

thither and exchanged for the fish of Cape Cod. This exportation of grain commenced within three years after the settlement of St. Mary's, and Oldmixon states the quantity then exported as high as 10,000 bushels. This importation of fish is one of those freaks of trade, wisely ordered no doubt, which fill us, looking back upon them from a distance, with mingled amazement and amusement, for while bringing these edibles from abroad, the fisheries at her own door were richer than anything that New England could boast. The oyster beds of St. Mary's county, like those of the Eastern Shore, have been already referred to. The shad fisheries of the Potomac also are unrivaled by those of any other portion of the United States. From three hundred to thousands are taken at a "haul;" with herrings innumerable, as high as 400,000 barrels of herrings per year have been taken from that river within a hundred miles of Washington, cured, barreled and exported, chiefly through the Baltimore market.

The colonists made the same mistake that settlers upon rich, virgin soils have often made before and since. They believed its richness inexhaustible, and tried it for a century with the most exhausting system of agriculture. Their successors fell into the opposite error, and believing the soil exhausted past recovery, removed to virgin soils in the South and West, to practice, it is to be feared, the same system of agriculture which they had practised in Maryland. In consequence the agriculturally rich lower counties of the State, the earliest settled, and in some respects most desirable counties, St. Mary's, Charles, Calvert, Prince George's and Montgomery, greatly diminished in comparative importance and actually had a smaller white population in 1860 than they had in 1790.

This sparseness of population, coupled with the belief of the hopelessness of cultivating the worn out soil, left much of it idle and uncultivated, and permitted it to grow up to waste, and the immigrant will find wood land abundant and very cheap.

The last few years have seen many and great improvements in this region. Experiments have proven the soil to be most grateful for generous and proper treatment, good crops have been obtained where it was absolutely desert, and the prices of lands have much advanced.

The means of reclaiming the lands exist within themselves in extensive beds of shell marl, and it is worthy of mention in this connection, that at this time the whole country within the range of its transportation might be fertilized by the thousands of loads of manure wasting and a nuisance in the horse corrals of the Government in and about Washington.