

CHAPTER XVI.

OBSERVATIONS UPON THE PRESENT STATE OF AGRICULTURE IN MARYLAND, WITH SUGGESTIONS FOR ITS IMPROVEMENT.

Upwards of two hundred and twenty-five years have elapsed since Leonard Calvert and his small band of pilgrims effected a settlement on St. Mary's river. They honestly purchased lands from the owners, including the clearings upon which the Red Man had raised his tobacco and corn. Then was commenced a most exhausting system of agriculture, which was continued by them and their successors during a period of little short of two hundred years. The result of this old system of almost incessant cropping without manure, reduced the productiveness of the soil to such an extent that at length the crops would in many places scarcely bring the cost of raising them.

Such was the condition of much of the soil in that region when I visited it, about 26 years since; but I had an opportunity in the early part of the last summer to see the same lands bearing heavy crops of wheat, yielding, perhaps, four times the amount per acre as when I first visited that part of St. Mary's county.

Dr. Broom, an extensive as well as successful farmer, (who now owns and farms the land upon which the first settlement was made,) stated that this remarkable improvement in the soil was mainly caused by the use of lime, and, I may add, by intelligent management.

This locality is mentioned, because it contains the first land cultivated in the State by the European settlers. The settling and culture of the other tide-water counties soon followed, and with a similar impoverishment of most of the soil. By the improvements of modern agriculture, so generally adopted by our agriculturalists within the last 30 to 40 years, the improvement of the soil has progressed in an increasing ratio.

If the United States census statistics were correctly given, we should find when the returns of 1860 shall be published, that a large increase of products will have been realized during the preceding ten years throughout nearly the whole State.

It may be useful for us to inquire into the causes of this