

BIA

SIXTH ANNUAL MEETING

OF THE

United States Agricultural Society,

HELD AT WASHINGTON, D. C., JAN. 13, 1858.

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PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.



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GENTLEMEN: — Another year of our existence has completed its course.

We now meet on the Sixth Anniversary of the United States Agricultural Society to report its progress, and to concert plans and measures for the future. While I congratulate you upon the success of our association, I unite with you in deploring the existence of a commercial embarrassment unparalleled in the history of our country. Here we have a visible demonstration of the importance of the great cause of agriculture in the fact, that in the midst of this depression, when so many of the other industrial arts seek lucrative employment and find none, when the fortunes and the hopes of many of our fellow citizens are wrecked, and when the hearts of many more are failing them for the fear of trouble that may overtake them, where do we look for ultimate relief, for a power that can unfurl the sails of our late prosperous commerce, that can put in motion again our manufactories, our machinery, and freight the long trains of cars which lately traversed our innumerable railroads, creating profitable employment for millions, giving life and enterprise to all classes of society? *Where?* There can be but one reply to this question. For these results we must look to the pro-

ducts of the soil. True, there may be a diversity of opinion as to the cause of this great calamity. It may be ascribed to speculating and overtrading, to banks and to our system of banking, to our tariff and revenue laws, which for a long period have agitated the public mind and taxed the wisdom of our ablest statesmen.

But I have said, and now repeat what I believe to be the sentiment of the great American heart, that we must look to our abundant harvests, to our granaries and barns filled with plenty, for the speedy restoration of individual and national prosperity. We talk of the immense liability of individuals and corporations to foreign capitalists, and tremble at the thought of it. Those capitalists enquire with solicitude how can this debt be cancelled? Farmers reply, take our crops in exchange for your fabrics, and we can give you corn and wheat enough to cancel the debt, and leave a comfortable supply for home consumption.

How important then that Government should encourage and protect the American farmer by wise legislation, and by every means in its power. We rejoice, therefore, in the recent presentation of this subject to Congress by the Hon. Mr. Morrill of Vermont — in the increased patronage bestowed by the Government on the Agricultural Department of the Patent Office, especially in the laudable exertions of that department to collate and diffuse valuable information by its greatly improved Annual Reports, and to distribute the most desirable seeds in all parts of the country. We rejoice in these indications of progress, and in every approximation towards a result which we believe to be only a question of time — the establishment of a special Agricultural Department at the seat of Government with a Cabinet office at its head. Most heartily do we rejoice in all these evidences of improvement. The cause of Agriculture has been, and should ever be, dear to the christian, the patriot, and the philanthropist. The seed planted by

the eminent men who have gone before us is now taking root, and it is our happy privilege to realise some of their fondest hopes. At no former period in the history of our country has the progress of agriculture been so rapid. Great advances have been made in most of the arts of cultivation, but to no one cause are we so much indebted as for the relief which genius has brought to labor by the improved implements of husbandry.

TRIAL OF IMPLEMENTS.

In accordance with the recommendation of the Committee on Agricultural Implements, at the exhibition in Philadelphia in 1856, and presented at the last annual meeting, it was resolved that future awards in this department should be based upon a "*practical working trial in the field.*" As the season for the annual exhibition would be too late for the trial of Reapers and Mowers, the Executive Committee sanctioned a proposition from the Implement Committee to hold an exhibition of these open to competition from all parts of the country, at some convenient place, in the month of July last. Various applications were received, with different degrees of encouragement. Among these it became difficult for the Committee, without personal observation, to fix upon a location. They confided this trust to their special agent and secretary, H. S. Olcott, Esq., who examined the various points proposed, and submitted to the Executive Committee a report in favor of Syracuse, N.Y. His report was approved, the necessary preparations made, and the trial commenced on the morning of the 14th of July, and continued to the 20th. The weather was propitious, the number of entries large, the interest deep and general, and the importance of the result to the cause of agriculture inestimable.

The award of the judges upon the Reapers and Combined Machines was announced at the exhibition at Louisville. That on Mowers, we regret to say, was deferred to a recent date; the judges finding greater difficulty in coming to a decision. They have, at length, made up their awards, which will be found in the Transactions of the Society, and also in their report. The receipts from donations, entries, and other sources were sufficient to meet all expenses on the ground, and to defray the cost of the medals and diplomas awarded, which amount, with proper vouchers, has been paid into the treasury of the society.

Much of the success of this exhibition is to be ascribed to the zeal of the respective competitors; to the enterprise and liberality of the good people of Syracuse and its vicinity, and to the superior ability and fidelity of the Board of Judges. An official report of this trial will be found in the Transactions of the Society for the past year. A separate edition of the report has been printed for general distribution.

More than forty machines entered the field, and an honorable competition was sustained throughout the trial. It was a sublime spectacle to see a score of these machines at work performing the daily labor of hundreds of men in a single hour. Nor was this a mere experiment, without any parallel in the actual labors of the field. A western gentleman informs me that at one time he witnessed one hundred and sixty-four reaping machines, followed by one thousand men, women and children, binding up and stacking the golden sheaves. It was a soul-stirring sight, said he, to see the grain falling and gathered up at the rate of two hundred acres per hour.

The wonderful improvements recently made in this department are but the harbingers of others still more wonderful. The day is at hand when the time-honored plow, perfected by the genius of centuries,—when the mighty mower

and reaper, those astonishing productions of modern invention, which have made the name of America glorious in all the earth—when these propelled by steam, shall roll majestically across our vast prairies and fertile vallies, to cultivate our soil and gather up our abundant crops.

These trials stimulate and guide inventive genius, give a wise direction to the skill and capital of the manufacturer, and illustrate the economy and great importance of labor-saving implements.

FIFTH ANNUAL EXHIBITION.

It will be remembered that at the last annual meeting in this place, a proposition by Mr. Secretary Guthrie and Hon. Humphrey Marshall, in behalf of themselves and the South Western Agricultural and Mechanical Society, was made to hold the annual exhibition, for the year 1857, in the City of Louisville, Ky. That proposition was accepted and referred to the executive committee, whose delegation visited that city and ratified the appointment of the necessary local officers for the execution of this plan. The exhibition commenced under the most favorable auspices on the 31st day of August, and continued six days. The weather was delightful, and the arrangements on the most liberal and magnificent scale.

The attendance was unusually large, considering the population of that city and its vicinity. It was characterised by the great number of delegations from Agricultural associations, by distinguished farmers and mechanics, by gentlemen of high official reputation, and by the liberality and enthusiasm of the good people of Louisville. The interest and attendance were well sustained from first to last. An amphitheatre so extensive, crowded for so long a period with congregated talent and genius, and adorned with female grace and beauty, it was never before my happiness to witness.

If the number of entries has been larger at some previous exhibitions, yet any deficiency of quantity was more than made up by the superior quality of the animals and articles on exhibition. Another interesting feature of the Exhibition was the continuation of the trial of implements in the field, and of machinery worked by steam power.

From the receipts of this Exhibition the Local Committees confided to your President, who has paid over to the Treasurer of the Society, a sum deemed sufficient to meet the expense of all the Medals awarded. The balance of the receipts was left in the hands of the Local Committees, who assumed the responsibility of paying all other premiums and expenses in accordance with the guarantee contained in the original proposition. The report of the Assistant Treasurer and of the Committees on settlement of accounts, have just been received; but considering the large expenditure for local structures, it is doubtful whether any balance, resulting from the sale of these, will eventually be carried to the credit of the Society.

FUTURE EXHIBITIONS.

In the infancy of this Society, it was deemed necessary to its establishment and success that it should hold an Annual Exhibition. In this department of labor it has, the last year performed double service, imposing upon its officers a demand for an unusual amount of labor, responsibility and expense. Highly as I appreciate these gatherings, and important as I verily believe them to the cause of Agriculture, yet they have now been held in the Eastern, the Northern, the Central, the Western and South-western sections of the country. These have increased the popularity and efficiency of local associations; they have extended the area of friendship, and promoted a more general intercourse among cultivators in all parts of the republic, and have encouraged the National Government

by our interviews and meetings, in this city, to laudable endeavors to enlarge its sphere of usefulness. They have given us a name and favorable position, both in this country and in Europe; and would our government grant to us the same fostering hand that the States extend to agricultural associations within their respective bounds, it would be deemed both judicious and practicable to continue to hold at least one exhibition every year. But, for the want of that aid and in the present financial crisis I respectfully submit whether this, for the present year, be expedient, and would recommend that all applications for the next exhibition be transmitted to the Secretary, and the question of time and place be submitted to the Executive Committee, with full power to act in the premises. In case no exhibition should be held the present year, the Secretary would, in the mean time, have an opportunity to bestow more attention to the business of his office, to conduct the correspondence with increased efficacy, and from these, to gather materials for our annual volume, which may be issued either monthly, quarterly, or at the end of the year, as expediency and the welfare of the association may require. In this way a new interest might also be given to this volume, by elaborate articles from the pens of distinguished scientific and practical agriculturists on subjects previously assigned, and which would be of great and general utility.

MEDALS.

In concurrence with the Committee on Agricultural Implements, the Executive Committee confided to the President the securing a proper design of a Die for Medals to be awarded in certain cases to successful competitors, instead of money. The design was drawn by Hammat Billings, of Boston, and the Die is in process of execution

by Francis N. Mitchell, of that city. I herewith transmit an accurate representation and description of the same.



DESCRIPTION — FACE.

On the face is Ceres. (Goddess of the Earth, Patroness of Agriculture,) seated upon a throne. In her right hand, which is elevated and extended forward in an attitude of invitation, she holds a wreath of honor; in her left the sickle — emblem of agricultural industry. Her brow is crowned with the star of Empire, and in her lap are gathered various fruits. Around the rim of the medal is the classic wreath of laurel, and within this are the words, in Roman letters: "UNITED STATES AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY.—1852.

DESCRIPTION — REVERSE.

The reverse side is ornamented simply with a wreath of plants, the productions of the grand divisions of the United States, emblematical of the National character of our Society. On this side are the Sugar Cane, Tobacco, Cotton Plant, Indian Corn and Wheat, united with clusters of the grape, and surmounted, in an escutcheon, with the time-honored plow. Thus the great staples of the South, North, West and East, are wreathed together, encircling a space appropriated for inscribing the name of the successful competitor.

I had confidently hoped that the Die would have been completed and the Medals ready for distribution at this meeting in accordance with a previous notice. I regret, however, to state that some delay has been providentially occasioned by the indisposition of the artists, but the

work is now in rapid progress, and will soon be executed. Immediately on its completion, advice will be given to the successful competitors, and their Medals and Diplomas will be transmitted to them by the members of Congress from their respective districts, or in such other way as they may elect.

DECEASED OFFICERS.

Among the occasions for gratitude and joy, I recognise the fact that we meet here to-day many who took an active part in the formation of this Society, and have constantly contributed to its progress by their presence, co-operation and wisdom. But all are not here! We are particularly impressed by the absence on this occasion of Thomas J. Rusk and George Washington Parke Custis, Vice-Presidents of this Society, and active from its formation, both of whom have been removed by death the past year.

Gen. RUSK emigrated from Maine to Texas previous to the Revolution which dissolved the allegiance of the latter State to Mexico, and in which he performed active and honorable service. After the admission of that republic into the Union he represented Texas two terms in the Senate of the United States, and was at the time of his death elected for a third. He evinced, in a remarkable degree, kindness with decision, urbanity with fortitude, chaste expression with wise counsel, and thereby secured great popularity with his constituents, and the high esteem of his associates and countrymen. He was a staunch friend of this association and of American agriculture; and those of us who have met him in this hall will not soon forget the influence of his presence, and the attention and respect which his voice commanded in our deliberations. Long will his name be held in grateful remembrance!

The venerable Mr. CUSTIS was well known to us as the "Farmer of Arlington," an honorable title conferred upon

him on this platform by Daniel Webster, at the organization of this Society, and one by which his name will descend to posterity. He was present at each of its annual meetings, occupying a seat on the right of the Chair; and at the close of each pronouncing, by my request, a farewell address and benediction. By his death, the last representative member of the immediate family of the immortal Washington has passed away. His politeness, suavity, his generous hospitality, his addresses and literary productions, his historical paintings of prominent scenes in the life and conflict of the Great Chieftain; his rural taste, and particularly his devotion to this Society,—all these embalm his memory, and give an unfading lustre to his fame. The following were his touching and prophetic words at the close of our last meeting:—

“The time has come for me to say, — *Farewell!* And when a man, on whose head rests the snows of seventy-six winters, bids you farewell, the probabilities are that it will be a long farewell. You will now return to your homes with hearts cheered and hands strengthened, by this mutual communion and this brotherhood of farmers from all parts of our great country. And you will come up to our National Capital another year, each one with fresh cause of encouragement for the rest, each one with more information, the result of the year’s observation and labors, which he will interchange with his fellows and thus scatter broadcast over the land. And as you come up from all portions of the country—from those classic grounds where our fathers died—let your hearts be invigorated by their patriotism and your hands labor for the prosperity of the country they bought with their blood.

And now, Gentlemen of the United States Agricultural Society—Farewell! Go back to your homes and tell your friends what has been done at this meeting for the cause of Agriculture, and encourage them as you have been encouraged. Continue your devotion to this bulwark of our coun-

try, continue inviolate our great Constitution, obey our self-imposed laws, preserve our blessed Union, and our Republic will be IMMORTAL !”

RESIGNATION.

Gentlemen of the Society,—Men die, but institutions live. Several of the founders of this Association have already passed away, and their departure calls upon us for renewed diligence and activity. I have most cheerfully endeavored to bear my full share in these labors and responsibilities. For six successive terms you have honored me with your confidence as President of this Association,—an office which I esteem as one of the highest and most honorable that could be conferred upon me. For each of the last two years I have tendered you my resignation, but have yielded to your urgent solicitation, and have discharged the duties of the position at great personal sacrifice and to the best of my ability.

Among the considerations which have prevailed with me was a desire to reciprocate your kindness, and to conform my action to your judgment,—that my official service was important to the establishment and success of our Society. These objects have now been accomplished. The United States Agricultural Society is a recognized national institution, co-operating harmoniously with the other agricultural associations of the country, and cherished by the warm affections of the American people. Wherever its exhibitions are held we are sure to meet, not only gentlemen of all professions, but thousands of our intelligent yeomanry. The Society has now attained a standing that will ensure its perpetuity and usefulness, and a name that will descend to future generations. My resignation, therefore, which I now, for the third time tender you, cannot be prejudicial to its interests. New and imperative motives urge me to this measure. As the financial partner of a large commercial house, I cannot

for the present abstract the time which I have heretofore devoted to your service, and yet faithfully discharge my multiplied duties in that relation. Besides, I cannot disguise from you the fact that my health has recently been seriously impaired and my life imperiled by the onerous duties of numerous official positions, superadded to those of my legitimate business. Some of these I must sacrifice, and I think I may now, without fear or reproach, be permitted to express my fixed determination not again to be a candidate for re-election.

By this proposal I seek temporary relief, for my heart will still be with you and I shall beg ever to be recognized as an active member of this body. To you, my fellow-associates, who have shared with me the discharge of official duty — especially to Secretary POORE for the fidelity and ability with which he has sustained me, under the severe responsibilities of the past year, and to every member, I tender my grateful acknowledgments. I beg also to assure you of my ardent desires for your individual happiness and for the prosperity of the Society; and should the time in future arrive when my services in this or any other capacity may be required, and when a due regard to my business relations, my family, and my own health will permit me to render them, I shall most cheerfully respond to your call.

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, gentlemen, permit me to congratulate you upon the beneficial influence of our Association and the results we have already attained. Our anniversaries at the seat of Government and our annual exhibitions have awakened an extended and general interest in the great cause we seek to advance. They have acted as a stimulus to enterprise, mutual instruction and improvement, and have promoted a more cordial intercourse and a closer alliance

between cultivators, and the various local agricultural societies of our own and other lands. They have aided in developing the vast natural resources of our country — in elevating the vocation of the farmer to its true dignity, and impressing on the public mind the importance of the great interest of American agriculture and of its protection by governmental patronage.

Never before, in our national existence has this idea been so forcibly illustrated, because the present commercial emergency turns the thoughts of men back to the primeval source of individual wealth and prosperity, the world-sustaining art of agriculture, — and because the application of science to this art is just beginning to produce its sublime results, multiplying our products a thousand fold, relieving the burden of toil and hastening the golden age, the millenium of agriculture, — when with the blessing of heaven, the cultivator of the soil shall witness the fulfilment of his noble mission as a co-worker with God in enriching and beautifying the earth. Let us then look forward with full assurance to this blessed consummation — the crowning felicity of participating more and more in the secrets of that wonder-working Providence, which causes the dust on which we tread to bring forth its fruits and flowers in endless variety and richest profusion, for the sustenance and comfort of man. Let us then take fresh courage, redouble our efforts, and speed the car of improvement in its advancing course. Onward bid it roll — till all the arts of rural life and cultivated taste shall have attained their final and glorious accomplishment — till from East to West, from North to South, our country, our *whole* country shall rejoice in the triumphs of perfected husbandry, in the blessings of universal peace and prosperity :

“ Till plenty rising from the encouraged plough,
Shall fill, enrich, adorn our happy land.”

MARSHALL P. WILDER.

