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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.















# ADDRESS

TO THE

AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY OF MARYLAND.

DELIVERED

*At their Anniversary Meeting held in the Chamber of the  
House of Delegates, at Annapolis,*

On Wednesday the 15th December, 1819.

BY THE

HON. VIRGIL MAXCY,

One of its Members.

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RESOLVED, That the thanks of this Society be presented to Mr. Maxcy, for the able and eloquent Address delivered before them.

RESOLVED, That the Secretary apply to Mr. Maxcy, for permission to publish his Address, and if it be obtained, to cause two hundred copies to be published for distribution under the direction of the President.

*THOMAS H. CARROLL*, Secretary.

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## ADDRESS, &c.

*Gentlemen of the Agricultural Society of Maryland,*

HAVING been requested to deliver an address at this anniversary meeting, I have thought it best, after a few preliminary remarks upon the relative importance of agriculture, in comparison with other pursuits, to invite your attention to a brief view of its condition in Maryland, and to an examination of the means, by which individuals as well as the legislature, may most effectually contribute to its improvement, which has now become equally essential to the welfare of the agricultural class and the general prosperity of the state.

Political writers have, from the beginning, differed with respect to the sources of the wealth of nations, some attributing it to agriculture, some to commerce, some to manufactures, and others to labour and capital employed in all three. The last appears to me to be the true theory: for agriculture originates, manufacture improves, and commerce gives value, by creating demand, while labour and capital stimulate all. But however variant opinions may have been, or still are, with respect to these several hypotheses, all must agree that whatever may be the value, imparted by the labour and ingenuity of man to the productions of nature, the earth is the original parent of them all. Agriculture is the art, by which these productions are multiplied, so as to meet the wants of civilized men. Most of these wants are common to all—to the agriculturist, the manufacturer and the seaman, as well as to the artist, the man of letters and the statesman. As all equally de-

rived their origin from the earth, all are equally dependant upon it for their subsistence and accommodation. However then commerce and manufacture may polish the shaft, or learning and the fine arts may decorate the capital, it is agriculture, which forms the deep and solid base, on which the column of civilized society reposes.

Agriculture is an unobtrusive art. It performs its silent labours in retirement and out of the view of the multitude: on the other hand, the arts throng the cities and bustle in the crowd; while commerce, appropriating the products of both, hoists its gaudy flag, spreads its swelling sail, traverses the globe, and challenges the gaze of men in opposite hemispheres.

Nations, as well as individuals, are governed by external appearances and first impressions, until philosophy, by teaching them to think, enables them to trace effects to their true causes and to assign to them their relative importance. Hence commerce, from the display it makes before the eyes of men, was generally considered the first and greatest agent in the production of national wealth, and manufactures were ranked next; whilst modest agriculture, hidden in the privacy of the country, was forgotten; or if remembered, was remembered only to be undervalued or despised. Agriculture therefore in Europe, even half a century ago, formed the occupation almost exclusively of the lowest order of the people, without knowledge to enlighten, or capital to enable them to improve. Of later years, however, since political economy has assumed the form of a science and has caused statesmen to be more sensible of the importance of an improved state of agriculture, it has attracted more attention from

the better informed and wealthier classes of society, it has excited the inquiry of the learned, and is at length beginning to obtain that degree of consideration, which its importance so justly demands.

In England nothing has had a more powerful effect in attracting to it the public notice, than the establishment of agricultural societies. Many patriotic men of rank, fortune, learning and talents, gave them their closest attention, and, by their personal example, drew to them the regard and respect of that class of people, who had the means of undertaking improvements upon an enlarged and liberal scale. A general emulation was excited amongst the country gentlemen; public opinion became enlightened; the government felt its influence, and at length listening to the able representations of that patriot farmer, Sir John Sinclair, established the British Board of Agriculture and Internal Improvement. This board, while it serves as a centre of information to inquiring agriculturists, performs the same office to the government, and points out to it such measures, as are best calculated to promote their prosperity. Under the combined influence of this board, and of the numerous societies in all parts of the country, agriculture has been inspired with new spirit and activity. Men of speculative minds have begun to investigate, statesmen to examine, and political philosophers to analyze, with a deeper scrutiny, the sources of England's power; and, to the utter astonishment of all, it has been ascertained, that wide spread as is her commerce, and extensive as are her manufactures, it is to her agriculture, more than to both, she was indebted for the support of her system of public

credit—a system, whose amazing energy enabled her *singly* to breast the furious and towering flood of united Europe's rage, and finally to roll back its agitated waves over the head of the potent Frosero, whose magic had raised them!

This fact, extraordinary and surprising as it may appear, has been proved beyond a doubt by the result of the tax, which was levied indiscriminately upon all classes of the people, having an income of more than 50*l.* sterling per annum.

The proceeds of that tax from the proprietors and occupiers of land were, 16,433,475.

The proceeds of it from all other classes—merchants, manufacturers, office holders, professional men, &c. were only 13,021,187,  
less than one half of the amount, received from the agricultural class.

The number of proprietors and occupiers of land, who came within the operation of the income tax, was three times as large as that of all other classes together.\*

As in political calculations it is proper to consider all men, as spending the amount of their income, it is also fair to consider them, as paying indirect taxes in proportion to their expenditure. And, as a vast deal of commercial property escapes direct taxation, we may, without fear of error, take it for granted, that the agricultural class, in relation to their property, pay far more than their just proportion of the direct taxes. We may then safely conclude, that at least three-

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\* Vide Sir John Sinclair's Code of Agriculture, page 343, 345.

fourths of the vast revenue of Great-Britain is derived, directly or indirectly, from the owners and cultivators of the soil. And in her darkest hour, when invasion threatened all her coasts, when thick gathering perils appalled the merchant and the fund-holder in the midst of London, where, but among the yeomanry of the country, were found the fearless hearts and toil-strung arms, that presented an impenetrable barrier to her foes?

If such then be the relative importance of agriculture, and the portion of her population engaged in it, in Great-Britain, whose commerce and manufactures are so extensive, but whose whole territory is almost equalled by several of our single states, of how much greater consequence is agriculture and the agricultural class in the United States, whose territory stretches from the St. Lawrence to the Gulf of Mexico, and from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean? If agriculture be the nerve of England's power, and the source of her wealth, and if commerce and manufactures, even there, are merely useful hand-maids to distribute, improve, convert into other forms, or consume its products, of how much greater importance must it be, in all points of view, to our country? And who shall calculate the limits of its wealth and prosperity, its grandeur and power, should the people adopt, throughout its almost unlimited territory, an improved and enlightened system of cultivation?

Massachusetts and New-York, since the termination of the late war, have set a good example for the imitation of their sister states, by enacting laws for the direct encouragement of improvement in agriculture. By the provisions of

their acts, a sum of money, proportioned to the amount, that may be raised by an agricultural society in each county, is ordered to be paid out of the treasury, to be distributed in premiums under its direction. In several other states, societies owe their origin and progress to the public spirit of individuals. A circumstance worthy of notice, (which, while it is gratifying to the friends of the plough, is at the same time illustrative of the simple habits and manners of our country,) is, that citizens of the highest distinction have not only given the countenance of their name and character to these useful associations, but have accepted appointments in them requiring active duty, and taken a leading part in their management.\*

No state in the union would derive greater benefit from the establishment of such societies and from a diffusion of correct information on agricultural subjects and rural economy, than Maryland.

In the Conococheague and Monocacy vallies, and in some other parts of the northern counties of the state, a good system of husbandry is established, and excellent practices prevail; but in the southern parts of the state, on either side of the Chesapeake, agriculture languishes in the most wretched condition. On the Eastern Shore a

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\* In evidence of this fact, may be cited, amongst many other honourable examples, the addresses of Mr. Madison, late president of the United States, now President of the Agricultural Society of Albemarle County, in Virginia—of Col. Pickering, once Secretary of War, afterwards Secretary of State, and now President of an Agricultural Society in Massachusetts—of General Davie, formerly minister to France, now President of the Agricultural Society of South-Carolina—and of Major General Brown, who is now at the head of our army, and whose late speech before an Agricultural Society in the State of New York, of which he is Vice President, is distinguished by a vigour and energy of thought and expression, at once characteristic of his mind and profession.



severe course of cropping, without a judicious rotation, has reduced a soil, originally fertile, to a state of sterility. If here and there you come to a farm or neighbourhood, where better habits prevail, and an improving system of cultivation has in part restored the original productiveness of the land, your eye is regaled with the same sort, though not the same degree, of pleasure, with which a wanderer hails the spots of green on the deserts of the East.

Nor do the lower counties of the Western Shore exhibit a more exhilarating prospect. This is generally a waving country, blest with a soil originally fertile, covered with the noblest forests, and intersected with navigable streams and creeks, falling either into the great Chesapeake or Potomac, and affording the easiest and cheapest means of transporting all its produce to market. Look over the map of the United States—nay, of the world—and you will hardly find a spot, where the choicest advantages for successful agriculture have been so bountifully showered by a beneficent Providence, as upon this tract of country. And yet what a melancholy prospect does it now exhibit! The original settlers first cleared a corn-field in the forest; next, a tobacco lot; and cultivated both with successive crops of the same articles, until their powers of reproduction being completely exhausted, resort was again had to the forest, and a new corn-field and a new tobacco lot were cleared. The same process was repeated, until almost the whole of this highly favoured region was despoiled of its valuable wood and timber. Shallow cultivation came in aid of this system of destruction by fire and axe. The plough, the greatest blessing, when properly used, ever bestowed by

the inventive powers of man upon the human race, became a most powerful auxiliary in effecting this scene of desolation. When the plough sinks deep, the loosened earth absorbs the heaviest rains and preserves the moisture for the nourishment of the crop, if drought succeeds; but when it stirs the surface only, the light top soil becomes fluid at a copious or sudden fall of rain, and both soil and water are precipitated from the hills to the creeks and branches below. Whenever fertility was by these means completely destroyed, the field was thrown out of cultivation; stunted pines uniformly succeeded to the occupation of land, originally covered by the finest oak, hickory, beach and poplar; and wherever a few of the latter have escaped destruction, they serve, beside their dwarfish neighbours, as monuments of the magnificent bounty of God, in melancholy contrast with the thoughtless improvidence of man!

This gloomy picture is but too faithful a representation of this interesting portion of our state. 'Tis true, there are scattered, in different parts of it, enterprising, intelligent and spirited individuals, whose husbandry would do credit to Frederick and Washington counties. But though the improvements which they have made, have doubled the produce and value of their lands, and their efforts have been crowned with the most distinguished success, their example has had but little effect in reforming the habits of the country in general. These habits, must finally reduce those, who indulge in them, to poverty, and banish them from their homes.

And must this beautiful region be deserted? Are its inhabitants doomed to join in the current

of western emigration and leave abodes, endeared to them by a thousand tender recollections? And must the hospitable fires of the Eastern Shore be extinguished? Shall that social, warm-hearted and generous people, be compelled to seek new and more fertile lands in the south or the west, while in deep-felt sadness, they cast many a "longing, lingering look behind" upon the receding homes of their childhood?

I trust not. I confidently hope, that the spirit of improvement, which has totally changed the face of the country and the condition of the people in other parts of the state, will extend to them. An enlightened system of agriculture is all that is wanting. The means of improvement are at hand on both shores. Let the marl beds, which abound on the Chesapeake, be explored and spread upon the fields—let the plough be driven deeper into their surface—let gypsum stimulate the sleeping energies of a soil newly turned up to the fertilizing dews and atmosphere of heaven—let clover and other improving crops restore to the exhausted earth, the vegetable matter indispensable to fertility—let the rich soil, washed from the hills into the low grounds and branches, be hauled to the farm-yard and mixed with the offal of the cattle—let the sea-ware, which every tide drives upon the shores of the Chesapeake Bay, and lime, so easily procured from its inexhaustible banks of marine shells, be spread upon the fallows and mixed with the soil. But above all, let Agricultural Societies be formed in every county in the state. These, when conducted with zeal, are most powerful agents for the introduction of the good practices, I have enumerated, and for the dissemination of information, derived from

experience; for the overthrow of errors and the establishment of useful truths; for the excitement and maintenance of a generous emulation among agriculturists; for inspiring a strong desire for the distinction and reward, which excellence in their art will confer; in a word, for adding to the all-pervading impulse of interest, the ennobling stimulus of ambition. The planter and the farmer, in common with all other human beings, acknowledge the dominion of this powerful principle: but the circumstances of their lives bring it but seldom into operation. The lawyer, the physician, the manufacturer and the mechanic exercise their professions in the presence of witnesses; their respective skill becomes the subject of comparison in the city or neighbourhood, where they reside; and they immediately feel the result of that comparison in the increase or diminution of their profits as well as reputation. On the contrary, the agriculturist has rarely a witness of his labours to excite his pride, or amend his practice by the communication of useful knowledge. This is the great and predominant cause of the slow progress of improvement in husbandry and rural economy. Agricultural associations are the most obvious, as well as most effectual, means of removing this cause. They bring to light the merit of good cultivators, and while they reward the deserving, they instruct and stimulate the ignorant. By means of cattle shows, ploughing matches, and exhibitions of produce, stock and implements of husbandry, they bring together those, who are interested in agriculture, for purposes connected with their pursuits. Information of various practices is communicated from one to another; conflicting opinions excite

discussion, inquiry and experiment; the knowledge of each becomes common to all, and a general desire of improvement is encouraged and diffused. The prudence, which deters the cultivator from adopting new practices, which may result in embarrassment, no longer prevents their reception, when the success of others has established their safety and utility. This success is made known at such meetings, and invites imitation. New and more profitable modes of culture are thus introduced, and a general melioration of the condition of agriculturists takes place.

If these reasons be not sufficient to satisfy every one of the utility of agricultural societies, let me call your attention to the example of such nations, as have encouraged and multiplied them. The best and most intelligent writers upon agriculture in France, Germany, England and Scotland, attribute the rapid improvement of those countries to the efforts and influence of such associations. There is now scarce a district of any extent or importance in Great-Britain, which has not its agricultural society. Such associations first diffused a spirit, that led to the establishment of the British Board of Agriculture and Internal Improvement: and that, in return, has caused the formation of more agricultural societies, than ever before existed in any nation in any age. This board collects, in a focus, all the rays of knowledge, emanating from these numerous bodies; while each of them, in return, receives from it the concentrated intelligence of all the others, and brings it within the reach of every individual in the kingdom, desirous of acquiring it. Agriculture, in that *commercial* and *manufacturing* country, is now gaining its share of the public attenti-

on and regard, which have hitherto been bestowed exclusively on commerce and manufactures, and is attaining the rank and dignity, to which it is intrinsically entitled. Shall it be held in less estimation and its improvement be deemed of less importance in this great *agricultural* country? Enterprize seems to be the presiding genius of our people. His giant foot-prints are visible in every part of our broad territory. Having with a magical rapidity settled the country and built up the cities of the Atlantic, he has transcended the Alleghany; he has levelled the forests of the vast extent on this side of the Mississippi; he has planted there villages and populous towns; he has crossed that monarch river of the west and now explores the interminable regions of the Missouri. Shall he become the destroying demon, or the beneficent deity, of the country, he has uncovered to the sun? Shall he scourge the fertile soil, till sterility and its attendant poverty succeed, or shall he, by a judicious system of cultivation preserve for ever its original productiveness?

This is a question of the greatest magnitude to those parts of this vast empire, which are still unexhausted. But a question of still nearer interest to Maryland forces itself on the mind. How shall fertility be restored to its worn-out soil, and depopulation be prevented? Some of the means, depending upon individual exertions, and the efforts of agricultural societies, I have already attempted to point out: but much, in aid of them, may be done by the government of the state.

It is essential to the prosperity of the cultivators of the soil, that they should have access to markets, where such prices may be obtained, as

will repay past labour and encourage reproduction. In reference to this object, the utility of good roads, bridges, railways and canals, and the removal of obstructions in rivers and creeks, is too obvious to require a single remark to illustrate it.

Great undertakings of this sort, where several states are concerned, and where rival interests may excite jealousies and present obstacles, seem properly to belong to the general government. Had the plan of that profound and eloquent statesman, who presides over the war department, for the establishment of a fund for internal improvements, succeeded, many of those, now present, might have lived to see *national* highways and *national* canals intersecting our great country in all important directions, facilitating communication between all its parts, and forming those bonds of connexion, that have now, since the application of steam to the purposes of navigation, become more necessary than ever to the preservation of the union. However desirable to this country independence of foreign nations for necessities, conveniencies, or even luxuries may be, all must acknowledge, that a mutual dependance between our different states for the promotion of their prosperity is the strongest tie, that can bind them together. The course of commerce, which has heretofore made the Atlantic cities the market of the productions of the west, and the source, from which it derived supplies of foreign goods, constituted the most powerful ligament between them. Should steam navigation on the Mississippi ever be able to supply the vast regions, from which it gathers its waters, with the products of foreign commerce at a cheaper rate, than they can be afforded by the Atlantic cities across the moun-

tains; and should New-Orleans, or some other city on that river, become the great mart of their agricultural produce, this ligament is burst asunder: and a patriot might well tremble at the agitation of any question, involving a real or even an apparent conflict of interests between the people, residing on the different sides of the Alleghany. In such an event, that great ridge, instead of being, what it has been emphatically styled, the "*buck bone of the United States*, which no human strength can break, no sword can sever," might become the barrier between two hostile empires. To prevent so calamitous a result, no means are so well adapted as the establishment of roads and canals. And who, in this inventive age, shall despair of seeing the day, when steam, applied to carriages upon rail-ways, shall perform prodigies on land, that will rival those, which it has already exhibited on the water? Had the general government adopted the proposed plan of internal improvements, the offspring of a wise forecast, that looked to distant political as well as commercial results, no state in the union would have derived so much benefit from it as Maryland. The waters of the Potomac approach nearer to streams, that intersect the western country, than any other river of the United States. To remove the obstacles to its navigation would probably have been the first object, that would have attracted the attention of the general government. One of the next would probably have been the completion of the best communication by land between the west and our great commercial capital. These objects effected, Washington and Baltimore would have become the great marts of western trade.



We might, moreover, have expected to see the waters of the Eastern Branch connected by a canal with the waters of the Patapsco and the Chesapeake joined to the Delaware. The greater part of the state might then have had a choice of the three markets, Baltimore, Washington and Philadelphia. How great a stimulus this would have been to our agriculture, is more easily imagined than told.

The general government, however, have declined entering into this career of internal improvement, and have thereby devolved that important duty upon the several states in their separate capacities.

New-York, Virginia, South-Carolina, Tennessee, and several other states, have engaged in it with a spirit highly honourable to themselves, and worthy the imitation of all the others.

Shall Maryland be indifferent to these noble examples? Shall she witness, unmoved, the gigantic efforts of New-York, now cutting through her territory a canal of nearly three hundred miles, which by opening a vast extent of fertile country to a market, will invigorate her agriculture and, by the junction of the Hudson with the Lakes, draw off to her chief commercial city a part, at least, of that western trade, which proper exertions might retain to ours? Shall she be insensible to the example set her, still nearer home, by her neighbour Virginia, whose Board of Public Works are not only planning canals and removing obstacles to navigation from her rivers and creeks, for the benefit of the country adjacent to them; but are extending their views farther and inquiring into the practicability of a water communication with the west? Shall she too

rob us of a portion of the western trade? And can we look with indifference upon the strenuous exertions of our jealous rival, Pennsylvania, to accomplish the same object? In a competition for the western trade nature has given us the advantage, in the geographical position of our territory, and if we lose it, it will be entirely owing to our own listless negligence.\* Will it be said, that we have contributed large sums of money for making the Potomac navigable; that we have incorporated several canal and road companies; that we have devoted the bonus, which might have been demanded for a renewal of the bank charters, to the completion of a turnpike to join the great national western road; and pledged the proceeds of two annual state lotteries as a fund for making internal improvements, for the promotion of literature and science, and the establishment of benevolent institutions? All these measures certainly merit approbation; but more ought to be done. An ample fund, immediately productive, ought to be created and pledged for these all-important purposes, so intimately connected with the character, dignity and prosperity of the state.

May we not be allowed to hope, that the wisdom of the General Assembly, many of whose members have honoured our meeting this evening by their presence, will be directed to the accomplishment of these interesting objects? By adopting such measures as will effectually attain them, they will give themselves an incontestible title to the lasting gratitude of an enlightened people: for such measures, aided by the influence, exam-

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\* Vide an able pamphlet, published last year by a late member of the executive council, entitled, "Remarks on the Intercourse with the Western Country."

ple and intelligence of such societies throughout the state, as you, Gentlemen, have formed in this, its ancient Capital, will revive its drooping agriculture; will lay the foundation of a permanent prosperity, by restoring fertility to the districts now worn out by a destructive system of cultivation; will check those ever flowing currents of emigration to the south and west, which are constantly thinning the population of many parts of the state; will thereby increase our numbers and of course our relative political weight in the great national family: and what is of at least equal consequence, will elevate the character of our state, will add dignity to its name, and challenge the respect and applause of the union. Should such a course of measures be heartily adopted and vigorously pursued, a new era will open upon Maryland; she will take a high stand among her sister states; her citizens will feel a conscious pride in her character; and the lofty, patriotic state feeling, which will ensue, will carry her, through a long course of liberty and honour, to the farthest goal of wealth, prosperity and happiness.



















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