

## Art. V.—PERUVIAN COTTON.

*New Orleans, November 17th, 1846.*

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I send to you herewith a sample of PERUVIAN COTTON, brought by Lieut. Sherburne, of the Navy, to this country. He represents it to be *very* productive; and that fact, united to its beautiful natural color, may make it interesting to many of your Southern readers, who perhaps will like to examine it.

Very truly your friend,

S. F. GLENN.

We have inspected, as a matter of curiosity, the specimen of Peruvian cotton furnished us by our correspondent. Its appearance is singular enough, resembling that of matted wood, and of a dark brown color. We cannot regard its commercial importance as anything, nor the claims which it may have upon our planters. However, as the subject is before us, we will introduce a letter relating to these cottons, written by Mr. Garnett to a Liverpool house, and afterward published in Peru.—EDITOR.

“I have for some time intended to call your attention to the importance of attempting to grow fine cotton in Peru. We have been, as you are aware, consumers of Peruvian cotton to some extent for the last six or eight months, and, from

the observations I have made on it during that time, I have no hesitation in saying that it possesses many excellences. It is long enough (almost too long), very sound in staple, and, when well managed, of a very good color; its defects are coarseness and harshness of staple; and if these could be removed, I do not see what is to prevent its rivaling the Egyptian and Sea island cottons, any considerable approximation to which would very materially enhance its value; seeing that the highest quotation for Sea island was last week 30*d.*, while the highest for Peruvian was no more than 6*d.* With the view of improving the quality of cotton in Peru, I would strongly recommend you to send seeds of various kinds, packed in air-tight boxes, particularly Sea island and Egyptian, which some of the cotton brokers would easily procure from the spinners using these descriptions; and judging from what I hear of the climate of both countries, I should think the Egyptian would go to a very similar atmosphere and mode of cultivation to that where it has been raised, which would be very likely to render it much more easily acclimated, and of course make it much more likely to succeed than a sort of cotton which had been grown under dissimilar circumstances of soil, climate, and mode of cultivation.

“ These seeds, when sown, ought (with the exceptions hereafter to be mentioned) to be planted at such a distance from all other cottons as to render it very unlikely for the wind or insects to carry the pollen from the flowers of one kind to those of another; for without this precaution, such is the tendency in many genera of plants to hybridize or cross-breed with each other (and I believe, from what I have heard, that there is this tendency in the different varieties of cotton), that, however good the quality in the first instance, they would all revert to the old variety in a season or two, in consequence of the great preponderance of that variety over any newly introduced ones. So much are the growers of turnip seed, for sale in England, aware of the importance of attending to this, that the greatest precautions are taken to remove all cruciform plants from the vicinity of the fields, while their turnips are in flower, as there is such a tendency in them all to hybridize that the quality of the seed is often injured by the wild mustard (*sinapis arvensis*) springing up in the same or adjoining fields; while by carefully selecting, on the other hand, the best bulbs for seed, and by judiciously crossing one variety with another, new sorts are obtained, combining the excellences of both. This leads me to observe, that probably seed of foreign varieties of cotton may not thrive well in the first instance; and I would therefore very strongly recommend the gentleman who makes the experiment carefully to select seed from the plants on his estate which he sees are producing the best and finest cotton, and sow them in contact with a few seeds of each of the sorts you may send out to him, carefully removing them in every instance, as far as is practicable, from the vicinity of all other cotton; and then again sowing the seed which is obtained from these experiments, and carefully examining the cotton growing upon each of them. It is more than probable that some of the plants will be varieties partaking of the character of both the parent kinds; and by selecting the best of these, and sowing them alone (still at a distance from all other cotton), there is but little doubt that much benefit will be derived by the persevering and skilful cultivator. I have heard it stated that the origin of the Sea island cotton is to be traced to something of the kind. An observing and experimental planter, by carefully examining his plants, and sowing seed always from those alone which produced the largest and finest cotton, at last arrived at that excellent quality known by that name. Look again at what has been done in Egypt by the introduction of seeds of better cotton; and there this improved variety has by no means had a fair chance of showing what it is capable of becoming, inasmuch as the wretched cultivator has not the slightest inducement to improve its quality. He gets no more per pound for the finest and cleanest cotton than he does for the coarsest and dirtiest, and therefore it is not very likely to improve under his care. But with all this neglect and want of management, we can see, by what it is, what it would most probably become in the hands of an enterprising and skilful man, who knew that every improvement he made in its quality would be to his own advantage. Assuming that our Peruvian friends would so far improve the quality of their cottons as to double its value in this market (and I do not think myself too sanguine in expecting even more than this), with very little extra labor, nearly all the addition price would be profit.

“ But supposing that even cross-fertilizing, or hybridizing, as the horticulturists call it, does not frequently naturally occur in cotton plants, we all know that it is very easy to effect it artificially, by prematurely unfolding the petals, and

with fine scissors cutting away all the stamens before impregnation takes place. This requires to be carefully done, so as not to injure the petals, and they will then close again of themselves; and when they expand naturally, then impregnate the stigma of the flower with the pollen of the kind you want to cross with. We owe many of our finest varieties of fruits to this practice. The late Mr. Andrew Knight, in particular, was very successful in raising new kinds this way. And it appears to me, from the experiment I have made, that the more frequently this cross-breeding takes place, the more easy (within certain limits) it is to extend it, until cultivation has so completely changed the character of the plant that it bears very little resemblance to its original stock. There is nothing growing wild like our cabbages, turnips, and cauliflowers, nor even like our carrots, celery, and asparagus. Where are the originals of our wheat, barley, rye, beans, and peas? Many of these appear to be so completely transformed by cultivation, that we do not know where to look for the original stocks from which they have sprung."