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ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE

ANNUAL MEETING

OF THE

N. Y. STATE AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY,

ALBANY, FEBRUARY 12, 1863,

BY EZRA CORNELL, PRESIDENT.

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ADDRESS.

Gentlemen of the New York State Agricultural Society:

This meeting marks the close of the past and the commencement of a new year with our Society. The year that has passed has been the most eventful of any in the history of our country—remarkable alike for the devastating ravages of war, in the Southern section of our Union, and the extraordinary prosperity and rich reward of agricultural pursuits in the Northern and Western sections of the same Union. The State of New York, under the blessing of a kind Providence, has never perhaps enjoyed a higher degree of prosperity than during the year which has just closed.

The labors of the husbandman have been rewarded with abundant harvests, and with a ready and satisfactory market for his products; he has also been exempt, in a remarkable degree, from pestilential visitations, from unseasonable and
unpropitious weather, and from the ravages of noxious insects.

The heavy drafts upon our farm laborers, caused by the necessities of the Government, to meet and suppress a wicked and gigantic rebellion, waged by the slave power for its overthrow, was promptly responded to by volunteers from the free and brave sons of our farmers, who, like Cincinnatus, left the plow in the furrow and rushed to the defence of their country and its free institutions, leaving the work at home to be performed by the reserve corps of the farm, aided by the increased application of the mechanical devices which the inventive talent of our people is annually placing at the disposal of the farmer as a substitute for manual labor. These sources have been ample, all the requirements of agriculture have been supplied, and the condition of the farms of the State, it is believed, was never better at the commencement of a new season than at present for the reception of seeds for the spring crops.

The advantages that have enabled the great agricultural interest of the State to sustain itself so triumphantly, perform all the labors and duties requisite for the growth, gathering and marketing
of a crop exceeding the full average of the production of the State, during a season when more than one hundred thousand laborers have been drawn from the tillage of the soil to the destructive pursuits of war, is the result, mainly, of the operations of the New York State Agricultural Society in encouraging every invention and every improvement which tends to lessen manual labor on the farm, and render more efficient such as are indispensable in the pursuits of agriculture.

At the period when the Society was organized, the plow and the harrow were the only implements in general use upon the farm which had been brought to a tolerable state of efficiency, or that have retained a place among the farm implements of the present day, and these have, since that period, been so improved as to perform better work with a diminished outlay of power. It was then customary to expend from four to six days of manual labor in hoeing an acre of corn. Now, one day, with a horse-hoe, or an improved cultivator, is adequate to the tillage of an acre so perfectly, without the intervention of the hand-hoe, that the average production per acre is fully sustained. The mowing-machine, horse-rake and horse-pitchfork, have so completely robbed the
hay-field of the terrors of severe labor that the aged and infirm members of the household can supply the necessary demand, and cut as much grass in one day with the machine as ten of the most stalwart men could cut with the scythe in the same time, while the housing of the hay is alike facilitated by the use of the other implements. The reaper is working a like revolution in our fields of grain. Without the use of this machine, thousands of acres of wheat would have remained unharvested during the past summer in the grain-growing regions of the West.

And so we might canvass the whole field of farm labor, and we should find a ready helper at hand, in the form of some machine or improved implement, in every department. Even in some of our largest dairies, machinery has taken the place of the milk-maid. In one instance which has come to my knowledge, three persons, with the aid of the "Yankee cow-milker," as the machine was termed at the great Exhibition in London, perform the milking in a dairy which required the labor of twenty persons before the machine was introduced. The proprietor assured me that the cows were milked more satisfactorily now than formerly, and would remain in milk
longer with the use of the machine than they did when the milking was performed by hand.

Much of this improvement and many of these new inventions may be traced to suggestions or encouragements held out by this Society, or to ideas or thoughts which were quickened into active inquiry and directed to inventive channels by visits to our Annual Fairs, or occasional implement trials. By the opportunity thus afforded for the farmer and the mechanic to meet together annually, where they can cultivate each others acquaintance, examine each others productions, learn each others wants, interchange with each other views as to the defects of this machine and the improvements applicable to that, where dormant ideas are quickened into life by chance suggestions, which result in the invention of a new machine or the improvement of an old one, the State of New York has received benefits, the value of which are as a thousand to one to all the pecuniary aid the Society has drawn from the Treasury of the State.

The vast benefits derived from this organization, in the manner above suggested, are by no means the only ones resulting from it. Every branch of production upon the farm is stimulated by it. The farmer sees something at the Fair
that he had not seen before. He hears something that is new to him. He revolves the matter over in his mind, as he returns to his own quiet home, and comes to the conclusion that he will try the experiment. The trial is made, it proves a success, and he wonders that he had never thought of it before.

The evening discussions held during our Fairs are important in this point of view, and are very deservedly increasing in popularity. Farmers attending them listen to the discussion of subjects, in which they are directly interested and of which they know much, by practical men like themselves, and it is hardly possible that they should fail to give birth to new ideas, stimulate profitable reflection, and ripen into some improvements.

Our organization, however beneficial it has been to the great farming interests of the State, however valuable it has proved to the manufacturing and mechanical industry of our people, however convenient as a channel through which the science and knowledge of agriculture is collected and disseminated throughout the world, is still far from being perfect—far short of what it should be or what is practicable. The organization of the Society should be so perfected as to secure active
representation and co-operation in every county of the State, that every town should feel and recognize the influence of its usefulness, and every school district should know that it was recognized by the State Society as a component part of the great industrial hive of the Empire State, whose interests it was the duty and pleasure of the Society to watch over and to promote.

Details for the improvement of our organization would be out of place here, but the subject should occupy the earnest attention of the officers and friends of the Society and of the agriculturists of the State. Our State and County Societies, imperfect as they are, have earned a much higher appreciation than they have yet received by the Legislative authorities of the State, representing as they do the most important branch of industry in the State, and by which the millions of our people are fed.

The amount of capital invested in agricultural pursuits and the annual products of the same in the State of New York, as exhibited by the census of 1860, and the increase of the same during the preceding ten years, are as follows: Cash value of farms, $803,343,393, an increase over the like estimated value in 1850 of $248,796,751. Value
of farm implements, $29,166,565, an increase in
ten years of $7,081,639. Value of farm stock,
such as horses, cattle, sheep, swine, and other
animals, $82,293,917, increase in ten years $2,-
946,407. Making a total capital invested of $914,-
803,875, and an aggregate increase in ten years of
$258,824,797. Annual products, embracing grain,
hay and field crops of all kinds, $67,072,011, an
increase over the same class of crops in 1850 of
$7,076,548. Value of animal products, such as
cattle slaughtered, wool, butter and cheese, $38,-
025,698, increase in ten years, $6,588,598. Value
of orchard products, beewax, honey, maple sugar
and domestic manufactures, $5,876,968, increase
in ten years, $1,623,354. Making a total of an-
nual products of $110,974,677, against $96,786,177
in 1850, an aggregate increase of $14,188,500.

This sum of total products, $110,974,677, em-
braces the cost of farm labor, an item, the actual
amount of which, we have no census data to
determine, but we can approximate to the amount
by assuming that it equals the usual proportion
allowed by the landlord to the tenant on leased
farms, where the tenant furnishes only the labor,
which proportion as far as my knowledge extends
is one-third. Applying this rule to the case, we