we know nothing, except from their sacred books; but these contain a large store of knowledge. Their cereals seem to have consisted only of wheat, barley, rye (or it may be spelt), and millet, but they cultivated leguminous plants, such as beans and lentils. It is impossible to say accurately when these books were written, so that in the following notices respecting the bread of the Hebrews I take the sequence in which I find them placed in the Bible. It is impossible to do otherwise, as their chronology is such an open question.

At first, in all probability, the normal course of pre-historic man was followed – wheat and barley grew wild, were first eaten raw, and then parched. Of this latter and primitive method of cooking cereals we have several notices. It was used as a sacrifice, as we see in Leviticus ii. 16: ‘And the priest shall burn the memorial of it, part of the beaten corn thereof, and part of the oil thereof, with all the frankincense thereof: it is an offering made by fire unto the Lord.’ That parched corn was at that time a food we find in Levit. xxiii. 14: ‘And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the self-same day that ye have brought an offering unto your God.’ We next find it as the food of labouring people in Ruth ii. 14, when Boaz ‘reached her

parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left.’

Mention is again made of it in I. Sam. xvii., when Goliath of Gath challenged the men of Israel. Jesse’s three sons had followed Saul to the battle, and the anxious father had sent his youngest son David, with provisions for them, and a present to their commander, vv. 17, 18: ‘And Jesse said unto David his son, Take now for thy brethren an ephah⁴ of this parched corn, and these ten loaves, and run to the camp to thy brethren; and carry these ten cheeses unto the captain of their thousand, and look how thy brethren fare, and take their pledge.’ We see, I. Sam. xxv. 18, how Abigail, Nabal’s wife, in order to propitiate David, ‘made haste, and took 200 loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and 100 clusters of raisins, and 200 cakes of figs, and laid them on asses.’ The last we hear of parched corn as food is in II. Sam. xvii. 27, 28, when David arrived at Mahanaim. Shobi, Machir, and Barzillai ‘brought beds, and basons, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched corn, and beans, and lentils, and parched pulse.’ In England this parching is sometimes applied to peas, and, indeed, there is a saying comparing an extremely lively person ‘to a parched pea in a frying pan,’ and in America ‘pop corn,’ or parched maize, is very popular.

Threshing corn we first read of in Deut. xxv. 4, when we find the following direction given: ‘Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn,’ a practice which the natives of Aleppo,

⁴ A measure containing 10 homers, or about 60 pints.

and some other Eastern places, still religiously observe.

How Gideon (Jud. vi. 11) or Oman (I. Chron. xxi. 20) threshed, whether by oxen or by flail, we cannot tell, but in Isaiah xxviii. 27, 28, we find five methods of threshing then in vogue. 'For the fitches [this is supposed to be the *Nigella sativa*, whose seeds are used as a condiment, like coriander or caraway] are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod. Bread corn is bruised; because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen.' In Lowth on *Isaiah* we find this passage made somewhat clearer:

'The dill is not beaten out with the *corn-drag*;
Nor is the *Wheel of the Wain* made to turn upon the cummin.
But the dill is beaten out with *the Staff*,
And the cummin with the *Flail*, but
The bread corn with the *Threshing-Wain*;
And not for ever will he continue thus to thresh it,
Nor vex it with the Wheel of its Wain,
Nor to bruise it with the *Hoofs of his Cattle*.'

The *Staff* and *Flail* were used for that grain that was too tender to be treated in any other method. The *Drag* consisted of a sort of frame of strong planks, made rough at the bottom with hard stones or iron; it was drawn by horses or oxen over the corn sheaves spread on the threshing floor, the driver sitting upon it.

The *Wain* was much like the former, but had wheels with iron teeth, or edges like a saw; the axle was armed with iron teeth or serrated wheels throughout; it moved upon three rollers, armed with iron teeth, or wheels, to cut the straw. In Syria they make use of the drag constructed in the very same manner – and this not only forces out the grain, but cuts the straw in pieces for fodder for the cattle; for in Eastern countries there is no hay.

Sir R. K. Porter, in his *Travels in Georgia*,⁵ speaks of this method of threshing, which he saw in the early part of the last century. ‘The threshing operation is managed by a machine composed of a large square frame of wood, which contains two wooden cylinders placed parallel to each other, and which have a turning motion. They are stuck full of splinters, with sharp square points, but not all of a length. These barrels have the appearance of the barrels in an organ, and their projections, when brought in contact with the corn, break the stalk and disengage the ear. They are put in motion by a couple of cows or oxen, yoked to the frame, and guided by a man sitting on the plank that covers the frame which contains the cylinders. He drives this agricultural equipage in a circle round any great accumulation of just-gathered harvest, keeping at a certain distance from the verge of the heap, close to which a second peasant stands, holding a long-handled 20-pronged fork, shaped like the spread sticks of a fan, and with which he throws the unbound sheaves forward to meet the rotary motion of the machine. He has a shovel also

⁵ Vol. II., 89.

ready, with which he removes to a considerable distance the corn that has already passed the wheel. Other men are on the spot with the like implement, which they fill with the broken material, and throw it aloft in the air, where the wind blows away the chaff, and the grain falls to the ground. The latter process is repeated till the corn is completely winnowed from its refuse, when it is gathered up, carried home, and deposited for use in large earthen jars. The straw is preserved with care, being the sole winter food of the horses and mules. But while I looked on at the patriarchal style of husbandry, and at the strong yet docile animal, which for so many ages had been the right hand of man in his business of tilling and reaping the ground, I could not but revere the beneficent law which pronounced, "Muzzle not the ox when he treadeth out the corn."

It was probably one of these that Araunah meant (II. Sam. xxiv. 22) when he said unto David: 'Let my lord the king take and offer up what seemeth good unto him: behold, here be oxen for burnt sacrifice, and threshing instruments and other instruments of the oxen for wood.' And it is certainly mentioned in Isaiah xli. 15: 'Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth.'

The threshing-floor is many times mentioned in the Bible. There were those of Atad, Nachon, and Araunah (or Ornan), the value of whose floor, etc., is variously stated in II. Sam. xxiv. 24, where it says that David bought the flour and oxen for 50 shekels of silver, or about 6*l* of our money; whilst in I. Chron. xxi. 25, he

gave him 600 shekels of gold in weight, or 1200*l* of our currency, which seems a large sum for a small level piece of ground; for the floors, so-called, were out of doors, so that the wind might carry away the chaff, as we read in Hosea xiii. 3: 'They shall be ... as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor.' See also Psalm i. 4.

These floors were used for other purposes than threshings, as we read in I. Kings xxii. 10: 'And the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah sat each on his throne, having put on their robes, in a void place (*or floor*) in the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them,' a statement which is repeated in II. Chron. xviii. 9.

Harvest-time was appointed by Moses as one of the great festivals – Exodus xxiii. 14, etc.: 'Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year. Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it thou camest out from Egypt: and none shall appear before me empty). And the feast of harvest, the first-fruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field.' And again, in Exodus xxxiv., this is repeated, with the addition (v. 21): 'Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest: in earing time and in harvest thou shalt rest.' This holiday was, and is, called the feast of tabernacles, and we read in Deut. xvi. 13, etc.: 'Thou

shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine: and thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maid-servant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates. Seven days shalt thou keep a solemn feast unto the Lord thy God in the place which the Lord shall choose: because the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice.'

In the story of Ruth we get an idyllic picture of a Hebrew harvest field, with its kindly greetings between master and man, and its gleaners. Naomi, a native of Bethlehem, returned thither from Moab, after the death of her husband, Elimelech, accompanied by her daughter-in-law Ruth, who was also a widow, 'and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest.'

Special favour was accorded to Ruth. She might glean 'among the sheaves' —*i. e.*, following the reapers, instead of waiting until the corn had been carried; but the Jews were enjoined to be liberal in the matter of gleaning, as we see by Lev. xix. 9: 'And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest'; and in Deut. xxiv. 19, 'When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it; it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the Lord thy God may bless

thee in all the work of thine hands.’

There were no public mills at which flour could be ground, but, as now, in the unchangeable East, every family ground their own corn, and this task, as well as the making and baking of bread, was left to the women. See Matt. xxiv. 41: ‘Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.’ Again we find that it was a woman who was grinding corn on a housetop in Thebez who (Judges ix. 53) ‘cast a piece of a millstone upon Abimelech’s head, and all to brake his skull.’ An Eastern flour mill consists of two stones, the upper one rotating on the lower. In Shaw’s *Travels*, p. 297, he says: ‘Most families grind their wheat and barley at home, having two portable millstones for that purpose. The uppermost is turned round by a small handle of wood or iron placed in the edge of it. When this stone is large, or expedition is required, then a second person is called in to assist. It is usual for the women alone to be concerned in this employ, setting themselves down over against each other, with the millstones between them.’

And Dr. Clarke, in his *Travels*,⁶ says, that at Nazareth: ‘Scarcely had we reached the apartment prepared for our reception, when, looking into the courtyard belonging to the house, we beheld *two women* grinding at the mill in a manner most forcibly illustrating the saying of our Saviour. They were preparing flour to make our bread, as it is always customary in the country when strangers arrive. The two women, seated

⁶ Vol. IV., 167, 168.

upon the ground opposite to each other, held between them two round, flat stones, such as are seen in Lapland, and such as in Scotland are called querns. In the centre of the upper stone was a cavity for pouring in the corn, and by the side of this an upright wooden handle for moving the stone. As the operation began, one of the women with her right hand pushed this handle to the woman opposite, who again sent it to her companion, thus communicating a rotary and very rapid motion to the upper stone, their left hands being all the while employed in supplying fresh corn as fast as the bran and flour escaped from the sides of the machine.'

Of such importance among the household treasures of the Hebrews was the flour mill esteemed that Moses laid it down (Deut. xxiv. 6): 'No man shall take the nether or the upper millstone to pledge: for he taketh a man's life to pledge.'

The first mention of bread in the Bible, with the exception of Adam's curse, is in Gen. xiv. 18: 'And Melchizedek, King of Salem, brought forth bread and wine'; but it is pre-supposed, in Chap. xii. 10: 'And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land.' When the three angels visited him on the plains of Mamre, he offered them hospitality (Gen. xviii. 5, 6): 'I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said. And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures

of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth.’ And to this day in Syria cakes are made upon the hearth, and the breaking of bread together is a token of amity and protection extended by the stronger to the weaker.

Of what shape the Hebrew bread was we do not know, for no representation of it has come down to us. As a rule it was possibly in the form of thin flat round cakes – similar to those unleavened biscuits now used by the Jews during their Passover, and the form and dimensions of which are probably traditional – but they also had *loaves* of bread, as we read in many places. The Shew, or Presence bread, must have been loaves, because of the quantity of flour in each – between five and six pints. The directions for making it, etc., are plain enough (Lev. xxiv. 5-9): ‘And thou shalt take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes thereof: two tenth deals shall be in one cake. And thou shalt set them in two rows, six on a row, upon the pure table before the Lord. And thou shalt put pure frankincense upon each row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, even an offering made by fire unto the Lord. Every Sabbath he shall set it in order before the Lord continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant. And it shall be Aaron’s and his sons’; and they shall eat it in the holy place: for it is most holy unto him of the offerings of the Lord made by fire by a perpetual statute.’

This shew bread must have been leavened, for a cake containing nearly three quarts of flour, and unleavened, could hardly be. We have no certainty as to the shape of these twelve

loaves, typical of the tribes of Israel; for, although the gold table on which it was placed figures in a *bas relief* on the Arch of Titus at Rome, there is no bread upon it. The Rabbis say that the loaves were square, and covered with leaves of gold; and that they were placed in two piles of six each, one upon another, on the opposite ends of the table; and that between every two loaves were laid three semi-tubes, like slit canes, of gold, for the purpose of keeping the cakes the better from mouldiness and corruption by admitting the air between them; and it is also said, but upon what authority I know not, that each end of the table was furnished with a tall, three-pronged fork of gold, one at each corner, standing perpendicularly, for the purpose of keeping the loaves in their proper places.

The new bread was set on the table with much ceremony every Sabbath, and it was so ordered that the new bread should be set on one end of the table before the old was taken away from the other, in order that the table might not be for a moment without bread. Jewish tradition states that, to render the bread more peculiar and consecrated from its origin, the priests themselves performed all the operations of sowing, reaping and grinding the corn for the shew bread, as well as of kneading and baking the bread itself. On the table was, probably, some salt, as we read in Lev. ii. 13: 'With all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt.'

There seems to be little doubt but that the Israelites knew nothing about leavened bread until they went into Egypt, and that they obtained that knowledge from the civilised Egyptians.

That they did leaven their bread we learn from Exodus xii. 34-39: 'And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading-troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders... And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of Egypt, for it was not leavened, because they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victual.'

Bread was sometimes dipped in oil as a relish, and in this state it was also used in sacrifice. Lev. viii. 26: 'And out of the basket of unleavened bread, that was before the Lord, he took one unleavened cake, and a cake of oiled bread, and one wafer,' etc.; and, occasionally, as we see in Ruth, it was dipped in vinegar. The Jew thanked God for all His good gifts, and with his bread, he took it in his hands, and pronounced the following benediction: 'Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, the King of the world, that produceth bread out of the earth.' If there were many at table, one asked a blessing for the rest. The blessing always preceded the breaking of the bread. The rules concerning the breaking of bread were – the master of the house recited and finished the blessing, and after that he broke the bread; he did not break a small piece, lest he should seem to be sparing; nor a large piece, lest he should be thought to be famished; it was a principal command to break a whole loaf. He that broke the bread put a piece before everyone, and the other took it into his hand. The master of the family ate first of the bread after blessing. Maimonides, writing on *Halacoth*, or legal formulæ (*Beracoth*,

c. 7), says the guests were not to eat or taste anything till he who broke had tasted first, nor was it permitted at festivals for any of the guests to drink of the cup till the master of the family had done so.

There are several unleavened bread bakeries in London, and one each in Birmingham and Leeds, to supply the Jews resident in the neighbourhood with Passover cakes, or *Matzos*. Of course, there is an enormous demand for this sort of unleavened bread, and to meet it these bakeries begin baking two months before the commencement of the Passover. These *Matzos* look like ordinary large water biscuits, except that they are a foot or more in diameter. They are made of flour and water, and contain no other ingredient.

After the flour has been kneaded into a very stiff dough, a lump of it, weighing about 50 lb., is placed on a great block of wood and pressed into a thick sheet by a heavy beam, which is fastened to the block at one end by an iron link and staple. This sheet is next placed under an iron roller, from which it emerges in a long ribbon. It passes under another roller, and another, and then it is thin enough for baking. It is now stamped and cut into the unbaked *Matzos*, which are placed upon a large peel, or wooden tray, having a long handle, and deposited in an oven. Three minutes later they are taken out, white, but crisp. From the oven they are conveyed to the packing room, where they are allowed to cool, after which they are put up in stacks, and thus kept ready for delivery. Of course, during the whole of Passover

week the Jews eat no other bread.

CHAPTER IV

THE BREAD OF THE CLASSIC LANDS

As an introduction to the bread of the Romans and Greeks, let us begin with the pretty myth of Demeter (or Ceres, as the Romans called her), and her daughter Persephone. Zeus, or Jupiter, had promised his daughter Persephone to Pluto, without informing Demeter of his plan, and whilst the girl was plucking flowers which Zeus had caused to grow, in order to fix her attention, Pluto seized her, and, the earth opening, they disappeared, and went to his kingdom of Hades. Many places have been assigned as the spot where this took place; but the ancient Eleusis, not far from Salamis or Athens, now the little village of Lefsina, has, if such a thing were possible, perhaps the prior claim, for here stood the famous temple of Demeter, now lately (1882-89) excavated and surveyed, and here were performed the Eleusinian mysteries in her honour.

The shrieks of Persephone were heard only by Hecate and Helios; and her mother, hearing only the echo of her voice, at once darted down to earth in search of her beloved child. Hopelessly and aimlessly she wandered about, caring nothing for herself; and for nine whole days and nights neither ate nor drank, tasted neither nectar nor ambrosia, nor did she even bathe herself.

On the tenth day she met Hecate, who told her all she knew of her daughter's disappearance, which was not much, as she had heard but her piercing cries. But, thinking that Helios, the all-seeing sun, might have viewed the scene, they hastened to him, and he told them how it all happened: how Pluto had carried off her daughter, with the approval and consent of Zeus.

Heart-broken at this conduct of the father of her child, she would have no more of the society of the gods, and forswore Olympus, preferring to live rather among men on earth. And so she dwelt among them, rewarding those who were kind to her and severely punishing those who did not treat her well; and in this way, still wandering and mourning for her lost child, she came to Eleusis, where Celeus was king.

But her wrath was still as fierce as ever, and, by withholding her gifts, the fields produced no crops, and there was famine upon earth, and so sore indeed did it become that Zeus, perceiving it, feared that the race of man might become extinct for lack of food, and sent Iris as ambassador to try and persuade Demeter to return to Olympus. But she was firm, although all the gods were sent to her to induce her to relent, and nothing would she do to mitigate the evil she had wrought, save on the condition that her daughter should be restored to her.

Hermes was sent to Pluto, and his mission met with partial success. Persephone had eaten of the pomegranate seed, which sacredly pledged her to her dread lord; and for three months in the year she must leave her mother and the fair earth and go to

live in Pluto's dreary kingdom. Hermes fulfilled his mission by restoring her to her loving mother, who rejoiced over her with an exceeding joy. Zeus, choosing this happy moment, sent Rhea to Demeter to conciliate her and prevail upon her to return to Olympus – a task which she happily effected. The earth smiled once more and became fertile, and Demeter, with her daughter, to whom she was lent for nine months in the year, went to dwell once more in the companionship of the gods; but, before she left the earth, she rewarded Celeus, the King of Eleusis, who had been kind to her, by giving his son, Triptolemus, a chariot with winged dragons and seeds of wheat. His chariot was useful, for by means of it he was able to ride all over the earth, and instruct men in growing corn. He established the worship of Demeter at Eleusis, and instituted the mysteries in honour of the goddess.

And in this pretty myth of Demeter and Persephone we may trace the story of the seasons; how for nine months the earth is smiling and fertile, and for the remaining three is dead.

Dr. Schliemann claimed to have found the site of ancient Troy when he uncovered the hill of Hissarlik. It was undoubtedly the remains of a pre-historic city, and one which had advanced to a considerable amount of civilisation. And this is shown particularly in one instance, in the huge earthenware jars, or *pithoi*, that were used for storing corn and wine. The following illustration gives a graphic description of them as they appeared *in situ*: 'One of the compartments of the uppermost houses below the Temple of Athené, and belonging to the third, the burnt

city, appears to have been used as a magazine for storing corn or wine, for there are in it nine enormous earthenware jars of various forms, about 5 ft. high and 4-3/4 ft. across, their mouths being from 29-1/2 in. to 35-1/4 in. broad. Each of them has four handles 3-3/4 in. broad, and the clay of which they are made is as much as 2-1/4 in. thick.⁷

Dr. Schliemann says [p. 279]: 'The number of large jars which I brought to light in the burnt stratum of the third city certainly exceeds 600. By far the larger number of them were empty, the mouth being covered by a large flag of schist or limestone. This leads me to the conclusion that the jars were filled with wine or water at the time of the catastrophe, for there appears to have been hardly any reason for covering them if they had been empty. Had they been used to contain anything else but liquids, I should have found traces of the fact, but only in a very few cases did I *find some carbonised grain* in the jars, and only twice a small quantity of a white mass, the nature of which I could not determine.'

So that we see that this pre-historic nation not only grew corn, but stored it for future use.

The means this pre-historic people had of crushing or mealing the grain was the same as usual: the saddle querns, or two stones with flat surfaces, between which the grain was crushed and roughly trituated – so frequently found on the Continent, and the pestle and mortar of the lake dwellings, as also round stones

⁷ *Ilios*. By Dr. H. Schliemann. London, 1880, pp. 32, 33.

for fitting into hollows such as are found in the lakes, the cave dwellings of the Dordogne and in the dolmens of France. Dr. Schliemann, in describing 'the Trojan saddle querns,' says they 'are either of trachyte or of basaltic lava, but by far the larger number are of the former material. They are of oval form, flat on one side and convex on the other, and resemble an egg cut longitudinally through the middle. Their length is from 7 in. to 14 in., and even as much as 25 in.; the very long ones are generally crooked longitudinally, their breadth is from 5 in. to 14 in. The grain was bruised between the flat sides of two of these querns; but only a kind of groats can have been produced in this way, not flour. The bruised grain could not have been used for making bread. In *Homer* we find it used for porridge (*Il.* xviii., 558-560), and also for strewing on the roasted meat (*Od.* xiv., 76-77).'

In Homeric times the corn was evidently ground by millstones (which were, probably, precisely similar to those found by Dr. Schliemann), as we see in *Il.* vii. 270, xii., 161, and *Od.* vii., 104, xx., 105. Pliny N.H., xxxvi., 30, speaking of millstones says: 'In no country are the molar stones superior to those of Italy; stones, be it remembered, not fragments of rock; there are some provinces, too, where they are not to be found at all. Some stones of this class are softer than others, and admit of being smoothed with the whetstone, so as to present all the appearance, at a distance, of serpentine. There is no more durable stone than this; for, in general, stone, like wood, suffers from the action, more or less, of rain, heat, and cold... Some persons give this

molar stone the name of *pyrites*, from the circumstance that it has a great affinity to fire.'

In book xviii., 23, Pliny gives us *the mode of grinding corn*. 'All the grains are not easily broken. In Etruria they first parch the spelt in the ear, and then pound it with a pestle shod with iron at the end. In this instrument the iron is notched at the bottom, sharp ridges running out like the edge of a knife, and concentrating in the form of a star, so that, if care is not taken to hold the pestle perpendicularly while pounding, the grains will only be splintered and the iron teeth broken. Throughout the greater part of Italy, however, they employ a pestle that is only rough at the end, and wheels turned by water, by means of which the corn is gradually ground. I shall here set forth the opinions given by Mago as to the best method of pounding corn. He says that the wheat should be steeped first of all in water, and then cleaned from the husk, after which it should be dried in the sun and then pounded with the pestle; the same plan, he says, should be adopted in the preparation of barley.'

This was how corn was prepared in some parts of Italy at the time of the Christian era, by the same method as that described by Livingstone: 'The corn is pounded in a large wooden mortar, like the ancient Egyptian one, with a pestle six feet long and about four inches thick. The pounding is performed by two or even three women at one mortar. Each, before delivering a blow with her pestle, gives an upward jerk of the body, so as to put strength into the stroke, and they keep exact time, so that two pestles are

never in the mortar at the same moment... By the operation of pounding, with the aid of a little water, the hard outside scale or husk of the grain is removed, and the corn is made fit for the millstone. The meal irritates the stomach unless cleared from the husk; without considerable energy in the operation the husk sticks fast to the corn. Solomon thought that still more vigour than is required to separate the hard husk or bran from the wheat would fail to separate "a fool from his folly." "Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him."

We have noticed the primitive Homeric millstones and the Etruscan pestles and mortars, but at the time of the Christian era things molinary were somewhat more advanced. Doubtless in parts of the country the hand mill or quern, called *Mola manuaris*, *versatilis* or *trusatilis*, was in use, and it was worked by slaves, who were sent to the *pistorineum* as a punishment. But the usual corn mill was worked by animals, and was called *Mola iumentaria* or *Mola asinaria*.

Both Greeks and Romans originally ground their flour and baked their bread at home, and mills and bakeries have been found in several private houses in Pompeii. One of these bakeries was attached to the house of Sallust, on the south side, being divided from it only by a narrow street. Its front is the main street, or Via Consularis, leading from the gate of Herculaneum to the Forum. Entering by a small vestibule, the visitor finds himself in a portico of ample dimensions, considering the character of

the house, being about 36 feet by 30 feet. At the end of the portico is an opening through which the bake-house is entered, which is at the back of the house, and opens into a smaller street, which, diverging from the main street at the fountain by Pansa's house, runs straight up to the city walls. The work room of the mill and bakery is about 33 feet long by 26 feet. The centre is occupied by four stone mills, and when it was uncovered, the ironwork, though entirely rust eaten, was yet perfect enough to explain satisfactorily the method of construction.

Not only were the flour mills, kneading troughs and other utensils for baking found in Pompeii, but there were also loaves of bread, of round form, and sub-divided, some of which were stamped with the baker's name. That this was the usual form of loaf is also shown by a painting on the walls of the Temple of Augustus, where we see the bread partially broken, and by the representation of a baker's shop, where all the loaves are similarly shaped.

This, at all events, seems to have been the shape in vogue about the time of the Christian era; but in the *bas reliefs* on the tomb of Eurysaces, who was a baker in a large way of business at Rome, they seem to be globular. These *bas reliefs* are most interesting, as they show the whole history of baking. First there is the purchase of the corn, and payment being made for it; then we see it ground, and sifted to separate the bran. Next a man is buying some flour. Then we see the dough being kneaded by horse-power, the bakers making it into loaves, the baker with his

peel baking the loaves, which are afterwards carried in paniers to be weighed. Then there are the customers, and the bread being sent out for delivery.

Pliny tells us that there were no bakers at Rome until the war with King Perseus of Macedon, more than 580 years after the building of the city. The ancient Romans used to make their own bread, it being an occupation which belonged to the women, as we see is the case in many nations even at the present day. In those times they had no cooks in the number of their slaves, but used to hire them for the occasion from the market. The Gauls were the first to employ the bolter that is made of horse-hair; while the people of Spain made their sieves and meal dressers of flax, and the Egyptians of papyrus and rushes.

Many freedmen were engaged as bakers, and under the Republic it was one of the duties of the *œdiles* to see that the bread was properly prepared and correct in weight. Grain was delivered into public granaries by enrolled *Saccarii*, and it was distributed to the bakers by a corporation called the *Catabolenses*. A bakers' guild (*corpus* or *collegium pistorum*), which long existed, was organised by Trajan, and this body, through its connection with the *cura amonæ*, became of much importance, and enjoyed various privileges. There were guilds of *pistores* and *clibanarii* at Pompeii. A great increase in the number of bakeries (*pistrinæ*, *officinæ pistoriæ*) afterwards took place at Rome, owing, probably, to the action of Aurelian in introducing a daily distribution of bread, instead of the old

monthly distribution of grain that had been usual since the time of Gracchi.

CHAPTER V

BREAD IN EASTERN LANDS

Agriculture has always taken a prominent part in Chinese polity, and is incorporated in their religious observances; and a deep veneration for it is inscribed on all the institutions in China. Among the several grades of society the cultivators of mind rank first, then those of land, third come the manufacturers, and lastly the merchants. Homage to agriculture is done annually by the Emperor, who makes a show of performing its operations.

This ceremony, which originated more than 2000 years ago, had been discontinued by degenerate princes, but was revived by Yong-tching, the third of the Mantchoo dynasty. This anniversary takes place on the 24th day of the second moon, coinciding with our month of February. The monarch prepares himself for it by fasting three days; he then repairs to the appointed spot with three princes, nine presidents of the high tribunals, forty old and forty young husbandmen. Having performed a preliminary sacrifice of the fruits of the earth to Shang-ti, the supreme deity, he takes in his hand the plough, and makes a furrow of some length, in which he is followed by the princes and other grandees. A similar course is observed in sowing the field, and the operations are completed by the husbandmen.

An annual festival in honour of Agriculture is also celebrated in the capital of each province. The governor marches forth, crowned with flowers, and accompanied by a numerous train, bearing flags adorned with agricultural emblems and portraits of eminent husbandmen, while the streets are decorated with lanterns and triumphal arches.

Although rice is the staple grain in use in China, wheat-growing is one of the principal industries in the northern and middle parts of that country. The winter wheat is planted at about the same time that wheat is planted here. The soil, especially in the northern provinces, is so well worn that it is unfitted for wheat-growing, and the Chinese farmers, appreciating this fact, and the fact that all kinds of fertilisers are excessively dear, make the least money do the most good by mixing the seed with finely-prepared manure.

A man with a basket swung upon his shoulders follows the plough, and plants the mixture in large handfuls in the furrows, so that when the crop grows up it looks like young celery. Immediately after the first melting of snow, and when the ground has become sufficiently hardened by frost, these wheat-fields are turned into pastures, under the theory that, by a timely clipping of the tops of these plants, the crops will grow up with additional strength in the spring.

Wheat-threshing is the principal interest in Chinese farming. Owing to the scarcity of fuel, the wheat is usually pulled up by the root, bundled in sheaves, and carted to the *mien-chong*,

a smooth and hardened space of ground near the home of the farmer. The top of the sheaves is then clipped off by a hand machine. The wheat is then left in the *mien-chong* to dry, whilst the headless sheaves are piled in a heap for fuel or thatching. When the wheat is thoroughly dry it is beaten under a great stone roller pulled by horses, while the places thus rolled are constantly tossed over with pitchforks. The stalks left untouched by the roller are threshed with flails by women and boys. The beaten stalks and straws are then taken out by an ingenious arrangement of pitchforks, and the chaff is removed by a systematic tossing of the grain into the air until the wind blows every particle of chaff or dust out of the wheat. Even the chaff is carefully swept up and stowed away for fuel or other useful purposes, such as stuffing mattresses or pillows. After the wheat is allowed to dry for a few hours in the burning sun, it is stowed away in airy bamboo bins.

The milling process is a very ancient one. Two large round bluestone wheels, with grooves neatly cut in the faces on one side, and in the centre of the lower wheel a solid wooden plug is used. The process of making flour out of wheat by this machinery is called *mob-mien*. Usually a horse or mule is employed; the poor, having no animals, grind the grain themselves.

Three distinct qualities of flour are thus produced. The *shon-mien*, or A grade, is the first siftings; the *nee-mien*, or second grade, is the grindings of the rough leavings from the first siftings, which is of a darker and redder colour than the first grade; and *mod* is the finely-ground last siftings of all

grades. When bread is made from this grade it resembles rough gingerbread. This is usually the food of the poorest families. The bread of the Chinese is usually fermented, and then steamed. Only a very small quantity is baked in ovens. But the staple articles of food in Northern China are wheat, millet, and sweet potatoes. Wheat and rice are the food of the rich, while the middle classes of the Empire eat millet and rice. In the southern provinces the entire bread-stuff is rice.

At King-Kiang wheat is served as rice. It is first threshed with flails made of bamboo, and then pounded by a rough stone hammer, working in a mortar which rests on a pivot, and is operated like a treadle by the human foot. This separates the husks, and it is then winnowed, the grain being afterwards ground in the usual way.

Rice is undoubtedly the staple food of those parts of China where it will grow, in spite of its being a precarious crop, the failure of which means famine. A drought in its early stages withers it, and an inundation, when nearly ripe, is equally destructive; whilst the birds and locusts, which are fearfully numerous in China, infest it more than any other grain. Rice requires not only intense heat, but moisture so abundant that the field in which it grows must be repeatedly laid under water. These requisites exist only in the districts south of the Yangtse Kiang (the Yellow River) and its several tributaries. Here a vast extent of land is perfectly fitted for this valuable crop. Confined by powerful dykes, these rivers do not generally, like

the Nile, overflow and cover the country; but by means of canals their waters are so widely distributed that almost every farmer, when he pleases, can inundate his field. This supplies not only moisture, but a fertilising mud or slime, washed down from the distant mountains. The cultivator thus dispenses with manure, of which he labours under a great scarcity, and considers it enough if the grain be steeped in liquid manure.

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