

Farmers' Gazette,

AND CHERAW ADVERTISER.

VOLUME VI

CHERAW, SOUTH-CAROLINA, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 6, 1841.

NUMBER 8.

By H. MAC LEAN.

TERMS:—Published weekly at three dollars a year; with an addition, when not paid within three months, of twenty per cent per annum.

Two new subscribers may take the paper at five dollars in advance; and ten at twenty.

Four subscribers, not receiving their papers in town, may pay a year's subscription with ten dollars in advance.

A year's subscription always due in advance. Papers not discontinued to solvent subscribers in arrears.

Advertisements not exceeding 16 lines inserted for one dollar the first time, and fifty cents each subsequent time. For insertions at intervals of two weeks 75 cents after the first, and a dollar, if the intervals are longer. Payment due in advance for advertisements. When the number of insertions is not marked on the copy, the advertisement will be inserted, and charged till ordered out.

The postage must be paid on letters to the editor on the business of the office.

AGRICULTURE.

ANNIVERSARY ORATION.

Of the State Agricultural Society of South Carolina; by Gen. George McDuffie; read before the Society on the 23rd November 1840, at their annual meeting in the Hall of the House of Representatives.

Gentlemen of the State Agricultural Society of So. Carolina:

I enter upon the performance of the task you have been pleased to assign me, with a due sense of its importance, and a corresponding regret that I shall not be able to fulfil either my own wishes or your reasonable expectations. I may confidently trust, however, that this unpretending contribution to the cause of agricultural improvement, will be received in the spirit in which it is offered; and that the partiality to which I am indebted for the honor of now addressing you, on the greatest and most neglected of all the sources of public prosperity, will insure for the unavoidable imperfections of such a performance, your liberal and indulgent consideration.

The art of cultivating the earth, and of increasing and perpetuating its productive powers, while it has been the first to indicate the dawn of civilization among men, is probably destined to be the last to mark by its own advancement, the final stages of human improvement. For of all the arts that contribute either to supply the physical wants or promote the intellectual development and moral refinement of the human family; none are more deeply and essentially founded in the principles of inductive philosophy, or are capable of extending their achievements over a wider field of usefulness and true beneficence. It is scarcely possible, indeed, to assign any limits, either to the aggregate amount, or to the number or variety of useful productions, with which the fostering bosom of mother earth is ever ready to reward the researches and the labors of her children. And yet, so strange a paradox is man, that philosophy has stood gazing at the wonders of the heavens, entranced in the mazes of vain conjecture. Enterprize has traversed and vexed the earth, and the seas in the vain pursuit of golden visions—and even avarice, calculating avarice, has wasted its efforts in wild and gambling speculations, contributing nothing to the common stock of national wealth and human comfort, while millions of our race have been literally perishing for the want of nourishment, and the whole surface of the earth has presented one boundless and inexhaustible mine of wealth and abundance, which haughty science has scarcely deigned to explore, leaving sober industry to group its toilsome way amidst darkness and discouragement.

As cultivators of the soil, and as members of a community whose prosperity depends almost exclusively, and I may add, unalterably, upon its productions, it is high time that we should free ourselves from our share of this common reproach, and make one united and vigorous effort to redeem our agriculture from the shackles which ignorance, prejudice, evil habits, and the blind and fatal thirst for the sudden accumulation of large fortunes, have but too firmly fixed upon it.

To aid in the accomplishment of this great reform, an achievement, in all respects, worthy of the highest aspirations of patriotic ambition, I shall proceed to point out some of the prominent and practical errors most prevalent in our agricultural system—if system it may be called—and to lay down some of the fundamental principles and cardinal rules, which must form the basis of all substantial improvements in our agricultural economy.

The greatest, most prevailing, and most pernicious of all the practices which distinguish and deform the agriculture of this and the other cotton planting States, is the almost exclusive direction of the whole available labor of the plantation, to the production of our greatest market staple, and the consequent neglect of all the other commodities which the soil is capable of producing or sustaining, and which are essential to supply the wants of the establishment. No scheme of reform or improvement can produce any great and salutary results, which does not lay the axe to the root of this radical vice in our husbandry.

It should be, therefore, an inviolable rule in the economy of every plantation, to produce an abundant supply of every species of grain, and of every species of live stock, required for its own consumption. I am aware, that in peculiar localities, when the price of cotton has been

high, examples may be found of successful planting where this rule has been disregarded.

But this serves only to prove, that even a bad system prosecuted with great energy and under favorable circumstances, may be crowned with a considerable share of the success which would more certainly have rewarded a good one. Such examples, if they constitute an exception to the rule I have laid down, by no means impair its force or disprove its general expediency.—The economy of a plantation should be founded, not upon the temporary and mutable expedients, but upon general and permanent rules, adapted to all the probable vicissitudes of trade and of the seasons, and all the probable fluctuations of prices and of the currency. We have surely seen enough of these fluctuations, and sufficiently witnessed, if not experienced, their disastrous influence, to warn us against the fatal policy of yielding up the lessons of experience to the temptations of high prices and prosperous seasons. It is, indeed, one of the greatest which these fluctuations habitually produce among us, that we are but too successfully tempted, by the temporary allurement of high prices, to abandon all the maxims of wisdom and all the rules of sound economy, which have been imposed upon us by painful experience, in periods of depression and adversity: Let us, then, each one for the sake of his own interest, and all for the common weal of South Carolina, solemnly and deliberately resolve, that we will never again, under any temptation, incur the just reproach which must attach to our character as planters, if we should be induced to rely upon distant communities for those essential supplies, which our own plantations are so capable of producing. And to the end that this high resolve may be more firmly adopted and perseveringly maintained, I shall endeavor to shew, that it is the dictate, not less of an enlightened self-interest, than of an enlarged public spirit.

We are, then, to consider and decide upon the comparative cheapness and economy of producing ourselves on the one hand, and of purchasing from abroad on the other, the hogs, horses, mules, and other live stock, required for the use and consumption of our plantations, during an average series of years. A stranger to our wretched habits of economy, would be startled at the mere propounding of such an inquiry.—He could not comprehend the economy of importing from Kentucky, what our own soil and climate are so eminently adapted to produce. However plausible, it is most assuredly by a false economy, founded upon false reasoning. A man who will assume that our hogs and horses must be raised exclusively upon corn, and will gravely sit down to calculate the cost of so many bushels at seventy-five or even fifty cents a bushel, will certainly come to an erroneous conclusion. But those of us who systematically pursue the business of raising live stock, can testify that the quantity of corn necessary to raise hogs, horses or mules, is extremely inconsiderable. Oats, whether harvested for the work horses and mules, or used as pasturage for stock hogs and stock horses and mules, is an invaluable crop for a cotton planter. That which is used as pasturage, while it will cost only the labor of preparing the ground and seeding it, will keep all the stock in fine order, from the middle of summer until the opening of the pea fields, and these, which cost scarcely any labor, will keep them in like order, with very little aid from the corn crib, until December. From this time regular feeding will be required for about four months, and after that, very little will suffice till the oat pastures are again ready. In this view of the subject, I have omitted many useful auxiliaries, such as potatoes, pinders, peaches and apples, the two latter of which are often permitted to rot on the ground, though excellent food for hogs, and perhaps the least expensive of all. Nor have I embraced in it the artificial grasses, though I am quite sanguine from an experiment I now have in progress, that in most of the strong soils of the country, blue grass and herds grass will succeed very nearly as well as they do in Kentucky. Upon the whole, then, it is my deliberate opinion, founded upon my own experience and observation as a planter, that in South Carolina, and particularly the upper country districts, it would be true economy for the planters to raise their own stock, even if they could always buy Kentucky pork at three dollars a head. But let it be remembered that to accomplish this, they must devote themselves to it as an essential branch of their business. A regular system must be adopted and a competent person be charged with its execution; and overseers must be made to know, that it is as much their duty to superintend it, as the cultivation of the cotton crop; for hogs and horses can no more thrive without proper attention, than corn and cotton can grow without attention. And it is worthy of remark, that when hogs are fat or in a good growing order, it requires not half so much food to keep them in that condition, as it would require to sustain poor hogs and prevent them from growing poorer. It is, therefore, a most obvious rule of economy, never to permit stock hogs to sink below what we denominate a growing condition. The corn that will be required to keep them in that condition during four or five months in the year, will be less than

that which would be required in extra feeding to prepare poor hogs for the slaughter pen; and at the same age, their weight will be fifty per cent, greater, and their flesh will be much more firm, than that of hogs brought up in poverty and suddenly fattened. I am now speaking the actual result of my own experience, and I have been astonished to perceive how little corn is required to prevent fat hogs from getting poor.

As an important part of the branch of economy we are now considering every planter should keep as large a stock of neat cattle, and of sheep, as his pasturage, and the soil of the plantation will support. To this extent, there is no description of stock so valuable in proportion to the expense of maintaining them. Their flesh is much cheaper than that of hogs, and besides supplying the table of the planter with an abundance of good beef, butter and mutton, the former will advantageously supply one half of the rationations of meat during the autumnal months; and the latter, all the wool required for clothing the negroes in winter. In addition to all this, it is the opinion of the most experienced planters, in which I fully concur, that where cattle are penned every night on grounds properly covered with litter, the manure they will make in the course of the year, will very nearly defray the expense of maintaining them.

I have thus attempted to shew that it is the true interest of every planter to raise all the live stock required for his own use, and for the use and consumption of his own plantation, though no one else should pursue the same policy.

I now propose to consider the subject in a still more interesting point of view. I propose to enquire what would be the effect of this system upon the general prosperity of the cotton planting States, assuming that it should be universally adopted. It is not extravagant to estimate the annual expense which a planter would incur in purchasing his supplies of stock, at one tenth of the nett proceeds of his cotton crop, as exhibited on the books of his factor. Assuming, then, that the labor diverted from the production of cotton, in order to raise these supplies, would diminish the cotton crop in the same proportion, it would follow that each individual planter would derive as large a nett income from his diminished cotton crop, as he would have derived from one tenth larger, if he purchased his stock, even supposing that the diminished cotton crop, brought no higher price than could have been obtained for the larger one. But here we realize the grand result of the proposed reform in our agricultural economy.

It is a well established principle of political economy, confirmed by the uniform experience of the cotton planting States, that when the supply of a commodity exceeds the effective demand, the price is diminished, not in proportion to the excess, but in a still greater proportion. If, then, we assume that the proposed reform would reduce the annual cotton crop from two millions of bales, to one million eight hundred thousand, and that the effective demand of the world would not exceed the latter number, it would clearly follow from the above stated principle that the smaller crop of one million eight hundred thousand bales, would yield a greater aggregate income than the larger crop of two millions of bales. In the habitual state of our cotton trade, with a constant tendency in the production to exceed the demand, such would always be the result of diminished production where no extraordinary causes existed to check consumption. It results from this reasoning that the planting States would realize from the universal adoption of the proposed reform, a clear aggregate saving of the sum annually expended in purchasing live stock; and that each individual planter, besides greatly increasing the comforts of his establishment, would add ten per cent. to his annual income.—Entirely satisfied, as I am, of the soundness of this reasoning, and the justness of the conclusion to which it leads, I am aware that it is exposed to an apparent objection. It may be naturally asked, how it happens that the planters, a class of men sufficiently intelligent to understand their own interest, should, generally, pursue a course so little calculated to promote it?—A sufficient answer will be found to this question, in the force of established habits, the mistaken ambition which makes the point of honorable distinction consist in the number of cotton bales, and above all, the unfortunate habit so generally prevalent among planters, of neglecting their own business, and confiding it to the exclusive management of overseers. It is a duty which every planter owes, not only to himself, but to his country, as a matter of example, to give his personal superintendence to his business, and make himself master of all its details. He can scarcely deserve to own an estate, who from false pride or indolent self-indulgence, remains in voluntary ignorance of the various operations upon which its productiveness depends, and relies exclusively upon agents who are practically irresponsible, and in general, grossly incompetent. Certain it is, that no general reform or improvement in our agricultural economy, will ever be made

by overseers—Agents who are employed from year to year, who have no interest in any permanent improvement, and who are generally actuated by the motives of a tenant at will, which prompt them to aim at a large cotton crop the present year, without any regard to the future, or to the subsidiary branches of a sound system of economy. Every planter who has attempted such reforms or improvements as I have suggested, can testify how utterly impossible it is to make overseers, generally, realize their importance, or bestow upon them sufficient attention to insure their successful execution. Let it, then, be regarded as the point of honor with every planter, to attend personally to his plantation, and make himself master of every branch of its operations and economy. This is an indispensable preliminary step to all useful improvements in our agriculture, and is equally demanded by every consideration of private interest and public duty.

Another mischievous error in our planting economy, proceeding partly from the mistaken ambition of making a large count of cotton bales, and partly from the uncalculating habits acquired during high prices, is exhibited in the general carelessness with which cotton is picked out of the field and prepared for market. It has been fully demonstrated by experience that those planters who have their cotton properly handled, and sent to market free from the contamination of trash and stain, can habitually obtain in our own markets, one cent a pound more than can be obtained for cotton prepared in the usual way; and I can personally testify, as the result of my own experience, that the difference made in foreign markets is much greater.—Now, I invite your serious attention to a few plain and obvious reflections on this subject. A diminution in price of one cent a pound at the present market rates of cotton, is equal to ten per cent discount upon the gross amount of the annual income of the planter, and a still larger per cent upon the amount of his nett income. It follows, that by the careless operations of four months in gathering the crop, one tenth of its value is destroyed, and one tenth part of the labor of the whole year is absolutely nullified. The labor of one hundred hands is reduced in value to that of ninety, and five hundred bales of cotton are reduced to four hundred and fifty. Now I confidently put it to every practical planter, as a plain question of economy, what possible advantage there can be in carelessly picking out a cotton crop, that will compensate the planter for this sacrifice of fifty bales of cotton, the product of the whole annual labor of ten hands? Let it be admitted, and it is an extreme supposition, that hands will pick out one tenth more in the one mode than they will do in the other. Even on this hypothesis, one tenth of the labor of the whole year would be sacrificed for the sake of one tenth of the labor for four months, and to this sacrifice we must add that of the additional expenses of the horse power required to make the additional fifty bales of cotton. Does not the conclusion, then, irresistibly follow from these premises, that every planter should lay it down as a cardinal rule, in pitching his crop, to plant no more than he can pick out with proper care, giving due attention to the other interests of his plantation. This rule, like that relating to live stock, comes recommended by the twofold consideration, that it not only promotes the individual interest of each planter, but still more extensively, the general interest of the entire class. If it will cause a diminished quantity of cotton to be produced, it will cause the price of that diminished quantity to be proportionately increased, by its superior quality, and still further, the very circumstance of its diminished quantity.

It is not to be doubted, therefore, that the general adoption of the two plain and practical rules, so perfectly in the power of every planter, of raising his own supplies instead of buying them, and picking out and preparing his cotton with proper care and attention, would do more to promote the prosperity of the cotton planting States, than all the *morus matricialis* speculations and political paper nostrums that ever deluded a people with visionary hopes, while they afflicted them with real disasters.

And here, gentlemen, it may not be unprofitable to indulge in a few cautionary reflections on that wild and extravagant spirit of speculative adventure, with which almost all classes of our countrymen have been smitten and infatuated for several years past, and which has exerted a most pernicious influence, even upon our agricultural economy. It has unfortunately inspired our planters, in too many instances, with a sort of contempt for the "dull pursuits" of sober industry, and taught them to look upon every visionary and ephemerous humbug as an Es Dorado of sudden and unbought wealth. Now, if any anticipates, from the deliberations of this society, the discovery of some new process by which wealth is to be accumulated without labor, the sooner he dispels such a delusion the better. There is no

royal highway to wealth, a more than to learning. As labor is the only true and ultimate measure of value, wealth is neither more nor less than the accumulated results of labor; and wherever one becomes rich without labor, it follows as a necessary consequence, that by some speculative juggler, he has managed to transfer to himself the labors of her people. Though individuals, therefore may become rich by unproductive processes, it is impossible, in the very nature of things, that communities ever can. Let us, then, realizing these great principles of industry and sound economy, and discarding all visionary schemes, steadily pursue the beaten track of honest industry, consoled by the patriotic reflection, that every dollar we thus add to our own fortunes, is so much added to the wealth of the State, and that the losses of others constitute no one of the elements of our prosperity.

As intimately connected with this view of the subject, I may venture to offer a few suggestions, calculated to shew that in a planting community, habitual indebtedness is the almost certain cause of pecuniary embarrassment, and is palpably opposed to every maxim of genuine economy. Of all classes of the community, the planters can best plead the excuse of necessity for going in debt, and fatal experience has but too clearly demonstrated the disastrous effects of such a policy.—As this is the besetting frailty of the times, which so many lessons of experience have entirely failed to cure, I consider it worthy of the grave and solemn consideration of this association. For if there be any question in the whole circle of our general economy, in relation to which a sound public opinion should be brought to bear upon individual imprudence, this, in my opinion, is that very question.

If we consult the experience of other States, we shall find that all the advantages of a fertile soil and genial climate have been blasted by the mistaken policy of which I am speaking; and that communities, which industry and prudence would have caused to flourish almost beyond example, exhibit one general scene of pecuniary embarrassment, bankruptcy and ruin. The experience and observation of every planter will sustain me in the assertion, that we pay for credit, in the mode in which it is usually obtained in the purchase of property, from 10 to 20 per cent, interest. Every one who is accustomed to attend administrator's and other public sales, must have been struck by the extravagant prices men are tempted to give by a year's credit; and not less by the fact that such men are perpetually involved in pecuniary embarrassments, and that the very efforts they thus imprudently make to get forward in the world faster than their neighbors, keep them always in the rear. In fact, it may be truly affirmed as a general truth, that planters who are largely in debt, are, to that extent, the mere stewards of their creditors. Life is with them an anxious and slavish struggle in pursuit of an object which always eludes their grasp. But there is another form of credit, fortunately not so prevalent in South Carolina as in other States, of which planters are but too ready to avail themselves, which is equally at war with sound economy and a sound currency. I allude, of course, to bank discounts. It has been so fashionable of late, to pronounce extravagant eulogies on what is miscalled the credit system, that it will probably be deemed quite heretical to say that credit, in any form is a public and private evil. It is, nevertheless, my deliberate and well considered opinion, that one of the greatest nuisances that could afflict an agricultural community, would be the establishment of agricultural banks, so located as to enable every planter to obtain credit to the amount of one third part of the value of his estate. The fatal experience of other States has conclusively proved that such establishments have been the invariable causes of embarrassment and ruin. Owing to the periodical fluctuations inseparable from such a system, it has generally happened that a credit obtained by a planter, to the amount of one third of his estate, in a period of expansion, has required the whole estate in a period of contraction. And we have been but too impressively admonished that it is the very genius and instinct of those institutions, to grant credits in periods of expansion, and exact payment in periods of contraction. One motive for calling your attention to this subject, will be found in the public manifestation of a desire in some parts of the State, to convert the Bank of the State of South Carolina into an agricultural Bank, and with that view, to give it a central location. Such a change, made for such a purpose, I should regard as a great public calamity. Every one practically acquainted both with planting and banking, must be aware that a mere planters' bank can be nothing more nor less than a loan office. The planter realizes his income annually and periodically; and it follows, that a discount granted to him, except in rare cases, must be virtually a credit for a year. In practice it would be more generally for a longer than for a shorter period. It is self evident, then, that such a bank could not maintain the character of a specie paying bank for a single month. Now, if there is any one measure which the public opinion and the true policy of the State concur in demanding, it is the rigid enforcement of specie payments by all the banks.

Let me warn my brother planters, therefore, against involving themselves in a state of things by which they would either by the means of defeating this measure of salutary State policy, or become themselves the victims of it.

I cannot, therefore, recommend a more important reform to our planting community, than to get out of debt with all practicable despatch, if already involved in it, and resolve for the future never to be involved in it again. Such a resolution, generally adopted and firmly maintained, would do more to promote the independence and substantial prosperity of an agricultural State, than all the good offices of legislation united. Imagine for one moment the great moral and political change which would be produced, if it could be truly announced at this moment, that every cultivator of the soil, within the wide limits of South Carolina, was entirely free from the shackles of debt. It would be a glorious day of jubilee. The fatal spell of pecuniary influence would be dissolved at once, the shackles of dependence would fall from the arms of the indebted, and every citizen would walk abroad in the majesty of genuine independence and freedom.

But let us consider the effect which this general and habitual freedom from debt, would produce upon the progress of individuals in accumulating wealth, and upon the aggregate prosperity of the whole class of planters. Taking experience for our guide, it can scarcely be doubted, that those who have uniformly kept out of debt, and have never purchased property till they had the money in hand to pay for it, have generally accumulated fortunes more rapidly and much more certainly than those who have pursued the opposite policy. Every step they take is so much permanently gained. They are exposed to no backsets; they are affected by no vicissitudes in trade, and stand firm and unmoved amidst those great, and now frequent periodical convulsions, by which those who are in debt are always shaken and often overwhelmed.

Instances will no doubt occur to every one who hears me, of men who have habitually made smaller crops than their neighbors, and who have yet, in a series of years grown wealthy and much faster, by this very simple rule, which I once heard laid down by a friend. He never made large cotton crops and was regarded as a bad planter. And when asked how he got rich so much faster than his more energetic neighbors, he replied: "My neighbors begin at the wrong end of the year. They make their purchases at the beginning of it, on a credit; I make mine at the end of it, and pay down the cash." And here I am reminded of a saying of the late John Randolph, of Virginia; a man not more remarkable for his genius and eccentricity, than for the profound philosophical truth which sometimes escaped him, like the responses of an inspired oracle. In the midst of one of his splendid rhapsodies in the Senate of the United States, he paused and fixing his eye upon the presiding officer, exclaimed, "Mr. President, I have discovered the philosopher's stone. It consists in these four plain English monosyllables; 'PAY AS YOU GO.'" Now, I will venture to say, that this is a much nearer approach than alchemy will ever make, to the great object of its visionary researches. And in recommending this maxim to the cotton planters of the State, I have still kept in view, not only the individual interest of each planter, separately considered, but the common interest of the whole community of planters. For this reform, like the others I have suggested, independently of the direct benefit it will confer on each individual planter, will benefit the whole, as a class, by checking over-production.—One great cause of the incessant struggle to make large cotton crops, to the neglect of every other interest, is the reckless habit of contracting debts, which I am deprecating. Negroes are purchased upon credit, and the planter is thus furnished both with the means and the motives for unduly and disproportionately enlarging his cotton crop. As cotton is the only crop that will command money, and as money is the most pressing want of a man in debt every thing is directed to that object; so much so, that it is the standing apology for neglecting to pursue a sounder system of economy. The saying has, indeed, become proverbial among planters, "if I were not in debt, I would not strive to make such large cotton crops, but would devote myself to raising my own supplies, and making permanent improvements."

Let me, therefore, advise, admonish and beseech all our planters, as they regard their own true interest, the dignity and honor of their vocation, and the substantial welfare of the State, to avoid the entangling embarrassments of debt. Let them regard those who may offer them credit with no friendly eye, but as enemies in disguise, who seek to lead them into temptation. If they have contracted the habit of anticipating their incomes, even a single year, let them reform even that. Yes, reform it altogether. Then will their prosperity be placed on immovable foundations. Then will they stand unshaken and unfettered amidst those periodical storms and convulsions which are inseparable concomitants of a false and artificial system of fluctuating credit and currency. Then will South