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AMERICAN INSTITUTE.

AN ADDRESS,

ON THE SUBJECT OF

AGRICULTURE AND HORTICULTURE,

DELIVERED IN THE CHURCH OF THE MESSIAH,

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ON

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 9th, 1845,

By HENRY MEIGS,

A Member of the American Institute.

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LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

THE American Institute, in its wish to provide on this occasion such an address as would find favour in your judgments, had, on looking around our Republic for one capable of so delightful and instructive an address as would have deeply interested you in these most pure and most useful subjects, invited the aid of the Hon. George Lunt, of Newburyport, whose richly stored mind would have poured out before you the true immense values of the farm, and also would have graced with all the garlands of poetry the glorious regions of the flower garden. The Institute, with great regret for his unexpected indisposition, has directed me to exert my humble ability to fill the void thus produced. In prompt obedience to its direction, as an ardent servant in the great cause to which the Institute directs the greatest portion of its energy, I am honoured with the task of delivering to you the views of the American Institute in relation to these subjects. I beg your kind indulgence while I make the effort, assuring you, that if I should fail in pleasing you, it will not be for want of enthusiasm in the cause.

Ladies and Gentlemen: Let me begin by borrowing from the greatest man that ever lived, from our own dearly beloved Washington, his opinion of the Agricultural cause; an opinion among the very last communicated to his fellow-men. That opinion, contained in his message to Congress in 1796, was, That the Government of this Republic should then establish a separate Department for Agriculture; that the purse of the nation should be freely employed in the cause. He entreated Congress to establish a *Home Department for Agriculture*. The American Institute is now, and has been for some time past, engaged in awakening the vast farming interest of this country to the fulfilment of *Washington's wish*.

He knew, and all great men know, that the cultivation of the earth is our very first and our most delightful duty. *That Paradise lost by transgression can only be regained here on earth* by the sweat of our brows, in clearing away thorns and briars, and causing our vallies to show forth their golden harvests, and our gardens to blossom with roses. All savage life is without agriculture, worth any notice. All semi-wild existence is without a garden. By due care^{and} ^{and} ^{soil-} ^{rise of} intelligence, animals of a wild nature are subdued to ^{sub-} ^{soil-} ^{rise of} domestic habits. Man, in the pride of his high standing, as one created in the likeness of God, is capable of subduing all things on earth to his own uses. He flies on

the back of the horse. He rides the enormous elephant in triumph. He makes the little ox of former ages, weighing not more than three or four hundred pounds, weigh *five thousand*. He will now get from *one acre a thousand bushels* of valuable roots. He makes the desert soils become cultivable fields and gardens! He will have the earth bear a thousand happy beings where it bore but one unenlightened savage! He will now travel through his farms and gardens at the speed of forty miles an hour, and he prints the *Holy Book by millions on millions, by the same steam power by which he flies!*

Happy are we to be in this period of time, when the *temple of Janus is truly closed*; and when *those of the Almighty* are hourly rising from the ground, all through the civilized world, and unfolding their portals to a happier race.

No man ever wrought in the field or garden with his own hands, without becoming *more or less purified by the work*. God has commanded it, and he has blessed it. In all that man does, except in the farm and garden, remember that he can, if he will, *commit forgery*. *But in these he must be true*. He has no art, no magic by which he can *simulate a flower, a grain of wheat, or an ox!* Be the evil spirit in him what it may, in all these great productions of Almighty power, as the agent of that power, he is *compelled to be true*. Nature will not obey the evil spirit, and enable him to tell you a falsehood in these things. The very man who will sell you *chalk and water for milk*, cannot sell you *rye for wheat, a violet for a rose, or a sheep for an ox!*

Call up from the records of men those names which cannot die, and you will find them all of one mind as to the culture of the earth. What is the rule of that venerable empire at our antipodes: Chinese emperors have been always bound by a custom of several thousand years, to appear in the field at the opening of every spring, and in the presence of the first men of the empire, *take hold of the plough and run the first furrow!*

Cato of Rome always cried aloud to the Romans, go to your fields and work them with as much energy as you would meet the enemy in battle! The most beautiful poet of ancient days, Virgil, wrote two works that will never die. One on the management of stock, his *Bucolics*, (meaning care of cattle)—the other the *Georgics*, agriculture.

At the era of Virgil, Rome had attained by her power the command of an hundred millions of men. That was the *memorable Augustan age!* the real achme of Roman glory. Thus you perceive that the beloved poet of the day, the truly admirable *Maro*, devoted his rich mind first to the *raising of cattle!* secondly to *Georgics*, or agriculture; and lastly to the History of Rome's infancy and father *Æneas*.

Such then was the imperial taste of Rome. She had, by following the just and noble precepts of Cincinnatus, Cato, Virgil, Varro, Columella, of Theophrastus of Athens, and others of nature's noblemen, *established virtue* in her people. Virgil states the maxims of *Much cattle much wheat! Cull from your seeds the fruits always the very best. Spare not your sturdy labour upon the soil.* Italy can be for ever maintained as a garden by *manure of much cattle*, and by constant labour. *Steep the seeds of your plants in nitre and the lees of oil.*

Select the very best cattle to stock your farm. Kiln dry your grain before you grind it, and it will be more wholesome. Mow your grass while the dew is upon it. Agriculture is noble. The dictators of Rome maintained themselves from a few acres by their own daily labour. By such men and such means, says the Roman satirist, Juvenal, *all the men of Rome were brave and strong, and all the women chaste!* The empire grew to the enormous community of one hundred and twenty millions of people.

Thiers, in his Philosophy of History, has recently beautifully illustrated *this manhood* of the Roman people, and also the causes of its fall. Men grew proud; they began to disdain the labours of the farm; they chained their captives, and compelled them to labour during the day; and *at night*, says Columella, the best method to manage such an *obstinate race* is to have a cellar with a strong deck over it, with a hole therein just large enough *to let out one man at a time*. These captives were much larger men than the Romans, and required great care and severity to render their services available in the labours of the field. Cicero, the eloquent Cicero, had *ten thousand* of these *white, fair-haired, blue-eyed slaves* upon his own estates.

This system could not endure, and poor Rome soon felt, by turns, the horrors of famine. The world was ransacked for grain to feed the Roman people. Egypt, Sicily, Spain, *every colony*, was compelled to send its grain to Italy. On one occasion the emperor, excited by the cries of the famished citizens of the imperial city, on account of the much delayed arrival of grain, in a public and solemn manner, in the presence of the people, vowed to the gods, that unless the grain to feed his people should arrive within three days, he would (showing it) plunge that dagger into his own bosom.

The grain arrived *in time* to prevent the sacrifice. *The glory of nations, their virtue and their high agriculture, ARE THREE INSEPARABLE FACTS!!*

What was England for fifteen hundred years? Her history will show you, that her population never exceeded six millions during all that time. In 1509, gardening began to be of some importance in England. Before that time vegetables were imported from the Netherlands. Then began the culture in England of cabbages, gooseberries, musk melons, apricots, garden roots, &c. The damask rose was introduced by Dr. Linacre, physician of Harry the 8th. In 1526, roses were first consecrated as presents from the Pope! Hops from France! Pippin apples, by Leonard Mascall, in 1525. Corinthian grapes, now called currants, from Zante, in 1555. Musk roses, and several plums from Italy, by Lord Cromwell. *July flowers*, and carnations, in 1567. Tulips from Vienna, in 1578. Asparagus, oranges, lemons, artichokes, cauliflowers, beans, peas, lettuce, in 1660. Then began the population of England to grow. Then began the *creation of the farmer*. Then arose the *delightful dwellings of the yeomanry* of England, on the domains which, for more than a thousand years, had been occupied by feudal vassals, styled in the old law books *villians*, over whom, in their subject condition, the *eleven hundred military castles of England* had for so many ages frowned in *aristocratic power!* Now behold the magic changes wrought by the

power of farm and garden. You see now the annual jubilee of these noble interests, attended by all the gentlemen, lords and ladies of the British empire. Victoria (to her credit I proclaim it) personally shows to her subjects the example of *love and regard for even a poultry yard!*

Turn your eyes to France! Louis Philippe is the protector of the Royal Society of Horticulture, of Paris. Thus giving his fine example to all our patriotic citizens who are now so nobly engaged in forming every where *Farmer's Clubs*; which, by thus condensing the *theories and experience of masses of men*, will find those truths which are vital to a powerful progress in Agriculture, as well as in any other cause. See the Sultan of Turkey within a few months past sending commissioners into every district of the Mussulman Empire, to inspect the condition of farmers, to *lend them money* to buy stock and farming tools, to give them the most valuable seeds, and *ordaining that no man while engaged in cultivating the earth shall be arrested for debt!!*

Look for a moment at the value of cultivation! Spain for a long time annually received from her mines in South America, some thirty millions of dollars in gold and silver. Spain, which had before that time a rich agriculture and a lofty name, now became proud and lazy; her *Hidalgos, with pompous step*, paced the Prados of her cities, *disdaining all labour*. Spain dropped her spade and hoe—spurned the plough—and you all see the result.

England, by her parliamentary returns last year, shows the value of her agriculture for that year to be *three thousand* millions of dollars; or as much in *one year*, as the mines of America had given Spain in a *hundred years*.

Even France, so renowned for her civilization, has not yet redeemed the land from the original curse. Poiteau put a question last July, to the Scientific Congress of Rheims! How is it that France gathers but *six or seven grains for every one sowed*, of her grain crops?

The emperor of Russia is now seeking an exchange between his Farmer's Clubs and those of all the world.

As for our own immense continent, which we have an *indisputable commission to subdue and to till*, let us for a moment try to look at it as it will be in the lifetime of hundreds of thousands of our children. Think, if you can, of the future farms and gardens bordering the two hundred thousand miles of river banks of this Republic! Think of that glorious variety *due to the climates, all of which*, from tropical heat to the northern cold! from the low levels to the lofty plains! Of the myriads of sheep browsing on the sides of your yet untouched chains of hills and mountains peculiar to that fleecy race. See your improved breeds of oxen, by millions taking the place of the buffalo on your mighty western plains, fit for your markets when weighing from two to *five thousand pounds* each. See your acres by the *genius of chemistry*, and perhaps by electricity, united with the well instructed and persevering industry of the cultivator, bearing, not the French *six and a half for one*, but *ten times that amount*, of the purest wheat.

See your roads and division lines, marked, not by *choke pears*, sour apples, and poor nuts, but by endless rows of the hundred varieties of most delicious pears, apples and nuts. I mean by the latter, Madeira

nuts and others, including the finest walnuts, which may just as readily be grown as the bad ones.

See every farm-house and cottage, with its silk growing department. See the pound weight clusters of choice cultivated grapes, in the hands of every boy and girl! And remember that by the movement, on railroads as it *soon will be*, you can *safely* pass through a thousand miles of such a country, in two or three days! Every market of the Northern States may be supplied daily with the fruits and flowers of the tropics—and the invalids of either climate will be transferred with comfort to any position advised by a physician. On the appearance of threatening storms, the patient will be sent, *faster than the gale*, to a better clime, imitating the birds who *flee before a tempest and keep their feathers dry!*

Ladies, allow me in the enthusiasm of the moment, to turn your attention to the future cultivation of flowers. They belong to you of ancient right. Their lovely goddess is one of you, Flora! *We have not yet begun to see a field of flowers!* Botanists have made mighty additions to floral wealth, by searching most parts of the earth for specimens. But up to this time, they have only designated ONE QUARTER OF A MILLION OF PLANTS! All these have flowers, and all are susceptible, by *knowing* and careful treatment, of greater variety and increased splendour. How much have you admired the newly cultivated Dahlia of Mexico! You perceive that from seedlings of single petals, and humble tints, art has already *quilled them*, and *painted them*, until they form rosettes of such splendour as no ancient king or queen ever wore upon the breast.

France is cultivating pinks in a manner we yet do not see here. That fragrant little flower, of cinnamon fragrance, has already been varied hundreds of times in forms and colours. You all admire carnations. In future days the pink garden will be of itself a delicious treat.

Roses are constantly becoming more varied by art. Already there are more than a thousand different roses! Asters (stars) are becoming of distinguished beauty. Tens of thousands of these lovely flowers were combined in one floral edifice, exhibited in Boston, a few days since, by the Massachusetts Horticultural Society. But we have only commenced, Ladies, the adorning of our gardens with flowers.

The lovely race of violets demands your attention. See their *eyes*, (for so they seem,) *all turned to the south with one accord*. Seldom have we seen a more lovely sight than a thick bed of these *heart's ease*, all eyes looking to the south! Who can fail to enjoy the sweet pea? what a delicacy of growth its stem and flower present, and what a delicious perfume breathes from its modest petals!

Ladies, you have seen the festoon rose bushes, natives of our own land. Can any thing excel their loveliness? branch after branch stretching out to ten times the lengths of other rose bushes, and all loaded with their delicious *American flowers!* They have but just made their appearance in some of our court-yards and gardens. *Take care, henceforth*, that you enwreath your fences and trellises with this *native roseate garland!*

And there is another floral beauty, which once enraptured even the *most insensible* of men. The tulip has been made to show all the colours of the painter's palette with the most admirable forms of *etruscan*

vases! It has been grouped on beds by garden side-walks, in tens of thousands. A single one has once been sold for an hundred guineas! But, Ladies, there are yet uncultivated flowers of unknown beauty, to be developed by the care and skill of gardeners, to thousands in number. And do not fail, Ladies, to examine the flowers with a powerful microscope. You will then find your *admiration* of them elevated to *adoration* of God, who elaborates their rich colours and their perfumes *from the brown earth* on which you tread, and from the *air and light!* Their magnified beauty is indescribable.

Let me, while I now enjoy the gratifying opportunity, in behalf of the American Institute, ask you to take care of the realm of flowers! Maintain *its power over men along with your own*, to soften and render that *harder subject more and more civilized!* To meet him when he comes from the sturdy toil of the field, with a bouquet of lovely flowers, and your *yet more enchanting smiles.* *Without you and the flowers, he is indeed but a savage!*

You cannot fail to observe that there is an intimate sympathy between the religion of men and the honest and delightful employment in a garden. It is almost a certainty that the garden of the country clergyman is a good one. In that alone, of our temporal concerns, we perceive at once, that the spiritual pastor *is at home.* Innocence, health and cheerfulness are nurtured, and flourish in the garden. He cannot be a lawyer, a merchant, or a politician, without impropriety; but a garden is his *natural home;* and happy the pastor who, by early rising and proper labour in it, prepares his mind with its purifying influences, and his body by the physical energy which it infuses, to labour in his holy calling, for the eternal good of his congregation.

The American Institute, in carrying out the great objects of its charter, has devoted much of its time and ability to the main good—Agriculture. With a view to gather wisdom from numbers, it has called a convention of farmers, gardeners and silk growers, from all quarters of the land, to meet in this city this day. This assembly will again apply its force to the establishment of an Agricultural Department of Government. The members approach that subject with the last best advice of the illustrious Washington to us, couched in the following terms, “It will not be doubted that, with reference either to individual or national welfare, agriculture is of primary importance. In proportion as nations advance in population and other circumstances of maturity, this truth becomes more apparent, and renders the cultivation of the soil more and more an object of *public patronage.* Institutions for promoting it grow up, supported by the *public purse!* And to what object can it be dedicated with *greater propriety?* Among the means which have been employed to this end, none have been attended with greater success than the establishment of boards, composed of proper characters, charged with collecting and diffusing information, and enabled, by *premiums* and small pecuniary aid, to encourage and assist a spirit of *discovery* and improvement, by stimulating to enterprise and *experiment,* and by drawing to a common centre the results every where, of individual skill and observation, and spreading them thence over the whole

nation. Experience accordingly has shown, that they are very cheap instruments of *immense national benefits*."

One great national object to come under the care of such a Department, will necessarily be the culture of silk. Human experience has taught us, that in all the immense variety of articles afforded by nature for human comfort and convenience, there is no one thing connected with the clothing of our race *more to be cared for* than this beautiful article. What utility as a thread! what splendour as a garment! Already no human being is dressed to its satisfaction without some silk. Once more valuable than gold, and worn only by the upper classes of society, now it begins to form a portion of dress for almost every human being. An immense experience has proved its high value; and the millions of dollars which America annually pays to Europe for it—while America ought to let Europe pay us for it—urges us to the culture of this great staple. France says that silk can only be raised in small quantities by individual families. That our reliance for its production is absolutely upon that nice division of labour in which some one or more of those members of a family who are unable to do the more severe labours of the farm, *must have a cocoonery*. By an universal application of this rule—and *there is no other*—a nation can not only supply itself, but spare much for other nations.

And here allow me to repeat what is perfectly admitted by our Silk Conventions. That by a happy adaptation as to climate, America is more enabled to supply silk than any country on the globe, not excepting China; the only one which possesses the like fitness for that purpose. I refer you to the report of facts on this point, made by our Silk Conventions.

I feel authorized to declare, that the American Institute feels no truth as being better settled, than that our Continent can and ought, in justice to the natural qualities with which our Creator has endowed it, to be *the greatest silk growing country on the face of this globe!*

But I console myself—although I shall not see it, perhaps—that the day will soon come, in which this happy land of ours *will receive* for her silk alone, fifty millions of dollars a year.

Let no man be discouraged in his efforts to make the soil of this country productive! Industry has a power which may almost be deemed magical. Who would expect from the *granite hills* of Massachusetts and of Maine—looking as they do, as if in the tremendous upheavings of a deluge, they were *rocky waves suddenly cooled while yet they were rolling* in that transforming revolution of the surface of our earth—who would look to see those rocks, lately bearing but *mosses and shrubs*, when struck by the wand of *Pomona* and of *Flora*, (as Moses smote the rock for water,) pour out flowers and fruits like *Damascus* or *Canaan!*

I saw that triumph lately! and like victories will be achieved over all our most obdurate fields and hills by our posterity.

Omnia vincit labor. Labour conquers all, must be inscribed on our standard.

Ladies, permit me now to say in parting, so long as your smiles shall cheer the ardent labourer in the great cause of American industry, de-

pend on it, that ardour can never cool! And we of the Institute invoke those smiles as our greatest reward for our own labours.

As to you, men of America, for us to urge you to persevere with unrelaxing energy in this mighty cause, which is fast bearing upward our beloved native land to the loftiest heights of wealth and power, and glory! I would as soon, standing on the banks of our Cataract of Niagara, tell that *vast headlong torrent* to go ahead!

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