

W. H. Coleman

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Agriculture.

Depression of the South—The Cause and Remedy.

The author of the article upon the depression of the South, in the *Vindicator*, of the 14th inst., has been very successful in his attempt to show that the cause of our depression is not in any degree whatever the cause of our depression. We agree with him in his assertion that raising cotton is not the cause of our trouble. Our trouble is rather the result of the fact that we are unable to raise cotton enough to buy all the corn, meat, flour, potatoes, garden vegetables, milk, butter, poultry, eggs, horses, mules, wagons, carriages, farming utensils, sugar, molasses, rice, soap, starch, tobacco, whisky, boots, shoes, hats, caps, and a thousand other things which we need. We find ourselves unable to raise cotton enough to meet all these wants, even when we plant all cotton. Hence, therefore, most of our farmers who succeed, have found it best to raise some of these things at home. The hue and cry raised on the subject of cotton, is against too much attention to cotton to the neglect of other things. We presume no one is so silly as to advise an entire suspension of cotton planting. His remark, we suppose, could not have been intended for such persons. All things considered, Mr. Whitfield has placed himself in a position to defend cotton-planting to the exclusion of other crops. We will suppose him to say, Yes, that is right. Well, what is right cannot be otherwise than right; though car-

ried to an extreme, it cannot become wrong. This is good metaphysics and sound theology, or, according to Aristotle's classification, we may term it metaphysical theology. Now, supposing it to be right to give our undivided energy to our cotton crop, then we must buy all the abovementioned articles, as well as a great many other things not mentioned, among which, we will mention our fire-wood. It becomes our duty to buy this, while perhaps we may have a fine forest at our door, upon which we are paying a heavy tax. Some may say, that is not a reasonable case, no man would buy his fire-wood, and pay to have it hauled to him, while he had so much timber just ready to be converted into fire-wood. Is it not as reasonable, or more so, to suppose that a man would buy his fire-wood when it would cost him no small amount of labor to get it himself, than to suppose that he would buy his meat, his milk, and his butter, while he has so much grass in summer, and so much cane and mast in winter, ready to be converted into these articles, without any physical exertion on his part. But, perhaps, Mr. Whitfield, or some one else, who is a man for all cotton, may say, "Of course a man should keep some cows." Well then, when he has admitted that a man keep some cows, and cut some fire-wood, he allows him to take his attention from his cotton crop; and, if so, he has lost his position. The noise made about cotton is not against raising cotton, nor against it as a good marketable product, but against planting cotton to the exclusion of other good and necessary crops, and to the entire neglect of other industries. We may raise many crops which would not interfere with our cotton as much as we suppose, but we are inclined to depend upon our cotton crop too much, and other crops are neglected. Many of our farmers, instead of sowing oats, and putting in their first planting of corn at the time when it should be done, may be found at the villages or country stores drinking whisky or swapping horses. The greater part of the winter is often spent in idleness, or what is worse, in crime and dissipation, and the summer in whining about hard times. But the question will arise with some, if cotton is not king, why will people hang to it with such tenacity, and whence the necessity of so much being said of cotton versus other crops? We do not hear people always lecturing against too many radishes, or too many cucumbers. Well, much may be said in favor of cotton as a good crop for market, and with those who are not convenient to market, it is undoubtedly the best market crop that can be raised. It gives a fair yield from thin land. It is adapted to our climate and seasons. It furnishes work for the year round, thereby enabling a farmer to hire his hands by the year. There is comparatively little heavy labor connected with its cultivation, its gathering, or its manipulation, for market. It is easily handled (two hands will get about, with more ease, with a bale of cotton than with a basket of potatoes). It may be kept for an indefinite time with very little care. It represents a greater money value to the wagon-load, and costs less in transportation by rail or river, in proportion to its value, than any crop that we can raise. These advantages have a tendency to cause us to over estimate it and to undervalue other crops and pursuits.

I agree with the author of *Depression*, when he says the merchants are not our enemies. Shakespeare's *Shy-*

lock was not an enemy to his victim, but he would, nevertheless, exact his pound of flesh. It is said that the vampire bat, as it sucks the life-blood of its victim, gently fans him to sleep with its wings, and we know that the affectionate little mosquito calls us cousin while it cozens us to the extent of its supper. Oh, no, the merchants are not our enemies, but we have a right to complain of a state of affairs, under which one class of society makes more in five years than we can hope to get on the same investment in a lifetime.

He seems to look back with pleasure to the time when our credit was good, and to look forward with hope to the time when it shall be good again. I suppose he means our credit as individuals, for our State credit, until very recently, would not "hold shucks," since the days of repudiation, and great is the pity that it did not remain so. Where I live, the credit of successful farmers is good yet, and a great many have good credit who do not succeed to the extent of accumulation of property. Credit, like many other good things, to last well should not be too often called into use. The farmer should use his credit as he does his Sunday coat, only on important and necessary occasions. A great strain on either might cause an irreparable rent; but his religion and his industry he may wear all the week; like the machinery of a good watch, they are best preserved by being kept in action.

Agricultural liens have been authorized by legislative enactment, thereby inaugurating one of the most extensive systems of credit perhaps ever known for people who have nothing to pledge as security for credit. This legislation was intended, I suppose, for the benefit of the negro population. The result is, the ruin of a great many white people, and I may say the ruin of nearly all of the blacks. Is any one so blind as not to see the enormous premium our people are paying for credit, when they pay thirty dollars for a barrel of pork, on four months credit, which they could buy for about twenty dollars cash. Credit is the bane of our country. It is fraught with ruin, both to him who credits, and him who is credited. This has been the rule in the past; but now the merchants have even, thing in their own hands, and need lose nothing, if they have only common sense. Credit is the mother of extravagance. It is degrading in its influences, as it destroys our independence as a class. It works ruin to all the trades, except that of the merchant, as our people have no money to pay for improvements at such times as might be convenient to improve. Credit prices have the effect of keeping up cash prices, your merchant being ashamed to have a good credit customer see so great a margin between cash and credit prices. There are many credit customers whom their merchants prefer to have remain so, rather than have them pay cash for their goods.

The author of *Depression* seems to look upon the freed men as a burden to us. While I admit that they have done some bad voting, I must say that as a proprietor of land I have found no one to take their place in its cultivation.

A general hedge of this class, I fear, would be attended with ruin to this deponent, and, we think, would benefit nobody, financially. He deprecates such a calamity as the loss of our merchants, but we think we could exchange half of them for able-bodied farm hands, with great advantage to the country.

He also speaks of a want of experience in the new order of things. Nearly ten years have elapsed since this new (?) order of things was ushered in, and we think, where it trade requires an apprenticeship of a life-time, one had better drop the business, and like Don Quixote, strike out in search of adventures. He also suggests as a good idea the payment of our debts. We presume no sane man to have the "cheek" to advise another against paying his just debts. The Bible says, "pay what thou owest;" and also, "owe no man, save love," etc.; besides we have as a maxim, "Honesty is the best policy;" and doubtless a knowledge of this fact has had a greater influence in making men honest, than a disposition to obey the commandment which says, "Thou shalt not steal."

He says further, "a payment of debts would bring about economy." We prefer to reverse the order of things, and suggest that economy should come first, thereby enabling us to pay our debts. We think a cash system enforced upon every one would not only promote economy, but would make it a necessity. A man will use greater economy to prevent a collapse of the stomach, than to discharge an obligation to his merchant, whom he knows to be exacting an enormous profit.

We endorse the advice of Mr. Whitfield, as to our duty to make an effort for a better government. Where circumstances will allow it, our people should exert themselves. But in many parts of our State, a white man in government affairs occupies the position of a poor man at a frolic; he is expected to take a back seat, if invited to sit down at all. We might reasonably expect to see such an one in the dining room, towards the last table, discussing the leg of a turkey with an air of perfect nonchalance; but to be "seotin' round" in the parlor with his old shabby clothes on, offering to escort ladies to the piano and so on, would probably cause people to doubt the even balance of his mind, and might have a tendency to shake his own confidence in his ability to discriminate between propriety and impropriety. A combination of disadvantages, or difficulties and faults, go to make up our "winter of discontent." Some of these difficulties, which may not be considered as under our control, are a scarcity of labor, and high taxes for those who own the soil; an inconvenient distance from market to some; a want of transportation facilities, in the way of railroads; and the high price of everything we need to buy.

But we think our own faults stand obstructing the way to success, more than the disadvantages under which we labor, and the greatest of these, we think, are the credit system, too much attention to cotton, and a want of agricultural knowledge. As a people, we have many other faults, such as indolence, extravagance and intemperance; but as those who suffer from these faults are supposed to know it, they need not be told of them. The remedy for some of these troubles is self-suggestive. For the last mentioned, education and moral training are the remedy. We must educate. We must work at home, in the church, in the day-school and in the Sunday-school; and time will make us a great and prosperous people. Rome, under Romulus, was but a small band of determined men; Rome under Augustus Caesar was a great Empire.

It is told of Gen. Lee, that, in the midst of one of his great battles, when the enemy threatened to overwhelm his troops, and all was confusion and

dismay, on an application for orders from one of his subordinate officers, he replied, "Tell your General to trust in God and move forward." The influence of this brief mandate, like an electric spark, seemed to pass through the whole army. It did move forward and the enemy was overthrown. A believer in special providences might compare our situation with that of the Jews, as set forth in the Book of Leviticus. The words of God are, "If ye walk in my statutes and keep my commandments, and do them, then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and your threshings shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time; and you shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely; and I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid; * * * but if you will not, I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart, and ye shall sow your seed in vain; for your enemies shall eat it, and I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies; they that hate you shall reign over you, and ye shall flee when none pursueth you;" and David says, "I have been young, and now I am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread."

WM. W. MOORE.
Red Lick, Jefferson Co., Miss., June 24.

Suggestions for the Good of the Order.

MAJ. WALL: In reading the *Vindicator*, I see many good suggestions for the Grange. I never pass one unread, and yet, in my opinion, there is one of vital importance to the Order, and that is, the selection of Secretary of Subordinate Granges. Very many of the Granges in this State were organized last year, the charter members knowing but little about the Order, and nothing of the duties of the officers. In most cases the Secretary was selected with an eye to his proficiency in penmanship, and while we like to look at nice writing, etc., we think there are other qualifications that we looked after. We were not to blame then. But now that we have seen what we want, I think we should look well to this matter. Show me a *live* active working Grange, and I will show you a good Secretary. Nine times out of ten his duties are heavy, and if he has filled his office well, thank him for it, and let him off, and fill his place with his equal. If he has not filled it well, thank him too, and get a good one for the next year. One year is long enough for a good one to serve, and too long for a poor one.

The Secretary should be a live working Patron, willing to make some sacrifice of time to serve his brethren. He should keep posted in prices of merchandize, and the best markets to buy or sell at. The principal buying and shipping of produce should be done by him. No doubt one cause of trouble with our agent last winter was want of business tact in Secretaries, and another the fact that the members did their own correspondence, which, of course, multiplied the agent business, and in many instances caused delays and mistakes. Let us start next year with a good Secretary, and, in my opinion, our Order will prosper.

YEAR OLD PATRON.
July, 1874.