ADDRESS

AT THE

TWENTIETH SESSION

OF THE

American Pomological Society

HELD IN GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN,

SEPT. 9, 10, 11, 1885.

BY MARSHALL P. WILDER,
PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY.

PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY.
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Mr. Little with the
friend regards of
his friend

Marshall P. Wilder
1798- Oct 22- 1874
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THE HON. MARSHALL P. WILDER, PH.D., LL. D.

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Gentlemen of the American Pomological Society:

With the close of this meeting of our Association, thirty-seven years will have elapsed since its organization. Thanks to the goodness of an overruling Providence, it still lives to dispense its blessings on mankind. Long may it go on prospering and to prosper, while the earth bears a fruit, or man lives to cultivate it.

I have several times tendered my resignation as President, but the Society has as often declined to accept it, and has elected a special officer to occupy the chair when from any cause I might not be able to be present. This action I take to be an expression of feeling that I should still remain with you by official relation, not so much for what I can now do, as for a testimonial of regard for what I have done in the past. So believing, I have the pleasure to address you again.

Happy should I be if I could meet with you, to express personally our gratitude to the Michigan Horticultural Society for its cordial reception, and the
ample accommodations it has provided for us; and most happy should I be to exchange congratulations on the continuance of our lives; to rejoice with you in the prosperity of our Association, and to concert measures for its usefulness in advancing the great work that has been committed to our charge; but as this cannot be, I console myself with the hope that you will accept the invitation of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, and come to Boston in 1887, when I may be permitted to lay off the robes of office with which you have so long honored me, unless, ere that time, I shall have been clothed with the robes of immortality, and gone up to gather celestial fruits, which ripen not in earthly climes.

The work which our Society assumed was great indeed—no less than to compare fruits, and opinions as to the value of the numerous varieties in cultivation; to assist in determining the synonymes by which they were known; to endeavor to abridge, by general consent, the long catalogue of indifferent or worthless sorts then propagated by nurserymen and cultivators; to furnish reliable information in regard to the varieties which succeed in our varied climates; to maintain a spirit of cordial intercourse with kindred institutions—in short, to extend and improve the culture of fruit throughout our land. Thus our Society became the herald and guardian of a new era in the progress of Pomology never before known in this or other lands. It was its mission to lead in this most beneficent work. Most
faithfully has it executed this trust, embracing, as it now does in its organization, not only the States and Territories of our Union, but the British provinces on the North, all of which are represented in our institution, thus constituting, as it were, a Continental Association, working together harmoniously for the advancement of the Pomology of the American continent. Most of those who stood as sponsors at the organization of our Society, have exchanged the cultivation of fruits for the culture of the soul in the better land, and we fondly trust are now partaking of those immortal fruits whose bloom was on earth, but whose harvest is eternal in heaven. The Downings, Brincklé, Prince, Buist, James, Ernst, Warder, Walker, French, Cabot, and our Secretaries, Vick, Elliott, and Flagg, have passed on, leaving bright examples of their interest in our Society and the objects it seeks to promote. But, while we thus speak, let us be thankful to the Giver of all Good that some of its founders, who rocked the cradle of its infancy, still live and stand as its godfathers to this day to receive the thanks of grateful millions. Thomas, Parsons, Hovey, Ellwanger, Barry, Robert Manning, still live to help us carry on our noble work.

In Memoriam.

In reviewing events since our last meeting, I feel that we should most gratefully recognize that Divine Goodness which has preserved the lives of so many of our members to the present time. Some few — only
a few—from our large membership have passed away, and only one, so far as we know, of the more than one hundred connected with us by official relations, has departed since our last session, two years ago.

But he whom we could least spare has been taken from us. Charles Downing, our beloved friend, the upright man, and the great pomologist of America, is no more! The loss to our country and cause seems now to be irreparable. But Infinite Wisdom cannot err, and we should be thankful that he has been so long spared to us.

Mr. Downing was born at Newburg, N. Y., July 9, 1802, and died at his home in that city January 18, 1885. His death is to me a most afflictive event. We were associated together for nearly half a century in efforts to advance the pomology of our country. Succeeding, as he did, his brother, A. J. Downing, whose eulogy it was my sad duty to pronounce thirty-two years ago, he became the editor of the "Fruits and Fruit Trees of America," all the editions of which have been dedicated to my name from the first. These circumstances have drawn us more and more closely together by the ties of affection and friendly regard.

As a pomologist, he was world-renowned for his knowledge, accuracy, and good judgment, and as such had a longer experience than any other man of whom I have any record in this or any other country. His books will ever be precious memorials of good fruits
and good men; of a life whose great object was to make others happy in the enjoyment of the beauties and bounties of creation, and which has been a blessing to our world.

For more than a generation, he edited the “Fruits and Fruit Trees of America,” first written by his brother forty years ago. With the progress and expansion of pomology, this work grew under his hand to such an extent that he might well have claimed to be the author; yet, with characteristic modesty, he preferred to lay his laurels upon his brother’s grave. This encyclopaedic work, in its many successive editions, is now the authority in regard to the multitude of fruits described in it.

Charles Downing is dead, but his spirit is still with us, and will continue to inspire our souls, and the souls of those who shall succeed us, as long as a love of the beautiful in nature, of rural pleasures and of domestic comfort shall have a place in the heart of mankind. His star has now set, but it has left a golden record which shall illumine the annals of pomology, while the earth shall bring forth the fruits which he so much loved. His works are a rich legacy to the American people, and an enduring monument to his memory.

Although it has not been our custom to refer to the decease of members who had not been officially connected with us, I cannot refrain from expressing the deep regret which has been generally felt on account of the deaths of two of our members who held
the highest positions in the Horticultural Societies of Pennsylvania and Massachusetts, whose hospitalities we have several times enjoyed.

Hon. W. L. Schaeffer had for seventeen years held the office of President of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, and had been still longer in other official positions. He was much devoted to the interests of that Society, and the advancement of our cause.

Hon. Francis B. Hayes was in the fifth year of his Presidency of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society. He was much interested in Horticulture, especially in the introduction of new shrubs and plants for the adornment of his country residence, expending large sums of money for this object, and was one of the largest and most constant contributors to the exhibitions of the Society over which he so ably presided.

Both of these gentlemen were taken from us last year; they will long be remembered for their love of Horticulture, and their labors in promoting it, and will long be mourned, not only by their respective Societies, but by those of this Society who remember them as presiding with dignity and grace at the banquets given to us on our last visits to Boston and Philadelphia.

What our Society has Accomplished.

When we reflect on the unsettled and chaotic condition of pomology in our country when our Society
was established, the narrow limits to which fruit culture was confined, and the few engaged in it, and compare it with the immense territory now occupied for this purpose, and its importance as a great industry of our country, I think it may be well to take a retrospective view and see what our Society has accomplished.

Its formation opened a new era of enterprise in the annals of American Pomology, which has no parallel in those of other lands. It was the first great national pomological society, embracing in its organization the largest area for fruit culture in the world, where almost every fruit of every zone may be grown in perfection.

It has brought into close communion of interest, and concert of action, the most experienced and skilful pomologists of our country; and by its proceedings and publications has furnished examples and methods of work which have been adopted by other pomological and horticultural societies, all working harmoniously together, and thus has become the acknowledged pomological authority of our land.

It is truly an American Society, having, through all the vicissitudes of the past, held in the bonds of friendly intercourse for the promotion of our cause, the North, East, West and the South, and every region where fruits can be grown on this continent.

It has raised the standard of excellence by which our fruits are judged, discouraged the cultivation of inferior sorts, and thus educated the taste of the public for those of better quality, so that kinds once
common in our markets have become obsolete, and are now considered unworthy of propagation. In doing this portion of its work it has discarded by general consent more than six hundred varieties, either worthless or superseded by better sorts.

It has established a uniform system of rules, by which fruits are to be shown and judged. But, what is of the highest importance, it has instituted a much needed reform in the nomenclature of fruits, by which all long, unpronounceable, indelicate, inappropriate, and superfluous words are to be suppressed in the dedication of our fruits.

One of the grandest achievements of the Society is its Catalogue of Fruits, published biennially, with isothermal divisions and columns for fifty States, Territories, and districts, in which are recorded the fruits which may successfully be grown in those divisions, with stars to designate the merits and seasons of each. This is a work of great merit, and not attempted by any other society. And here let me say, that we should never forget how large a debt of gratitude we owe to Mr. P. Barry, as Chairman of the General Fruit Committee, for its compilation and classification. He has performed this duty for a long course of years; and fortunate indeed is it that we have, as his successor, his son, Mr. W. C. Barry, who has been so well educated for this duty.

Few things in the history and progress of American Pomology have been more effective in the past and
more promising of valuable results in the future than our system of State Reports. They embrace correct information from trustworthy persons, having special reference to the varieties most successfully grown; new kinds worthy of special notice; the chief obstacles to successful fruit culture in each district; and correct information in regard to the extent and progress of fruit culture in each section of our country, and are published under the supervision of the chairman of the General Fruit Committee of our Society, and contain a vast fund of information not elsewhere to be found.

These reports constitute a mine of pomological wealth, and contain not only all the modifications and changes which may have been made in collecting information concerning the culture of fruits, but also in the naming of them, and the synonyms by which they are known; the most desirable varieties being designated in our catalogue by stars, according to their several merits.

I cannot close my remarks on this subject without expressing the very great interest I feel in continuing this most important branch of our researches through generations to come, so that for all time we may have a system for the advancement of pomology, which shall be worthy of our nation and the great interests we represent. Had it done nothing else, this alone would entitle our Society to the universal approval which it now receives, and the gratitude of the generations which are to succeed us.
Before the organization of the Society, while we had around us, an immense region ready for the cultivation of the finest fruits, great confusion prevailed in nomenclature, and the difference between good and bad sorts was very dimly appreciated. At that time, pomologists experienced great difficulty in obtaining varieties true to name; and sometimes, after repeatedly procuring fruits, and losing years in waiting for them to bear, found themselves where they started. The American Pomological Society has performed an immense labor through its meetings and its committees, in correcting this confusion, and it is wonderful to contrast the early condition of pomology with its present mature state. Its future labor will be continuous and of vital moment, in introducing new and valuable varieties; and what will be of the greatest importance, maintaining an accurate nomenclature. It will inform fruit-growers, in every State and Territory, what fruits they are to look to for successful culture. But most important of all, its business will be to give American Pomology a high character as a science; to prevent the appearance of mere money-making and petty attempts to impart undue prominence to new favorites by laudatory names. The continued aim of the Society will be to maintain a position of dignity, integrity, and impartial usefulness.

To record all the good the American Pomological Society has accomplished would be equivalent to writing the history of American Pomology during the period of
the Society's existence. Its Proceedings are not only a record of the events of the time, but they clearly show that the Society has been preëminently instrumental in shaping and directing the pomological destinies of our continent. It has organized and systematized everything pertaining to fruit culture, and has developed and elevated American Pomology. The Fruit Catalogue is a grand and glorious work, but far greater is the educational and refining influence which the Society exerts over its members. No one—unless he be irredeemably depraved,—could attend its meetings without becoming not only a better pomologist, but also a better man and Christian.

The work which our Society assumed was immense. It required a great Society to carry it on. A great amount of time, labor, and treasure has been expended in bringing it to its present flourishing condition; but however great the labors performed, and the sacrifices made in behalf of our Society, not one regrets them, but all rejoice that they have had a share in promoting a work so beneficent in its design, and in perpetuating it for the comfort and happiness of mankind.

That the Society's mission for the future will be not less beneficial is hardly to be doubted, built upon so solid a foundation as it is. It will continue and complete the reform in nomenclature just commenced. As the laws that govern cross-fertilization become better and better understood, it is not improbable that the most desirable types and strains of fruits will become
more firmly established, resulting in the diminution of the number of varieties, and the perpetuation of only those best adapted to our various climates and soils. The special aim of the Society should be to enlist in its active membership all the best elements of our country, and to form, as far as possible, a closer relation with all existing State Pomological or Fruit Growers' Societies.

Rules of Pomology.

Nothing has afforded me more gratification than the favor with which our Rules of Pomology and the Reform in the Nomenclature of our Fruits have been received.

Soon after the close of our last session, we sent out a thousand circulars containing these Rules, together with the suggestions of the President in regard to the much needed reform in the nomenclature of fruits. These were sent to the Agricultural, Horticultural, and Fruit Growers' Associations, and to the leading nurserymen of our country. Some were also sent to foreign lands. The favor with which these have been received both at home and abroad has been remarkable, showing that the time had arrived when, by general consent, this reform should be made; and thus our Society has the honor of instituting it as an example for the pomological world. When we reflect on the long, senseless, and sometimes vulgar and ridiculous names by which so many of our most beautiful fruits are known, our indignation is so aroused that we desire to blot them
from our memory forever. Some have thought this spirit might be too aggressive. All reforms are more or less so; but when we think of the irrelevant and inappropriate names by which many of our fruits are known, we feel the importance of keeping up our warfare until the victory is won, and all our catalogues are purged of these improprieties. As I before felt, I still feel it my duty, as President of the American Pomological Society, to urge a reform in the names of fruits, avoiding all long, superfluous, inappropriate, indelicate, ostentatious, or unmeaning titles, and if we cannot change objectionable names already applied, at least to avoid them in the future. Hundreds of fruits once known in our catalogues have become obsolete for want of good properties, and so it will be in the future, and we shall retain only those which, by their excellent quality and adaptation to our situation and wants, are worthy of extensive cultivation. Like the Baldwin apple, the Bartlett pear, the Concord grape, and other renowned fruits, let such varieties be dedicated to perpetual remembrance by appropriate names, and thus let us hand down to future generations a system of nomenclature pure and plain in its diction, pertinent and proper in its application, and which shall be an example, not only for fruits, but for other products of the earth. Let us have no more names of generals, colonels, captains, presidents, governors, monarchs, kings or princes, mammoths or Tom Thumbs, or such titles as Nonsuch, Seeknofurther, Ne-plus-ultra, Hog-
pen, Sheepnose, Big Bob, Ironclad, Legal Tender, Sucker State, or Stump-the-World. These were suggestions made in my last address, to which I still adhere and from which I have nothing to take back. The terms Pearmain, Pippin, Beurre, Doyenne, Bon Chretien, etc., applied to apples and pears, once described classes of fruit which are now so confused and blended that the names have lost their significance. The cases are very few where a single word will not form a better name for a fruit than two or more. These reforms have been adopted in the Catalogue of the American Pomological Society, and other prominent horticultural and pomological societies have voted to adopt the improved nomenclature, and I desire to ask the cooperation of all pomological and horticultural societies in this and other countries in carrying out this important reform. It has been suggested that the work might be carried farther than has been done in the catalogue of the Pomological Society, as, for instance, by substituting Lucrative for Belle Lucrative, and Nelis for Winter Nelis. Pomologists may differ as to how far the reform should be carried, but by comparison of views they will come to a final agreement.

I desire especially to enforce upon nurserymen the duty of aiding in this reform, by revising their catalogues so as to correspond with the improved nomenclature. Horticultural and pomological associations have thus far been our most powerful auxiliaries in this good work, but they do not come in contact with the
people at so many points as the nurserymen whose catalogues are distributed broadcast over the land, and I would especially appeal to the many honorable representatives of this profession here assembled, to give us their hearty coöperation until the work is accomplished. Let us push on the work so constantly and vigorously while we live, that future generations, seeing its advantages, shall avoid the evils we have encountered, and shall enjoy the benefits of the improved system, and look back with gratitude to us for our labors.

Production of New Fruits.

And now in fulfilment of my promise to urge upon you while I live, the importance of producing from seed, new improved varieties of fruits, adapted to the various soils and climates of our vast territory, I have substantially to repeat what I have said in my former addresses. These are the means, and the only means, which God and nature have provided for the improvement of our fruits, and the better we understand and practise them the nearer shall we approach to that divine beneficence which gives flavor and richness to our fruits, and to the senses the highest types of beauty, grace, and gratification.

Thus from time to time I have spoken to you, and, were these my last words, I would again impress them upon you as of the utmost importance. With a careful study of the tendencies of varieties, and a judicious selection of parents, as breeders, we shall go on to pro-
duce fruits which will be adapted to every climate or condition of our land where any species of fruit may be grown. When we see what nature has done without the aid of manipulation—in the cold regions of the North, as in Russia, from whence came the Oldenburg and Tetoftsky apples, the Black Tartarian cherry, and other good fruits, as seen by Professor Budd and Mr. Charles Gibb, who can doubt our ability to produce fine fruits even in the colder regions of our country?

When we consider that the art of crossing varieties for their improvement was scarcely known until our day, and see what wonders have been accomplished by it, who can doubt that we may yet produce a pear with the richness of the Seckel, the form and size of the Bosc, and the vigor and productiveness of the Boussock. And so we may go on to improve other fruits, until all shall be made as perfect as ever were grown by "the grand old gardener" in Eden. But to do this we must study the characteristics of varieties, and thus help nature to perfect this work.

Thus Providence has placed in the hands of man a power to assist nature in the production of her most perfect and beautiful creations. And whatever some may think of variation, evolution, transmutation, or transformation of species, the great fundamental laws of life and its reproduction will remain unchangeable and immutable as long as the earth bears a plant, or a tree yields a fruit, or nature holds her place in the universe.
Nature is a kind handmaid, and, by her lovely creations, is constantly inviting us to come up and assist in her glorious conquests. Her voice is heard throughout the earth. To us, she says: "Come up and sit with me, and you shall have plenty and perfection. Come, and I will give you fruits which shall delight the eye, gratify the taste, and satisfy your souls."

O! Yes! Thou Queen of Grace,
We'll come and take thee at thy word;
We'll take thee, Nature, as a bride,
And, hand in hand and side by side,
Our loves and labors we will join,
And bless the hand that gives us thine.

We have now many excellent varieties of fruits from foreign lands which are suited to many of the soils and climate of our country. But when we reflect upon the number that have proved worthless, and are not suited to our condition, and consider the large number of good American sorts that have already been raised, we are forced to the conclusion that we must, hereafter, rely mainly on the production of new varieties from seed to supply the necessary kinds for our constantly increasing territory for fruit culture. We therefore rejoice in the great interest which has been awakened in this subject, so that what was a few years ago considered by physiologists and philosophers a mysterious art or science, is now practised extensively by cultivators in the various families of vegetable life. And now that we have the knowledge of this art, there is no limit to its use for the improvements we may desire. And, strange as it may seem
that the knowledge of this process of helping nature was withheld from us until our day, it is capable of indefinite application as long as the sexes of plants shall be known, and is the only means to revolutionize and improve the fruits of the earth.

When we reflect on the improvement which has been realized by cross-fertilization in the various species of the vegetable kingdom, we can scarcely fix a limit to its potent influence for good on our fruits. And we may thus go on from one degree of excellence to another until we shall produce fruits as fine as were ever grown by our father in Eden. Go on prospering and to prosper in this most promising and beneficent work. You can do nothing better for the generations that are to follow us; and so again, with line upon line, and perhaps for the last time, I leave with you my old injunction: "Plant the most mature and perfect seeds of the most hardy, vigorous, and valuable varieties; and as a shorter process, insuring more certain and happy results, cross and hybridize our finest kinds for still greater excellence." Go on! Go on! while you live, and when we are gone, others will rise up to chant our old song:—

Plant the best seeds of all your best fruit,
Good fruits to raise that some lands may suit;
Fruits which shall live their blessings to shed,
On millions of souls when you shall be dead.

Plant! plant your best seeds—no longer doubt
That beautiful fruits you may create;
Fruits which, perchance, your name may enshrine,
In emblems of life and beauty to shine.
Thus have I summed up some of the most important considerations and suggestions of my former addresses, thinking that I could do nothing better than to call your attention to them again, and reënforce them as principles upon which must depend the successful prosecution of our work.

And now, gentlemen, in conclusion, let me again congratulate you on what our Society has already accomplished. "The past is secure"; but the great duty still remains of extending, fostering, and rightly directing the pomology of our country.

Other societies have arisen, and will continue to arise, and help forward our noble designs; but the American Pomological Society will still bring together the most distinguished cultivators of our land, and will be the great head, guardian, and guide of the pomology of this western world. When we reflect on what has been accomplished in the thirty-seven years of its history, and think of the immense territory in our favored land which is yet to be occupied with fruit culture, and of the increasing demand for these products so necessary for the health and happiness of life, we feel the great responsibility which rests on us as protectors and conservators of one of the most important branches of American husbandry. Let me then urge you to persevere in this work and preserve our bond of union throughout the land. "Union is strength"; and in nothing is this better illustrated than in the associated efforts which have given such
influence and importance to our Society. Perpetuate it, that the blessings which it confers may go down to posterity, and grateful millions shall bless the memory of those who laid its foundations, and shall aid in carrying out its benevolent designs. Think once more, my friends, of the great blessings which you may confer on mankind by the multiplication of good fruits. Next to saving the soul is the saving of health, and I know of no better means than an abundant supply of ripe fruits.

Fruits are the overflow of nature's bounty; gems from the skies which are dropped down to beautify the earth, charm the sight, gratify the taste, and minister to the enjoyment of life; and the more we realize this, the more shall we appreciate the Divine goodness to us, and the duty of providing them for others.

Like morning's first light, that gladdens the sight,
So may the best fruits spread over the earth.
And when we shall reach that still fairer land,
And round the life-tree in mercy shall stand,
May each pluck its fruit, and nevermore feel
The serpent's sharp tooth, once close at his heel.