Ms. President, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is generally the case that the most voluminous writers on agricultural subjects are those who know the least about it. A little book learning may go a long way. In the early days of orange culture in this state a young professional man came to my place and desiring to make himself useful desired to assist in caring for my young grove. He stated that he had made orange culture a study for two or three weeks, and if I would give him an axe and a saw he would prune my trees. His kindly offer was declined with thanks, and my trees were saved. It may be something after this good man's intention that induces the writer to attempt to give information to this intelligent audience on the subject of vegetable-growing in Florida. The northern raised man, who first beholds the methods of the average Florida farmer or trucker, says at once that our methods are not the best, that we are way off in the best method of cultivation. The writer had the same opinion in the early days, and determined to give these Florida Crackers a lesson in farming. He harnessed four mules to a big plow, and turned over one-half an acre of ground very deep. The result was different from what we expected, as it took nearly five years to sufficiently reclaim that piece of land to produce anything but stunted weeds! Our residence is about midway of the state, measuring north and south, and it is with this latitude that the writer is most familiar. We have found by actual experience that all of the garden vegetables that are grown in any part of the United States can be grown here in perfection. But they must be planted and cultivated at the proper season or time of year. This state is so long, covering so many degrees of latitude, that no fixed season can be made applicable to the whole state, and every producer must determine for himself the proper time to plant. With us, October is the best month to commence our fall and winter gardens, followed by successive planting until the spring months of March and April. I refer to cabbages, turnips, beets, onions, lettuce and the like. These vegetables can only be successfully grown on moderately moist ground, and even then the soil should be bountifully enriched with either chemical or stable manures. When planted and properly cultivated on that kind of soil these varieties of garden vegetables will grow to perfection. No better can be produced in the world, but it is practically useless to attempt to grow
them on the high sand ridges, or scrub oak lands that are found in some parts of this state. No amount of labor or skill will avail to produce anything but a stunted inferior plant. Several years ago an effort was made to produce Casava for its starch. The promoters selected high dry ground on which to plant, and I suppose the industry proved a failure, as I have heard nothing from it. Had these parties selected low, moist ground on which to plant, they would, no doubt, have met with good results. The writer has grown the plant on that sort of land with astonishing results, producing a yield at the rate of many tons to the acre. All varieties of the vegetable kingdom will succeed the best on low moist, but well drained soil, and even then sufficient means should be provided for irrigation. Ordinary truck farming is not pursued in my section to any extent, our efforts in that connection being extended to the kitchen garden, our main crop being confined to the white or Irish potato. This vegetable is extensively planted in this section with gratifying success. Our soil is what is called “flat-woods,” so low that without drainage the ground will be nearly covered by the water that falls during our rainy season. The ground is plowed in the early fall months, is plowed into ridges and about the first of January the planting begins. The potatoes are cut into pieces of one or two eyes, and with a planter are dropped into these ridges about twelve inches apart. After the planting is completed, Disk cultivators are run between the rows, which builds up the beds. I should mention that, previous to planting, commercial fertilizers to the amount of one and one-half ton is sown on the ridges where the potatoes are to be planted. The growing crop requires some cultivation, but not too much. The roots of the plants should not be disturbed after it has reached a certain size. If the season prove a dry one the crop should be irrigated. If the season be wet, the ground should be as perfectly drained as possible. The cost of planting and cultivating an acre of potatoes will not vary much from seventy-five dollars, while the average yield is forty barrels or one hundred bushels suitable for transmission to market. Sweet potatoes do not require as rich land as do the white or Irish potato, but is cultivated in a similar manner by plowing the ground into ridges, but the best potatoes are grown from cuttings, growing the vines in seed beds and cutting the vines into lengths of about 18 inches long, laying them across the bed and pushing the center of the vine into the bed with a stick. Thus planted, the vine takes rest and the tuber is formed.

Sugar cane can be successfully grown all over the state, and in fact in every state bordering the Gulf of Mexico, but its cultivation being so much more expensive than in the tropical islands near us, is not extensively grown. The method of planting consists in plowing a furrow about six inches deep and laying the cane stalks lengthwise therein and covering with a plow. The cane stalk sends up a shoot from every joint. These shoots grow and form the stalk that is crushed, and the juice is evaporated, leav-
ing the sugar. In the tropics one planting will be sufficient for a term of eight or ten years, while in Florida it must be done every year. This with the greater expense for labor precludes the successful competition in the states with the tropical islands. In this short sketch I have mentioned but a few of the varieties of vegetables that can be successfully grown in this state.

Agricultural pursuits are in their infancy and little is known at the present time of the capacity of our soil and climate. In the early days ten bushels of corn was the average yield per acre. Now twenty-five and fifty bushels are grown as a second crop after white potatoes. It was the practice to purchase all the hay that was required from the more northern states, but today we are able to produce three tons of good hay from an acre, also a second crop. There seems no limit to the productions of this state, its climate alone being almost sufficient to induce an abundant vegetable growth and I predict that the day is not far distant when the poorest sand ridge in the state will be made to produce some crop that will richly pay the laborer. But I will close. The subject is too vast to be only alluded to on an occasion like this. This Society has a great work before it. Its labors have only just begun, and if my experience can aid it I am pleased to give it.