

EXTRACTS FROM THE ADDRESS OF
FRANKLIN MINOR, ESQ., BEFORE THE
VIRGINIA STATE AGRICULTURAL SO-
CIETY, AT ITS FAIR, NOVEMBER, 1855.

THE moral obstacles which impede the march of agricultural improvement are much more serious and insurmountable than the physical ones, because the minds of men are far more perverse than the ways of nature. Among the obstacles of this kind I note, as first in magnitude and importance, *the low repute in which work is held.*

Every farmer who hath sons and daughters ought to engrave over the vestibule of his front door in large letters, "Work alone is honorable." Honest, faithful, enduring work, either of mind or body, is the only aristocracy a free republic should ever acknowledge. They are the true *Nobles* of the land who do best their "appointed work of body or mind." Woe to the land in which the *loafer* hath more of honor than the laborer. By *loafer* I mean every class of *do nothings*, whether rich or poor, high or low, young or old. No man, and most of all no farmer, has a right to be idle. This state once produced a man when the world had need of such an one, to whom, if to any, this *do nothing* right might have belonged—a man whose name I need not call, your hearts anticipate me—that name which—

"High o'er the wrecks of men shall stand sublime
A column in the melancholy waste,
(Its cities crumbled, and its glories past,)
A monument amid the solitude of time."

But he did not claim the drone's right. His glory ever was to do his "daily work of body or mind appointed," whether it summoned him to lead embattled hosts in freedom's cause, to lay the foundations of a new government in honesty, wisdom and patriotism—or to pursue the humbler occupations of a farmer. They know not all his glory who know him only in the tented field or solemn cabinet. His agricultural letters, his farm journals, his directions to his managers, his care of his slaves, in short his attention to all the minutiae of farm work, declare his dignity and honor, no less than the loftier deeds which crowned his brow with wreaths of undying glory.

But we needed not this high and noble example to prove the dignity of enduring work. Work is honorable in itself, because it is the prime law of that system by which God created and upholds the universe—because it is necessary to the full en-

joyment and development of the powers of the body and the faculties of the mind with which man is endowed—and because it is our duty to ourselves, our children and our country—a duty which none can neglect and hope for peace. There is no honor, there can be no happiness, without work. If the sluggard say that he finds enjoyment in sloth, I leave him with his rival the hog, than which he is so far more worthless as he has neither bristles on his back nor bacon in his hams. Work is honorable in all men. The Doctor, the Lawyer, the Merchant, the Mechanic find their dignity and their honor, as well as their prosperity in the fidelity with which they do their daily work. Neither the character nor the scene of our work can strip it of its dignity, *if we do it well* and in a faithful spirit. When Epaminondas had conquered the foes of his country, and won for himself immortal glory, his envious enemies in order to affront and degrade him, elected him 'scavenger of the streets.' He accepted the office, and discharged the duties of it faithfully. The glory was his, the shame recoiled upon his enemies.

All work faithfully done is honorable. But some sorts of work are more agreeable than other sorts. In this respect, which can be compared with ours? In the open field and shady forest—at early dawn and dewy eve—amidst the carols of birds and the music of nature—surrounded by all that is lovely and sublime who hath so sweet a work as the farmer? May we not be pardoned if we sometimes exult over the pent up Lawyers, Merchants and Mechanics, who toil in envious walls, with no songs, no dew-drops, no sunshine? Oh! the farmer has a noble and pleasant work. Why then is work in low repute? Why is it thought genteel to have nothing to do? There is a screw loose somewhere in our moral system, else so false a notion, so vile and pernicious a heresy, could never have found a place in it.

It has been said that the existence of slavery among us makes work degrading. If this idea was entertained, only in that land of *isms* which lies North of us, I would not notice it. But some of our own sensible people have sanctioned this erroneous opinion. Even admitting slaves to be degraded, (which I by no means will do except for the argument's sake) I cannot at all comprehend, how their doing a thing in itself honorable or indifferent can make it degrading in others to do the same thing, when duty calls on them to do it.—Base men do such things every day without deterring the good from doing the same things. Dr. Webster ordered fat turkey for his dinner the day