

THE COTTON CROP OF 1904-'05.

Hon. Martin V. Calvin of Georgia Writes on the Cotton Outlook and the Proper Policy for Cotton Planters.

Editors Progressive Farmer:

The agricultural and manufacturing situation, for obvious reasons, was never so interesting or vital as now. The purpose of this article is not to give the farmers advice. They do not need it. The sturdy men who wrought order out of chaos, who have restored to the South, in aggregate amount, the fortunes which were swept away by war; who have grappled with and successfully solved, a larger number and a greater variety of difficult problems than were ever thrust upon the attention of an body of men in the world, do not need advice. But they do need to participate in, and follow, the discussion, now in progress throughout this country and Europe, of the issues involved in the situation with which they are now face to face.

A portion of the press seems to be apprehensive lest the true price of cotton (by some regarded as abnormally high), should lead to a greatly increased acreage in the plant this year.

Before touching upon that important question, I wish to emphasize the fact that the crop of \$1904-05 will command 12½c. to 15c., with 15c. as the average price for the entire crop rather than 12½c.

The lack of cotton, not speculation, fixed the price of the crop. 1903-04. A comparatively small crop will hold the true price steady for 1904-05.

It would be perfectly natural, under labor conditions which prevailed fifteen years ago, that the cotton acreage would be greatly increased. Existing conditions forbid resort to such policy. More than that, existing conditions, which are a matter of growth, not accident, will not permit the favorable consideration of such policy.

Regardless of what he might like to do, there is not a farmer in Georgia, or in any of the eight strictly cotton States, who does not know that it would be exceedingly unwise to attempt the acreage of last year, much less an increase of that acreage.

Very recently the writer was in conference with representative agriculturists from every Congressional district in this State—observant, conservative, gentlemen, each of them. In reply to inquiry on my part, each reported that it was practically impossible to secure requisite farm labor so far as the negro is concerned, and that for this reason, if for no other, an increase in the cotton acreage is absolutely impossible.

Another important view: Current discussion has impressed upon the minds of the farmers the fact that, on an average, the crop of 1903-04 was not a profitable crop. Why? Because three acres of land were necessary to the production of one bale.

There is no money in cotton unless the yield per acre be one-half to three-quarters of a bale—a 500-pound bale. This is now generally accepted as a fact.

Is labor scarce, difficult to engage, because of wages or because of antagonism between landowner and laborer? Not at all. The younger negroes, who to-day constitute the body from which farm help is to be obtained, are in a transition state and averse to the character of work necessary on a farm. That work is in no sense exhaustive, but it must be regular and persistent from the day the crop is pitched till it is harvested.

The situation in Georgia is duplicated in each of the cotton States.

Existing conditions would be alarming. I had almost said appalling, were it not for the inexhaustible resources and the unfaltering courage of the farmers.

Rest assured, the farmers will compass the situation, and summarily relegate to the rear every

difficulty, every obstacle that stands in their pathway.

How?

First, by reducing the cotton acreage.

Second, by a more thorough preparation of the soil—making each acre a seedbed by the skilful use of improved, labor-saving farm implements.

(I want to run in a parenthesis right here in order to say that through labor-saving farm implements and machinery, wondrously improved during the past decade, the labor problem will be easily, most satisfactorily, most profitably, solved.)

Third, by the use of the best seed—the earlier and more prolific varieties preferred.

Fourth, by adopting the check system of planting—four feet by three feet generally; in many instances four feet by four feet instead of the old system of three feet (rows) and two feet (drill).

Fifth, by the freer and more liberal, i. e., intelligent application of high-grade commercial fertilizers, rich in food, especially adapted to the plant.

Sixth, by the best methods of cultivation.

Chemists who analyze soil and fertilizers tell us that phosphoric acid, nitrogen and potash are the elements in which generally the soil is more or less deficient. A long series of careful experiments have demonstrated, beyond all doubt, that the three elements named sustain to one another a relationship that is expressed by 3 1-3:1:1.

Vailable phosphoric acid is of supreme importance to cotton. Soil conditions considered, nitrogen stands next, potash next.

The thought is to get a balanced ration and feed it to the plants, according to soil, at the rate of 300 to 400 pounds or 450 to 500 pounds per acre—a 500-pound bale of cotton from each acre being the set standard, toward which every effort should be persistently directed.

Every farmer will, of course, cling to the old and sensible practice of spreading over his land, and plowing in, all the stable and lot manure he can command and leaf mold according to his judgment.

A greatly exaggerated idea, as to the crops of eleven years, 1889-90 to 1899-1900, has crept into the public mind. It is true that the crop of 1897-98 amounting to 11,199,994 (482-pound) bales, and that of 1898-99 aggregated 11,274,840 (498-pound) bales, but the average yield per year, the eleven years, was less than 9,999,999 bales. So that with the two large crops mentioned, the actual average yield per year, the eleven years, was only 8,816,117 bales.

With the most favorable seasons, the crop of 1904-05 cannot possibly exceed 10,000,000 bales if, by chance, it should reach that number.

The world's necessitous demand is nearer 12,000,000 than 11,000,000 bales.

The gravity of the situation, as it relates to the cotton consumers of the world, was voiced by the king of England in his recent sated address from the throne. His majesty pointedly touched upon the scarcity of cotton and the unpromising prospect for a large crop of American cotton during the year under consideration, and probably for five to ten years to follow.

No anxiety need be felt in this country as to the renewed and redoubled efforts which all Europe proposes to put forth to grow her own cotton. She cannot grow American cotton; that is indigenous to our soil.

Europe tried cotton culture, 1861-65. She made then, as she can again make, cotton of a certain texture and grade, but it is lacking in the high quality of the American grown staple.

I repeat an encouraging and controlling fact: During the decade, 1890-1900, while the increase in the number of bales consumed was 61 per cent, the increase in the number of bales produced was only 29 per cent.

Those figures are far from being meaningless. The slogan is: A reduced acreage; one 500-pound bale, at least, from each acre.

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JAPAN'S CASE.

The Japanese Minister to the United States states it in a Notable Magazine Article.

The Japanese Minister to the United States, Mr. K. Takahira, contributes to the April World's Work the authoritative statement of Japan's case under the title of "What Japan is Fighting For." Among other things Mr. Takahira says: "One fact should be strongly emphasized. The Government of Japan has disavowed in the most formal and solemn manner, in the reply to China's declaration of neutrality, the purpose of acquiring any part of China's territory or occupying it to the detriment of Chinese sovereignty. In an equally binding manner it has declared its willingness to respect the lawful exercise of the rights which Russia had acquired in Manchuria. But it could not close its eyes to the fact plainly demonstrated by events in the immediate past that Russia seemed to have another object in view than the legitimate development of the interests acquired under those rights. The course of those events plainly pointed to designs on Russia's part threatening the principle of equal opportunity for the development of the interests of all the Powers in Manchuria, and tending even to endanger the territorial integrity of China." Mr. Takahira contends that Russia was not willing to bind herself in any manner regarding the independence and territorial integrity of China. He also declares that Japan's desire has been to protect her important treaty rights and commercial interests in the provinces affected by the war.

Concerning Korea the minister writes: "The independence of Korea, not alone from a commercial and industrial standpoint, but also for strategical reasons is of the gravest importance to the well-being of our people and the safety of our country. The power that controls Korea cannot restrict our progress along the lines of peaceful enterprise upon which much of the future prosperity of the nation depends, but can also keep us upon the defensive and thereby impose the heavy burden of incessant watchfulness and constant preparation. We have no desire to interfere with the independence or the territorial integrity of our neighbors, and no purpose, as we have shown conclusively to obstruct the development of the commercial and industrial interests of other nations within their territories. But the preservation of their political existence, especially the maintenance of the independence of Korea, is another matter, and when that is a threatened motives of an imperative nature demand that our nation shall intervene or else run the certain risk of jeopardizing its most vital interests."

A Paying National Investment.

When Alaska was purchased by the United States in 1867 its value was lightly regarded. The price paid—\$7,000,000—was thought to be excessive, and there was much popular opposition to the terms. Yet in thirty-six years the Government has received back in revenues not only the sum expended, but \$2,000,000 more. During the same period Alaska and the adjoining Canadian Yukon territory have supplied fish, furs, and mine products amounting in value, at a conservative estimate, to \$375,000,000. Goods worth about \$40,000,000 a year are now sent back in return, and the amount of American, English, and Canadian capital invested there is probably not less than \$125,000,000.—The World's Work.

They say our Standard Oil friend (?), John D. Rockefeller, spent the past season at Southern Pines. He walked up from the depot, lugging his grip, stopped at a second-class hotel—never tipped a waiter while he was there; spent two hours hunting a golf ball he lost to save paying fifteen cents for it. This is in striking contrast with some of the natives "who ain't worth nary a red," says the Rockingham Anglo-Saxon.