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Author

Edward Lloyd (VI)

The Farmer

1798-1861

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When Edward Lloyd the fifth of the name, who was commonly called Governor, arrived at his majority, the happy event was suitably celebrated at Wye House by a convivial assemblage of relatives and friends, who in the midst of their hilarity, after dinner, called for the infant heir to the name and estate, Edward Lloyd (VI) Jr., who was brought to the table and made to go through the form of drinking his father's health. He was then more than one year old, having been born at Annapolis, Dec. 27th, 1798. He was the eldest son of a large family of children, all of whom at this date (Oct. 1885) are dead with a single exception, the widow of Admiral Buchanan, who, in a serene and beautiful old age, still represents the high born graces of the family and the sterling virtues of her distinguished father. Young Lloyd grew up in the seclusion of his home, with no other companions than his own brothers and sisters, or, as unsophisticated youth knows few distinctions, the young negroes upon the plantation. His early education was at the hand of Mr. Joel Page a private tutor in the family, who long continued to be an honored and beloved inmate of Wye House, and who, there ending his days under painful

circumstances, being distracted in mind, was interred in the ancestral burial ground where a stone is erected to his memory, consecrated by the affection of more than one generation of the Lloyds. As all his ancestors had been farmers or planters, young Lloyd seems to have been predestined to the avocation of a tiller of the soil. Under the erroneous impression that the agriculturist is not benefited by higher education, or rather condemning, as he justly might do, the sciolism or pedantry of the college bred men of his day, his father neglected to give him the advantages of even that poor training and culture which could be obtained in the superior schools of the time. Young Lloyd did, however, feel some inclination to prepare himself for a professional life, and actually began his studies in the city of Philadelphia; but these, being interrupted by a severe attack of illness, were never renewed. It would have been no waste of time, money and labor, if he had taken courses of instruction in law, medicine and divinity, as preparatory to the avocation to which hereditary custom had destined him; for the learning of each of these would have been of value to the great planter who was required by the circumstances of his position as slave holder to perform the functions of jurist, doctor and priest upon his domain and among his dependents. While Mr. Lloyd missed those refined and delightful pleasures which flow from the cultivation of polite letters and the pursuits of science, he was not without compensation in his escape from their enervating influences, for while acquiring the elements of a good sound education in English letters and the principles of such knowledge as can be made applicable to the common practical affairs of life, the most masculine forces of his mind and traits of character were free to develop in all their healthy vigor and natural nobility. In short his education, falling in with his inclinations or aptitudes and circumstances, made him not the scholar

weighed down with "wise saws and modern instances"-dreamy, speculative, hesitating, timid from very excess of knowledge-but the thoroughly equipped man of affairs, courageous, ready, full of resources, capable of reading life's lessons of wisdom written in its most obscure dialect, of solving life's problems involved to the last degree of intricacy, unraveling life's syllogisms in her most entangled "logic of events," and reducing in the crucible and alembic of experience the most refractory of life's materials. There is other learning than that taught in the schools, however high, and this Ed. Lloyd acquired in the school of experience.

Arriving earlier than usual at a period in life, when the vacant pleasures of youth cease to satisfy the mind and occupy the hours, he became desirous of serious and profitable employment and so, at his request, he was placed in charge of a large plantation of his father's. Marrying soon after, his father built for him the beautiful house at Wye Heights now occupied by David C. Trimble, Esq., and there he settled down to the serious work of life which was never pretermitted until life's close. There he continued to reside until the death of Gov. Lloyd, when he removed to Wye House, and Wye Heights became the home of Danied Lloyd, Esq., his brother. There, too, he may be said to have served his apprenticeship under that most able master in geonies,- his father. In the conduct of this and other large tracts he displayed those qualities, and later acquired those habits which characterized him as the greatest farmer of the State of Maryland. Reared in affluence he became frugal; growing up in ease and idleness he became laborious and industrious; accustomed to every pleasure which wealth could purchase or parental partiality bestow he became abstinent from or inoderate in the indulgence of the customary enjoyments of youthful life, and to the greatest freedom of action, he became circumspect, self-restrained

as regards his own conduct, and masterful of the conduct of those subject to his control-that is to say, as he was able to govern himself so he was able to govern others. In this apprenticeship at Wye Heights he acquired that training which qualified him to manage in after life, with wonderful skill the larger estate of both land and slaves that fell under his care at the death of his father or that he acquired by his own economy, prudence or acuteness.

Without being too precise in its definition, it may be well enough to note that the period embraced within the experience of Col. Edward Lloyd (VI) the typical farmer of this section of Maryland, was pretty distinctly marked off in the industrial history of Talbot county. It extended from the time when the agricultural revolution from tobacco culture to grain growing-from planting properly so called to farming- had been fully completed; through the years of a rude and wasteful husbandry when the rearing of the cereals received the almost exclusive attention of our farmers; down to the beginning of that great epoch, which is marked in our industrial history by the introduction of improved machinery, the use of artificial fertilizers, but more distinctly still by the change of our system of labor. When Edward Lloyd, Jr., commenced his farming operations the rearing for market of tobacco, once the great staple and indeed currency of the province and State, after a gradual decline of more than fifty years, had wholly ceased. It had merely a survival to use the phraseology of the sociologists of this day, in the small patches of the negroes, who planted a little for their own uses. The adaptation of the soil of Talbot to the growth of grain, its presumed want of adaptation to the rearing of cattle, the proximity of the county to the first flour market of America or perhaps in the world coupled with the facilities of each farmer for the shipment of his products from his own door, probably a growing perception of the impoverishment of his lands,

had expelled the "sot weed" (its "factors" had long since gone) from the fields and barns, caused the warehouses for its storage to go to decay, and deprived the inspectors of their vocation. Edward Lloyd, Junior, long so called, became a great grain grower, and labored successfully, when so many failed, through the long and weary years of agricultural depression, extending from about 1820 to his death in 1861-years when the rewards of farm industry were so small and the wants of a growing civilization were so disproportionately great-years when poverty seemed to be the lot of the small farmer, and debt that of the large-years, too, when, in the midst of social and political unrest all seemed to be so dazed and blinded as to be incapable of seeing the cause why their fertile fields yielded but the crops of sterility and their labor and economy were paid with the wages of sloth and wastefulness. During this period the value of lands in Talbot County declined, and population diminished or was stationary.⁶⁷ It is much to the credit of Edward Lloyd the farmer, that under these depressing circumstances, -for it must be borne in mind that he was affected as sensibly by them as others were, if not more seriously-he was able to maintain the ancient repute of the family for wealth, when it seemed upon the verge of destruction, to disburden his estate of a heavy debt left charged upon it by his father, to aid his brothers when involved in pecuniary difficulties, and even to add largely to his wealth both in land and slaves.

The fanning of Col. Lloyd was conducted on a great scale, for he cultivated thousands of acres, and with a method which was as admirable as it was necessary for success. The system of tenantry, the occupant paying a proportion of the products, called by the French agronomists, the *systems metayer*, which prevailed in this county, had not his approval as being entirely too favorable to the land

renters, and often disastrous to the land owners; but while his estate was divided into many separate farms, each independent of the other, he kept the whole under his mediate or immediate direction and supervision. Each farm had its overseer, a white man, with its own gang of slaves, while the whole of them was under a bailiff or steward, who reported to him as master and chief. But he was not content with this, for he was unremitting in his personal attention, visiting each daily, if possible, giving general directions as to its tillage and management, looking after the welfare of his slaves, administering to their wants, or ordering punishment for offences against discipline. This involved much personal labor, for the accomplishment of which he was early in his saddle. Whether guests were in his house or not he made his rounds in company with his steward and returned to dine with his family in the afternoon. The remainder of the day was given to social enjoyment, or attention to such business as should be discharged in his office. He was of the class of gentlemen farmers—a class which it has been and still is the privilege and profit of this county to possess, giving dignity to an avocation too commonly thought to be suggestive of rudeness and rusticity only, refining the manners of our people prone to become agrestic, and maintaining a standard of honor in our social as well as business life—but he was a gentleman farmer, not in the sense of being one who amused himself with rural occupations as a pastime, and evaded the labors, responsibilities and annoyances of the husbandman, but in the sense of being one, who, not laboring with his hands upon his estate, was nevertheless assiduous in his attention to his business, careful in directing its greater or more important operations, giving personal attention to the condition of his dependents, looking closely after his own personal interests, yet finding time or taking it, for the cultivation of those

amenities and graces which give to life its greatest charm, and for indulgence in those pleasures, without which "weary, stale, flat and unprofitable, seem all the uses of this world." He was eminently a practical farmer, not given to trying experiments, yet not following old methods for the sake of consistency; having no agronomic theories to establish, but observing close that he might form rules for his own guidance. Not contemrning the laws of good husbandry which the experience of others or of himself had shown to be of value, he was suspicious of novelties, however highly recommended, knowing that in farming there is learned ignorance and that charlatanry has there as ample a field for its deceptions as in any other department of human effort. He did not believe there was any cryptic husbandry by which his broad acres could be converted at once into Hesperidean gardens, producing golden fruit, nor that there existed any bucolic catholicon to lard the lean ribs of half-fed cattle. Scientific farming, so-called, with its analyses of soils and their products, with its test tubes and scales, its alembies and retorts, with its ammonias, its phosphates and its potash salts, was looked at askance; not as denying, but as doubting, not as condenming, but as suspecting. Slow to change his method of culture, hesitating to accept innovations upon established usages, suspicious of newfangled implements which the ingenuity of the North and West was inventing under the stimulus of labor scarcity, and was pressing on the attention of the less crafty South-crafty in the old and honorable sense--where the like necessity for such devices did not exist, in the same degree, at least, the whole economy of his farms was decidedly conservative, as it is best all farming should be. If success be the meas- ure of skill in any calling, certainly Colonel Lloyd deserved to be regarded as one of the best farmers of Maryland; for his wealth increased while that of others diminished-he prospered while others in like

circumstances failed, falling into embarrassments and poverty. And this success was won, not by happy good luck in outside and hazardous ventures, but by his ability and diligence in his own legitimate business.

A few words with reference to Colonel Lloyd's management of his numerous slaves may with propriety supplement this account of his farming. Slavery on his estate differed from the slavery that existed almost everywhere else in the county, in this, that it was plantation rather than domestic slavery, to use terms of differentiation that here need not be explained. Owing to the great extent of that estate and the great number of slaves upon it, it was necessary to divide them by placing gangs or groups made up mostly of families upon each farm. These gangs were under overseers, and lived in quarters, a kind of barracks, or where there were families in separate cabins. The greater portion of those thus situated seldom came in communication with their master or his family, indeed many of them were as unknown to him as he was to them. There was therefore small opportunity for him to become acquainted with their grievances or unusual wants, and an impression became current that these grievances were unredressed and those wants unsupplied. That much hardship was silently endured is probable and there may have been even instances of cruelty at the hands of the rude men over them, but not with the consent, much less at the instance of the master. For the maintenance of due discipline a rigid regimen was absolutely necessary, and often without doubt the rules which were proper and mfl d in themselves were enforced by the overseers in so harsh a manner as to give grounds for a belief that the burdens of slavery, never and nowhere light and easy to be borne, on those portions of Col. Lloyd's estate which were not immediately and constantly under his eye, were rendered more heavy and galling than he wished them to be, or

than they were elsewhere in the county. It must be remembered too, that even deserved punishments when inflicted by a private hand, and not by the unimpassioned arm of the law, are apt to be regarded as cruel, even when they are milder than those judicially inflicted; and that labors unrewarded by wages are considered as severe and -crushing, which to the compensated worker would be felt as moderate, or easily endured. It should be mentioned, also, that inasmuch as it had been the immemorial custom of the Lloyd's of Wye, rarely or never, departed from, to sell no negroes from their plantations, the number of the idle and the vicious, deserving severity of treatment, was greater upon their estates than where the masters, by disposing of the incorrigible or criminal of their gangs to the Southern dealers, rid themselves of a class of slaves whose discipline required rigorous methods that savored of cruelty. As Col. Lloyd was a humane man, and kindly in all other relations, if he was harsh and cruel in his relations of master to his slaves, a relation which appealed in many ways to his leniency, and in an especial manner to his compassion, he must have been violating his own nature and customary impulses, a thing not to be believed. But to close what may be said upon this subject, it may be stated that his slaves were reasonably well housed, well clothed, well fed, not over worked, and cared for in sickness and in old age; yet, it must be confessed, that they enjoyed few luxuries, and but little of that *dolce far niente* so delightful and so natural to the negro-nor did any slaves anywhere enjoy them, except the "curled darlings" of the household." 68

The circumstance of the observance of the family custom of selling no negroes taken in connection with the prolificacy of the race, which a state of servitude instead of impairing seems to have promoted, caused a rapid multiplication of slaves upon the estate so that they began

to be profitless to the owner. In order to remedy this evil of over population, and that other of the retention around him of the vicious and idle, Col. Lloyd purchased in 1837 a large plantation in Madison county, Mississippi, and thither he removed, first, those who expressed a willingness to go--for he gave to the industrious and tractable the option to go or stay-and subsequently those whose conduct was such as to merit the punishment of transportation to this his penal colony, taking care, in the cases of the former, or deserving, not to separate families. It will thus be seen that he adopted a scheme for his own relief which had been adopted by civil governments under like embarrassments. This plantation at first quite remunerative, was ravaged by the war, and for long after rendered valueless by emancipation, but it is pleasant to know that it has again become profitable to Edward Lloyd VII, the present owner.⁶⁹

The Lloyds of Wye from the time of the coming into the province of Maryland of the first Edward had always taken an active and conspicuous part in public affairs, and therefore, it may be supposed, Edward Lloyd the sixth of the name felt it incumbent upon him too, not withstanding his want of predilection for, if it may not be said, his want of adaptation to political life, to assume the burdens and, in appearance at least, to covet the honors of civic station. He may have felt in some degree the instigations of an inherited propensity or it may have been a sense of obligation to the sovereign people, like that which bound the ancient nobility to assume their arms at the command of the king, that impelled him to take part in our civic contests. It is difficult to resist nature; almost as difficult to resist custom. Col. Lloyd had few of those qualities of mind and character which make the politician, using that term in the opprobrious which is the common sense of the term. He could not use the

politician's methods of action or thought. He knew nothing of his trickeries and frauds, nothing of his deceptions, pretenses and compromises with the truth and the right. He was as upright in his political conduct as he was sincere in his political convictions. If he was sometimes at fault in his opinions, as he most assuredly was, he never erred in his manner of asserting and defending them, he

Whose armor was his honest thought
And simple truth his utmost skill.

He made no claim to higher statesmanship, but was content to follow the foot steps of accredited leaders, for he was a strict partisan, and possessed the very equivocal merit of never differing from his party, at least so far as to oppose it in word or action. He inherited his attachment to the democratic party from his father, but this attachment was strengthened with the years, by a belief that in the supremacy of that party lay not only the national welfare but the security of his property in slaves. Pride is humiliated when it is discovered how many opinions which have been thought to have their origin in right reason may be traced to a selfish interest or even more ignoble source. Col. Lloyd probably never felt this humiliation, but he lived long enough to see that some of the doctrines of his party which were thought to afford the best defence of his peculiar property when pushed to extreme were the indirect causes of its obliteration. His first appearance on the political field was as delegate to the convention that nominated Mr. Van Buren, and then as presidential elector in the contest in 1836 between that distinguished gentleman and the more distinguished Mr. Clay. Mr. Lloyd gave assistance rather by weight of character and liberal pecuniary aid than by campaign oratory and electioneering devices, for he was not a ready speaker nor skilful schemer. The whigs were successful in

the county by a very considerable majority, and carried the State, but their great chieftain was not elected president. He was again upon the electoral ticket in 1840 when Mr. Van Buren was a second time the democratic candidate for the presidency with Gen'l Harrison as his opponent. This ticket was again defeated in Talbot as in the State at large, and Mr. Van Buren lost his seat which was filled by a much weaker man and less astute politician. In the year 1843 there was much agitation in Maryland respecting the payment of the "direct tax" which had been imposed for the purpose of meeting the interest upon the debt incurred for the construction of "internal improvements." A very considerable number of citizens of this county opposed the collection of this tax, and among them was Col. Lloyd, who most severely felt the impost. As the law provided that this "direct tax" should be collected by the same officers that collected the county taxes, and as there was resistance or refusal to pay the former so there was omission to pay the latter. There resulted much embarrassment at the county fise. A public meeting was called first to protest against the collection of the State assessment, and second to devise means for the relief of the county treasury. At this meeting Col. Lloyd was present, and he was appointed one of a committee to confer with the county commissioners. No more need be said here of this humiliating passage in our State and county history. Our ship of State barely steered clear of the rocks of repudiation upon which some seemed bent upon driving her. It is difficult to believe that Col. Lloyd was one of these. It is reasonable as well as charitable to suppose he was unconscious of the danger that lay in her course. This is only another instance of honorable men falling into errors when their political conduct is directed by a different moral compass from that they employ for their guidance in their private affairs. In the year 1850 and for some years previously the question of calling a

convention for a reform of the constitution of the State had been much discussed, and in May of this year a vote of the people was taken to determine whether such a convention should assemble. The vote was very small, indicating much indifference, not one half the electors casting their ballots; but the result was favorable to the call of a convention. Nominations by both the parties were made and those of the Democratic party were Messrs. Edward Lloyd, Morris O. Colston, S. P. Dickinson and Cornelius Sherwood. They were elected by a very large majority. At the organization of the convention Col. Lloyd was honored with a handsome vote for the president but failed of his election. He was not prominent in the debates of this body but that deference was shown to his opinions upon the different subjects that came before it, which was due to his good judgment upon organic law. After his election as a delegate to the convention, namely in October, 1850, he was, without opposition, elected State senator for Talbot and served during the years 1851 and 1852, succeeding the Hon. Sam'l Hambleton. Over this body he presided as president with the dignity and courtesy of the inbred gentleman and the tact and intelligence of the trained parliamentarian. It is believed that after the expiration of his term of service in the senate he never consented to be a candidate for any office, and gave no more attention to politics than his duty as a citizen required him. Before his death in 1861 the terrific storm that had been gathering in the political sky for many years, and had given warning of its approach by its frequent thunders, broke with all its devastating forces upon the devoted nation, threatening to rend it into fragments. He did not live to see it in all its maddened fury, much less to witness after it had paved over all its ravages. He is thought to have been in hearty sympathy with the insurgents of the South; but it is impossible to believe he was incapable of foreseeing the

consequences of the great rebellion to the institution for whose preservation that rebellion was raised, by those so infatuated as not to know that the first gun of the war was the signal for the destruction, sooner or later, of slavery. But he may have indulged the hope of many patriotic citizens that even after the first overt act some solution would be found of solving the problem reconciling national integrity with a perpetuation of the cause of the existing discord and distractions hope which, as is now seen, was vain and irrational. It is due to him to say that he did not render himself obnoxious to the government or its partisans in Talbot by any positive acts of disloyalty, though no man would have been more excusable from a southern point of view.

Col. Lloyd was nominally a member of the Protestant Episcopal Church, but like most of the Lloyds of Wye, he took little interest in its spiritual or temporal affairs. He respected its ministers, revered its doctrines and paid its dues, but neglected its ordinances, though not its moral precepts. Immersed in business he found time for but few of the social pleasures, other than those of a retired and domestic life. In his manners he was dignified and polished, but unaffected, easy and affable; inviting friendliness but repelling intimacies. He was frank, kindly and hospitable. A liberal scale of living was maintained at Wye House, but the lavish hospitality of his father was restricted to more moderate limits. While its doors were still opened to "welcome the coming and speed the parting guest," and while its board spread its generous regale, it could not be said, as was said of it in the days Governor Lloyd, in rustic compliment, meant to be superlative, that it was the most frequented hostelry of the county.⁷⁰ Col. Lloyd was of medium height, compactly built, of ruddy countenance, and a generally pleasing man. No portrait of him exists. He married Nov. 30,

1824, Miss Alicia, daughter of Mr. Michael McBlair, merchant of the city of Baltimore. This lady dying in 1838, left five children, of whom the present master of Wye House, Edward Lloyd, seventh of the name is the eldest. Col. Lloyd, after the death of his wife in 1838, remained unmarried and died at his home, Aug. 11, 1861, where he was buried in accordance with his injunctions as expressed in his will, "plainly, privately, without parade or preaching,"⁷¹ and where a monument with simple inscriptions has been erected to his memory.

67. From 1820 to 1860, according to the United States census, the population of Talbot increased in 40 years but 406 persons. From 1820 to 1840, in 20 years, it diminished 1,299 persons. From 1860 to 1880, in 20 years, it increased 3,630 persons.
68. This is a subject of so much delicacy that in this connection it cannot be pursued further: but it is hoped time and opportunity will be found for a consideration of the whole subject of slavery, as it existed in Talbot county, when occasion will be taken to correct and rebuke many of the misapprehensions which a hyperaesthiesal humanitarianism has indulged and many of the misrepresentations of a malicious or ignorant prejudice has invented and promulgated.
69. It may be well enough to say that in 1857 and 1858 he made large purchases of land in Arkansas and Louisiana which have since been disposed of. In transporting his slaves in 1837, he took them in his own sloop across the bay to Annapolis and then placed them in wagons. In these they were conveyed to Mississippi, he accompanying them in person, to secure their safety and comfort. Mr. Lloyd bought lands in Talbot also, and among them were properties on Choptank, and the estates of his brothers, Mr. Murray and Mr. Daniel Lloyd.
70. Or to use the common mode of expressing the same sentiment which was meant to be complimentary. "Governor Lloyd entertained more strangers at his house than Sol. Low at his tavern in Easton." This Sol. Low was a prince of Bonifaces.