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PLANTS USEFUL IN AGRICULTURE.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE CULTURE OF GRASSES, AND ON SAVING SEEDS, &c.

It is now fifty years since the celebrated Stillingfleet observed, "that it was surprising to see how long mankind had neglected to make a proper advantage of plants, of so much importance to agriculture as the Grasses, which are in all countries the principal food of cattle." The farmer, for want of distinguishing and selecting the best kinds, fills his pastures either with weeds or improper plants, when by making a right choice he would not only procure a more abundant crop from his land, but have a produce more nourishing to his flock. One would therefore naturally wonder, after this truth has been so long published, and that in an age when agriculture and the arts have so much improved, that *Select Seeds* of this tribe of plants are scarcely to be procured.

From the experience I have had on this subject, I find their culture is attended with certain difficulties, which arise not so much from the nature of the plants, as from the labour requisite to this purpose, great attention being necessary for saving Grass-seeds at the seasons when the farmer must exert all the strength of his husbandmen to get his other business accomplished.

The only mode by which this can be effected is by selecting a proper soil for the kinds intended to be saved. The seeds should be drilled into the ground at about one foot distance; and care taken that the plants are duly weeded of all other kinds that may intrude themselves, before they get too firm possession of the soil. The hoe should be frequently passed between the drills, in order both to keep the land clean and to give vigour to the young plants. The sowing may be done either in the spring or in the month of September, which will enable the crop to go to seed the following spring. In order to preserve a succession of crops, it is necessary every season to keep the ground clean all the summer months, to dig or otherwise turn up the land between the drills early in

the spring, and to be particular in the other operations until the seeds ripen. Now this business being so inconvenient to the farmer, it is not to be wondered at, that, wherever attempts of this kind have been made, they should fail from want of the necessary care as above stated, without which it is needless to speculate in such an undertaking. There is nevertheless still an opportunity, for any one who would give up his land and time to the pursuit, to reap a rich and important harvest; as nothing would pay him better, or redound more to his credit, than to get our markets regularly supplied with select seeds of the best indigenous Grasses, so that a proper portion of them may be used for forming pasture and meadow-land.

The above hints are not thrown out by a person who wishes to speculate in a theory which is new, but by one who has cultivated those plants himself both for seed and fodder, and who would readily wish to promote their culture by stating a mode which has proved to him a profitable pursuit, and for which he has, already, been honoured with a reward from the Society of Arts.

The following observations are intended to embrace such kinds only as are likely to be cultivated, with those that are distinguished for some particular good properties; as it would be impossible within the limits of this small memorandum to enumerate all the plants that are eaten by cattle. The same mode shall be pursued under all the different heads in this department.