

Saint Mary's Beacon.

LEONARDTOWN, MD.

THURSDAY Morning May 14.

chances of our fellow-coun-
Frank Ford, for the nomination
ship of the Court of Appeals,
in the estimation of the
community, and in all their specula-
tion, the factor. As we
repeat not be
usurer and money changer; now
that the farm is impoverished and
the wolf is gnawing at the latch-
string of his door, the farmer is
waking up and reaching out his
hand and laying hold on the govern-
ment machine. We all saw it
coming—this farmers' movement.
It was in the air, fresh and breezy
with the scent of the clover about it.
It was an outdoor movement. For
a time it sat on a fence and whit-
tled and talked, and we paid small
heed to it. Then it got down and
stirred around, and the women took
a hand in it, and it drove to camp-
meeting and gathered in the store,
and it grew strong and determined,
and it pulled its pants outside its
boots and walked into the United
States Senate and took a seat; it is
here among us, filling the chairs of
State, and lifting up its rugged
voice in the halls of legislature.

In 1888 the Western farmers asked
Congress for a bounty of twenty-
five cents on each bushel of wheat.
Why? Because corporations were
subsidized from the public treasury
to the farmers' disparagement; be-
cause nearly everything he ate or
drank, everything he wore, and
every utensil he used was by corpo-
rate combine raised to an unnatural
price; because all that he produced
by his labor was gambled in and
speculated with to his loss and im-
poverishment.

Never in the modern history of
the world, perhaps, have such com-
binations of wealth prevailed as
those which have controlled the
products, natural and artificial, of
this people since 1885. Then sprang
into life that creation of American
ingenuity, that irresponsible, secret,
law-defying, impersonal thing called
a "trust," into which combines,
one after another, the industries of
our people were merged. First the
cotton-seed oil trust, with fifty mil-
lion dollars capital; the sugar trust
with sixty million dollars; the rub-
ber trust with another fifty million
dollars then the steel, lead, linseed
oil, pitch, cordage, nail, oil-cloth,
binding-twine, tobacco, and all the
other "trusts," including the school
slates and paper bags.

One of the members of the Sugar
Trust testified before a Senate Com-
mittee that the object and purpose
of the Trust was "to regulate the
output and to keep prices steady;"
that is to say in plain words, to
keep down the supply, force up
prices, and lock out labor. Thus,
instantly on their formation, they
reduced the supply. Among others,
twelve oil factories, six sugar refin-
eries, twenty nail factories closed
their doors; prices rose; labor
sought in vain for employment; the
cost of living increased and poverty
fell to the lot of many as an offset
to the riches of the few. The out-
put of the people's industries was
and is absolutely controlled by these
corporate combinations, and every
man who held a plow in the furrow,
or cut down the timber in the woods,
or sowed the seed and garnered the
harvest of his industry, yes, and
every man who fished in the waters
for a living, was placed under the
burden of an iniquitous tax.

What a change has come over
this people since the old bell in
Philadelphia rang out liberty to all
the world! In those days the hus-
bandman found his market near at
hand and established the price of
his products by the law of supply
and demand; then "futures" were
not a marketable possibility; then
farms were small, unmortgaged, and
owned by individual proprietors;
"And every rood of ground sustained its
man."

Then the wants of the family
were limited, but well supplied.
"For him light labor spread her wholesome
store.
Just gave what life required, and gave no
more;
His best companions, innocence and health,
And his best riches, ignorance of wealth."

Presently, however, demand in-
creased, and when at last, amid the
gradual change, the dark shadow of
war settled over the land and gave
a still greater and more unnatural
impetus to the power of consump-
tion, it aroused the mechanical in-
genuity of the people and created
the labor-saving machinery of agri-
culture. The cost of farming

increased. This wonderful ma-
chinery would plow more, sow more,
reap more and consume less than
all the men who had preceded it.
From 1850 to 1880 labor-saving ma-
chinery used in agriculture in-
creased nine hundred per cent., while
farm labor increased only three
hundred and fifty per cent. in the
operation of improved land, which
increased one hundred and fifty per
cent.

Then capital combined to operate
the big farm and the small farmer
went to trucking or died out. He
could no longer go into the pasture
and survey his herds and flocks, or
into the field and look upon his
waving crops ripening to the har-
vest; he could no longer sit in the
open door, when the shadows fell
down over the earth, and look over
the expanse of his acres, or plant
his feet on the soil and spread out
hands to the heavens, laden with
the dew and shining with the spark-
ling stars, and say "Here is my
home and here the home of my
children; this is our freehold, and
within the circle of the earth I owe
no man aught but charity;" for a
skeleton had stalked out of the
graveyard of civilization and had
entered this man's abode; debt
clung like a foul vapor about him;
independence was a thing of the
past, and the joy of life had turned
to ashes in his grasp.

From 1870 to 1880 farms of one
hundred acres and under decreased
eleven per cent. and farms of over
one hundred acres increased one
hundred per cent., while farms of
one thousand acres and over in-
creased four hundred per cent.
This growth of the large farms
brought with it a corresponding in-
debtedness among the small farm-
ers of the country. Nine million
mortgages are to-day on record in
the United States, bearing from five
to forty per cent. interest, and, by
the experimental inquiry conducted
by the United States Census Bureau
for 1890, it is ascertained that only
three per cent. of this indebtedness
was incurred by the citizens of Mas-
sachusetts prior to 1870, only four
per cent. by the citizens of Illinois
prior to 1880, and only five per
cent. by the citizens of Iowa prior to
1880; or in other words, a compar-
atively small per centum of the ex-
isting recorded indebtedness was
due ten years ago.

For the first time in the history of
men, we have lived to see "bonanza"
farms and "cattle kings;" to read
of associations which own eight
hundred thousand acres of land; of
single corporations whose live stock
on their great ranch number a mil-
lion cattle, a million sheep and three
hundred and fifty thousand horses,
of an estimated value of forty-five
million dollars; to see men operat-
ing farms covering twenty-five to one
hundred and fifty thousand acres
under fence; to see the rolling stock
of the railroads choked with the
yield of the cereal crop, and the
navies of the world floating idly at
our wharves to secure to the spec-
ulator a rise in the price of wheat;
we have seen the settler on the fron-
tier toiling to raise a crop during
the summer months which necessity
forced him to burn for fuel in the
winter; we have become accustomed
to "corners" which levy a tax on
sixty million people as a result of
of the speculations of gamblers in
the food supply of the United
States; in a word, we have seen the
husbandman, year by year, bound
more hopelessly to the coat-tails of
his lord proprietor in this new feo-
dalism of the nineteenth century.

My friends, let us apply this ex-
perience to the subject matter of
this discussion to-night. Suppose
for the sake of argument, and that
alone, we say that the plan to lease
out the oyster lands in small hold-
ings would insure their better work-
ing, have we any assurance that in
time, either by mortgage or pur-
chase, the small holders will not,
like the small farmers, be absorbed
by the larger capitalist? Have we
any guarantee that the larger fac-
ilities of the capitalist will not en-
able him to control the market, to
render the small holdings compara-
tively worthless and ultimately to
squeeze out the small holder and
create a monopoly. I give little heed
to the theoretical safeguards which
the advocates of this course may
suggest. You may write words on
parchment, you may enroll them
among the statutes; but, in the
light of experience, deeds and sta-
tutes, and decisions of courts, and
senate committees, and the power
of a fearless press, have all been
unequal to maintaining the patri-
mony of the poor against the greed
of the rich.

I can imagine a Legislature hon-
estly surrounding the lease with
every restriction which legal ingenu-
ity could suggest, and, I can im-
agine another Legislature, just as
honestly and with equal ingenuity,
reversing its acts. The possibility
of corporations receiving grants of
land in the Chesapeake Bay bot-
toms is the assurance of the ultimate
formation and control of the "trust";
the big fish would swallow the small
of their own kind. Bearing in
mind the course followed by these
"trusts," which I have outlined in
my remarks, realizing that in
every instance they have sought to
advance prices by restricting pro-
duction, we can scarcely be expect-
ed to believe that such a control
over the oyster fisheries as that sug-
gested would reverse the precedents
and seek to enlarge the supply and
reduce the price to the public. On
the contrary the inevitable result
of such a course as the surrender of
these lands to private corporations
would be to restrict the taking of
oysters to a limited territory, to
confine the market to a limited sup-
ply, to increase the cost of the oys-
ter to the general public, to de-
crease wages, and to throw out of
employment the great multitude of
men who now enjoy a frugal living
from this industry.

The methods which large capital
would employ in the fisheries by
the introduction of steam and
machinery, would dispense with
the labor of hands; experience and
knowledge of the business would
be as little necessary as in the pre-
sent labor of our machine-worked
farms. The fisherman would be
absolutely a wage-worker, depend-
ent on the corporation, and his
wages regulated by the competition
of the world's market and not by the
population of a county or town.
The private capital, the savings of
years of patient industry, now re-
presented in the bateau or canoe,
would depreciate in value. The
school fund would vanish, the
company's store would come, and
the one section of the State where
it has been our boast to say that
any honest man who would work
could get his own living, and where
God had opened the storehouse of
nature to His hungry poor, would,
practically, pass under the control
of a great and irresponsible power,
whereof would become the law
of the necessities of the

the packer who was not ad-
mitted to this combine, or who,
having been admitted, was after-
ward squeezed out as an incumbrance
by his more crafty or more power-
ful confederates, the existence of
this "trust" would simply mean
subjugation and ruin. It is not
reasonable that the operations of
such a corporation would be con-
fined to the oyster fisheries; it
would, as a natural sequence, con-
trol all collateral interests, and the
packing trade and the tin-can
manufacturer would gradually but
surely pass under this overshadow-
ing monopoly.

The small competition in wages
now existing in those trades, which
yet affords some semblance of in-
dependence to the labor, would be
gone, and the great army of men,
women and children would fail of
employment or obtain a precarious
living at greatly reduced rates.

I am told that some amendments
to the existing "cull" law would
go far to perfecting it in operation;
that for all practical purposes it
would insure an improvement in
the future supply; that this law has,
so far, operated advantageously;
that time, by natural law, will
cause the recuperation of the oyster
bars; that the men engaged in the
fisheries are willing to observe any
statutes which may be enacted
looking to this end and for the
general welfare.

I am informed by many practical
men engaged last season in the
fisheries that the grounds are well
supplied with young oysters. I do
not believe, with such a public sen-
timent and the present condition of
the grounds, that the future is, by
any means, dark or unpromising.
Send representatives to the Legis-
lature who have the experience and
intelligence necessary to enact
proper laws for the protection of
this industry, and for many years
to come you will yet enjoy your
right to a common of fishery in the
Chesapeake Bay. The principles
of the common law can alone pre-
serve those rights. As certainly
as the sovereign people of this State
yield one jot or tittle of their pre-
rogatives to the full ownership,
possession and enjoyment of this
common of fishery, so certainly the
time will come when that right

will have passed beyond their con-
trol.
And now, in conclusion, before
me lies the map of this old State of
Maryland, with the Bay spread out
like a silver shield upon its surface.
The tide flows in, salt with the
brine of the hoary sea, laden with
the offerings of the deep. Down
to its margins, mingling on its
broad expanse, sweep the rivers
fresh with the sweet waters of the
hills. Up from the shore line, low
lying, with many a cove and open-
ing, rises the flat land, covered
with reeds and marshes, backed by
the green bordering of the trees,
and the sleepy wind creeps silently
along the rippling water and fills
the sails of the boats, and they
come homeward sailing to their
havens. Here, far removed from
the noise and turmoil, the conflict
and the strife of our city life, the
people pursue their humble calling.
Let them rest! Hold sacred their
rights and liberties! Better the
gratitude of a contented people than
the glory of riches; and better than
a tower for defense is their trust
and confidence.

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