

Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903) is considered the father of American landscape architecture. He embarked on an extensive research journey through the American south between 1852 and 1857. A narrative of his travels was published, from which the following is excerpted.

A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States; With Remarks on Their Economy
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(half-title page) Our Slave States.

Frederick Law Olmsted

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A MARYLAND FARM.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 14th. Called on Mr. C., whose fine farm, from its vicinity to Washington, and its excellent management, as well as from the hospitable habits of its owner, has a national reputation. It is some two thousand acres in extent, and situated just without the District, in Maryland.

The residence is in the midst of the farm, a quarter of a mile from the high road--the private approach being judiciously carried through large pastures which are divided only by slight, but close

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and well-secured, wire fences. The mansion is of brick, and, as seen through the surrounding trees, has somewhat the look of an old French chateau. The kept grounds are very limited, and in simple but quiet taste; being surrounded only by wires, they merge, in effect, into the pastures. There is a fountain, an ornamental dove-cote, and ice-house, and the approach road, nicely graveled and rolled, comes up to the door with a fine sweep.

I had dismounted and was standing before the door, when I heard myself loudly hailed from a distance.

"Ef yer wants to see Master, sah, he's down thar--to the new stable."

I could see no one; and when I was tired of holding my horse, I mounted, and rode on in search of the new stable. I found it without difficulty; and in it Mr. and Mrs. C. With them were a number of servants, one of whom now took my horse with alacrity. I was taken at once to look at a very fine herd of cows, and afterwards led upon a tramp over the farm, and did not get back to the house till dinner time.

The new stable is most admirably contrived for convenience, labor-saving, and economy of space. (Full and accurate descriptions of it, with illustrations, have been given in several agricultural journals.) The cows are mainly thorough-bred Shorthorns, with a few imported Ayrshires and Alderneys, and some small black "natives." I have seldom seen a better lot of milkers; they are kept in good condition, are brisk and healthy, docile and kind, soft and pliant of skin, and give milk up to the very eve of calving; milking being never interrupted for a day. Near the time of calving the milk is given to the calves and pigs. The object is to obtain milk only, which is never converted into butter or cheese, but sent immediately to town, and for this the

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Shorthorns are found to be the most profitable breed. Mr. C. believes that, for butter, the little Alderneys, from the peculiar richness of their milk, would be the most valuable. He is, probably, mistaken, though I remember that in Ireland the little black Kerry cow was found fully equal to the Ayrshire for butter, though giving much less milk.

There are extensive bottom lands on the farm, subject to be flooded in freshets, on which the cows are mainly pastured in summer. Indian corn is largely sown for fodder, and, during the driest season, the cows are regularly soiled with it. These bottom lands were entirely covered with heavy wood, until, a few years since, Mr. C. erected a steam saw-mill, and has lately been rapidly clearing them, and floating off the sawed timber to market by means of a small stream that runs through the farm.

The low land is much of it drained, underdrains being made of rough boards of any desired width nailed together, so that a section is represented by the inverted letter . Such covered drains have lasted here twenty years without failing yet, but have only been tried where the flow of water was constant throughout the year.

The water collected by the drains can be, much of it, drawn into a reservoir, from which it is forced by a pump, driven by horse-power, to the market-garden, where it is distributed from several fountain-heads, by means of hose, and is found of great value, especially for celery. The celery trenches are arranged in concentric circles, the water-head being in the center. The water-closets and all the drainage of the house are turned to good account in the same way. Mr. C. contemplates extending his water-pipes to some of his meadow lands. Wheat and hay

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are the chief crops sold off the farm, and the amount of them produced is yearly increasing.

The two most interesting points of husbandry, to me, were the large and profitable use of guano and bones, and the great extent of turnip culture. Crops of one thousand and twelve hundred bushels of ruta baga to the acre have been frequent, and this year the whole crop of the farm is reckoned to be over thirty thousand bushels; all to be fed out to the neat stock between this time and the next pasture season. The soil is generally a red, stiff loam, with an occasional stratum of coarse gravel, and, therefore, not the most favorable for turnip culture. The seed is always imported, Mr. C.'s experience, in this respect, agreeing with my own:--the Ruta baga undoubtedly degenerates in our climate. Bones, guano, and ashes are used in connection with yarddung for manure. The seed is sown from the middle to the last of July in drills, but not in ridges, in the English way. In both these respects, also, Mr. C. confirms the conclusions I have arrived at in the climate of New York; namely, that ridges are best dispensed with, and that it is better to sow in the latter part of July than in June, as has been generally recommended in our books and periodicals. Last year, turnips sown on the 20th July were larger and finer than others, sown on the same ground, on my farm, about the first of the month. This year I sowed in August, and, by forcing with superphosphate--home manufactured--and guano, obtained a fine crop; but the season was unusually favorable.

Mr. C. always secures a supply of turnips that will allow him to give at least one bushel a day to every cow while in winter quarters. The turnips are sliced, slightly salted, and commonly mixed with fodder and meal. Mr. C. finds that salting the

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sliced turnip, twelve hours before it is fed, effectually prevents its communicating any taste to the milk. This, so far as I know, is an original

discovery of his, and is one of great value to dairymen. In certain English dairies the same result is obtained, where the cows are fed on cabbages, by the expensive process of heating the milk to a certain temperature and then adding saltpetre.

The wheat crop of this district has been immensely increased, by the use of guano, during the last four years. On this farm it has been largely used for five years; and land that had not been cultivated for forty years, and which bore only broom-sedge--a thin, worthless grass--by the application of two hundred weight of Peruvian guano, now yields thirty bushels of wheat to an acre.

Mr. C.'s practice of applying guano differs, in some particulars, from that commonly adopted here. After a deep plowing of land intended for wheat, he sows the seed and guano at the same time, and harrows both in. The common custom here is to plow in the guano, six or seven inches deep, in preparing the ground for wheat. I believe Mr. C.'s plan is the best. I have myself used guano on a variety of soils for several years with great success for wheat, and I may mention the practice I have adopted from the outset, and with which I am well satisfied. It strikes between the two systems I have mentioned, and I think is philosophically right. After preparing the ground with plow and harrow, I sow wheat and guano together, and plow them in with a gang-plow which covers to a depth, on an average, of three inches.

Clover seed is sowed in the spring following the wheat-sowing, and the year after the wheat is taken off, this--on the old sterile hills--grows luxuriantly, knee-high. It is left alone for two years, neither mown nor pastured; there it grows and there it

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lies, keeping the ground moist and shady, and improving it on the Gurney principle.

Mr. C. then manures with dung, bones, and guano, and with another crop of wheat lays this land down to grass. What the ultimate effect of this system will be, it is yet too early to say--but Mr. C. is pursuing it with great confidence.

SLAVE LABOR--FIRST IMPRESSIONS.

Mr. C. is a large hereditary owner of slaves, which, for ordinary field and stable-work, constitute his laboring force. He has employed several

*Irishmen for ditching, and for this work, and this alone, he thought he could use them to better advantage than negroes. He would not think of using Irishmen for common farm-labor, and made light of their coming in competition with slaves. Negroes at hoeing and any steady field-work, he assured me, would "do two to their one;" but his main objection to employing Irishmen was derived from his experience of their unfaithfulness--they were dishonest, would not obey explicit directions about their work, and required more personal supervision than negroes. From what he had heard and seen of Germans, he supposed they did better than Irish. He mentioned that there were several Germans who had come here as laboring men, and worked for wages several years, who had now got possession of small farms, and were reputed to be getting rich.**

** "There is a small settlement of Germans, about three miles from me, who, a few years since (with little or nothing beyond their physical abilities to aid them), seated themselves down in a poor, miserable old field, and have, by their industry, and means obtained by working round among the neighbors, effected a change which is really surprising and pleasing to behold, and who will, I have no doubt, become wealthy, provided they remain prudent, as they have hitherto been industrious."--F. A. CLOPPER, (Montgomery Co.), Maryland, in Patent Of. Rept., 1851.*

He was disinclined to converse on the topic of slavery, and
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I, therefore, made no inquiries about the condition and habits of his negroes, or his management of them. They seemed to live in small and rude log-cabins, scattered in different parts of the farm. Those I saw at work appeared to me to move very slowly and awkwardly, as did also those engaged in the stable. These, also, were very stupid and dilatory in executing any orders given to them, so that Mr. C. would frequently take the duty off their hands into his own, rather than wait for them, or make them correct their blunders: they were much, in these respects, like what our farmers call dumb Paddies--that is, Irishmen who do not readily understand the English language, and who are still weak and stiff from the effects of the emigrating voyage. At the entrance-gate was a porter's lodge, and, as I approached, I saw a black face peeping at me from it, but, both when I entered and left, I was obliged to dismount and open the gate myself.

Altogether, it struck me--slaves coming here as they naturally did in direct comparison with free laborers, as commonly employed on my own and my neighbor's farms, in exactly similar duties--that they must be very

difficult to direct efficiently, and that it must be very irksome and trying to one's patience, to have to superintend their labor.

MARKET-DAY--NEGROES AND LIVE STOCK.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 16. Visiting the market-place, early on Tuesday morning, I found myself in the midst of a throng of a very different character from any I have ever seen at the North. The majority of the people were negroes, and, taken as a whole, they appeared inferior in the expression of their face and less well-clothed than any collection