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**Title:** "The Roman Catholics of Maryland," by Richard D. Sellman

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There is a period in the history of our country to which every American must look with gratitude interest and delight:— it is the period which relates to the first settlement of Maryland.

It was when religious discord and faction were shaking England to her very centre, and throwing a round her a deep and melancholy gloom— when the stronger and prevailing religious sect was exercising a cruel and merciless sway over the weaker and more obscure that a little band of Roman Catholics emigrated to Maryland. They had now come to a vast wilderness where no civilized foot had trod, but it was a wilderness which grew not the seeds of oppression and persecution— one in which they breathed a new and wholesome atmosphere— an atmosphere which <sup>the miasma of</sup> discord and faction ~~could~~ <sup>had</sup> not infected. They gazed upon the peaceful waters of the Chesapeake and listened to the cheering melody of the forest-bird, — and they



were canopyed by a clear and cloudless sky whose sun spread around them a double lustre and a double glory.

The form of Government which they adopted was based upon the practical assertion of the sovereignty of the people. With them freedom of conscience was the only basis on which could rest a perfect discipline, and the only means by which to establish and secure perfect harmony and concord throughout their midst. The evil effects proceeding from the spirit of intolerance then manifested in the New England Colonies were constantly presenting themselves before their eyes, and experience and wisdom had taught them that to prosper and grow rich with the blessings of God their country and their officers must be opened and free for all except the unworthy.

The intolerant spirit among the Puritans allowed none to come or remain within their borders but those who might of their own accord conform or whom they might force



to their doctrines of Religious worship. The innocent and harmless Quaker ~~looking up~~ <sup>worshipping</sup> to his God in a manner he thought and believed to be right and his duty, had heaped upon him the burdens of oppression, was persecuted or forced to leave beyond their borders. He might strive for what his conscience told him to be right - he might struggle to break asunder the shackles which bound him - but <sup>in</sup> vain his efforts: - he might plead for mercy, but the iron ~~grip~~ <sup>power</sup> of Puritan prejudice and bigotry still crushed him to the earth. Here in America - but another name for freedom herself - the shrieks and groans of persecuted people! - the heart he comes deadened at the thought, and the soul shrinks into shame!

But there was <sup>no feeling</sup> ~~nothing~~ of this kind manifested in the Roman Catholics ~~province~~ of Maryland. There was no breath ~~there that~~ breathed a selfish spirit. Under ~~to~~ <sup>their</sup> constitutions and laws the rocks and the hills and the forests were still as free as they had ever been. Although they were despised and looked



upon with ~~contempt~~ <sup>scorn</sup> by the Puritans yet they returned  
good for evil - love and good feeling  
for hatred and contempt. There was  
an affectionate and kind hand  
stretched out to greet and to welcome  
all who visited ~~the~~ <sup>its</sup> ~~soil~~ <sup>soil</sup> - within ~~the~~ <sup>their</sup>  
precincts was a home and asylum  
for both the oppressed and the free. There  
were in the Roman Catholic a  
gentleness, a kindness, a purity of  
soul which were alien to the Pilgrim  
father - a nobleness, a nobleness  
a humanity in the one which were  
not in the other.

Thus at this period in the Province  
of Maryland first shone the star of  
Religious liberty. The cloud which had  
concealed it at length broke off and  
dissolved into air - the chain which  
had bound it down at length grew  
weak and powerless. It was ~~a~~ <sup>a</sup> mighty  
harbinger of everlasting glory. Civiliza-  
tion which had been dormant  
felt its stirring influence and at length  
awakened from her lethargy began  
to renew her energies and to enliven  
and rejoice mankind. Systems which  
had held the world in bondage, were



ished - The spirit of <sup>Religious</sup> intolerance lay  
crushed within its grasp. Happy era  
for America, happy era for the world!  
amidst the deep, dark gloom which  
then overhung humanity it ~~states~~ <sup>had</sup>  
its birth - to the wisdom and foresight  
of the Roman Catholic letters of Mary-  
land it owes its being.

The Roman Catholic ~~letters~~ of  
Maryland! - There is a something  
in that word which every Marylander  
loves to recall and which every  
American must love to revere.  
It is indelibly impressed upon our  
hearts - it will live to the latest  
posterity. Although we do not agree  
with them in their precepts of Religion  
yet we love and admire them for  
their many virtues and for their un-  
swerving spirit of Religious toleration.  
It is the nobleness of character they man-  
ifested which makes them dear to our  
hearts, it is for their noble deeds that  
we shall never forget them. And  
should there ever be any hand so vile  
as to endeavor to degrade them and  
to blot out the glory their works have



a shiened :- ~~should~~ any so base  
to attempt to stult the character  
of the Puritans by debasing that of  
theirs, their "virtues will plead like  
Angels-trumpet-tongued" against the  
sectarianism of the Pilgrim Fathers.

R. D. Leman

Commencement Oration of Richard D. Sellman, Class of 1850  
Transcribed by Michael M. Geduldig, November 2006  
Edited by Don Sailer, September 2009

### The Roman Catholics of Maryland

There is a period in the history of our country to which every American must look with gratitude interest and delight: - it is the period which relates to the first settlement of Maryland.

It was when religious discord and faction were shaking England to her very centre, and throwing around her a deep and melancholy gloom - when the stronger and prevailing religious sect was exercising a cruel and merciless sway over the weaker and more obscure that a little band of Roman Catholics emigrated to Maryland. They had now come to a vast wilderness where no civilized foot had trod, but it was a wilderness which grew not the seeds of oppression and persecution - one in which [they?] breathed a new and wholesome atmosphere - an atmosphere which the miasma of discord and faction ~~could~~ had not infected. They gazed upon the peaceful waters of the Chesapeake and listened to the cheering melody of the forest bird, - and they

were canopied by a clear and cloudless sky whose sun spread around them a double lustre and a double glory.

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constitution and laws the rocks and the hills and the forests were still as free as they had ever been. Although they were despised and looked

upon with ~~contempt~~ scorn by the Puritans yet they returned good for evil - love and good feeling for hatred and contempt. There was an affectionate and kind hand stretched out to greet and to welcome all who visited ~~her its~~ their soil - within their ~~her its~~ precincts was a home and asylum for both the oppressed and the free. There were in the Roman Catholics a gentleness, a kindness, a preivity of soul which were alien to the Pilgrim fathers - a ~~nobleness~~ love, a nobleness a humanity in the one which were not in the other.

Thus at this period in the province of Maryland first shone the star of religious liberty. The cloud which had concealed it at length broke off and dissolved into air - the chain which had bound it down at length grew weak and powerless. It was ~~the~~ a mighty harbinger of everlasting glory. Civilization which had been dormant felt its stirring influence and although awakened from her lethargy began to renew her energies and to enliven and rejoice mankind. Systems which had held the world in bondage, van-

ished - the spirit of Religious intolerance lay crushed within its grasp. Happy ever for America, happy ever for the world! Amidst the deep, dark gloom which then overhung humanity it ~~dates~~ had its birth - to the wisdom and foresight of the Roman Catholic settlers of Maryland it owes its being.

The Roman Catholics ~~settlers~~ of Maryland! - There is a something in that word which every Marylander loves to recall and which every American must love to venerate. It is indelibly impressed upon our hearts - it will live to the latest posterity. Although we do not agree with them in their precepts of Religion yet we love and admire them for their many virtues and for their unswerving spirit of Religious Toleration. It is not the nobleness of character they manifested which makes them dear to our hearts, it is for their noble deeds that we shall never forget them. And should there ever be any hand so vile as to endeavour to degrade them and to blot out the glory their works have

achieved: - ~~should~~ any so base to attempt to exalt the character of the Puritans by debasing that of theirs, their "virtues will plead like Angels - trumpet-tongued" against the sectarianism of the Pilgrim Fathers.