

#### COTTON CULTURE.

It is now pretty well ascertained that the large estimates of old cotton on hand at the close of the rebellion were erroneous, and it is not probable that over one and a quarter million bales will come to market in sound condition. There are still some estimates higher than this, but there are many more that are lower. There was probably quite a large planting for this season, possibly for a crop of 700,000 bales; but the sudden collapse of the Confederate authority disorganized the old system of labor just at the most critical season, when continuous labor is needed to prevent the weeds from choking the young cotton plant, whose first growth is very slow, and it is not probable that over one half the crop planted will be made. From the best information now attainable, one and a half million bales of American cotton must supply the world's need from about July 1, 1865, to October 1, 1866, at which date a moderate supply of the crop of 1866 will be coming in. At the first glance it would seem to be a misfortune

to the country that the available supply should be so small, but a little reflection will prove that this is the most desirable condition in which we could be placed.

Consumers of cotton cloth will have to pay a little more; but as the average consumption of the country, with the factories all in operation, never exceeded ten pounds of cotton a head per annum, the difference between twenty cents and forty cents per pound is no very severe burden; and forty cents per pound secures good order and peace in the cotton States, whatever may be the political mismanagement. Disorder cannot exist, and ill-treatment of the colored laborer will be impossible, when it shall appear that his labor will produce from \$1,000 to \$1,600 in gold value, besides all the food he can require. The total consumption of cotton in 1860 north of the Potomac was about 800,000 bales; south of the Potomac, about 150,000 bales. The present rate of consumption north of the Potomac is about 10,000 bales per week—say 500,000 bales per annum; and the consumption South was much increased during the war by the manufacture of home-spun cloth.

If we take the supply for fifteen months at 1,500,000 bales, this country will require one half, leaving 700,000 to 800,000 bales for export; and whenever it shall be demonstrated that such are the facts, even though this supply should all come in during the six months from September 1, it must be taken at a very high price, and if at twenty pence per pound in Liverpool, the amount placed to the credit of this country in gold value will be \$130,000,000 to \$140,000,000.

England must take American cotton, even though her supply of short staples be very large. The dread of an immense influx of American cotton held back by the war being removed, her market for cotton goods has re-opened with a fair demand, and her mills are now on two-thirds speed, but such has been the migration or change of employment of Lancashire operatives that labor is now very scarce; and when labor is scarce, the mills operating on American cotton will draw all the hands from the mills working Surats, even at the same rates of pay, because the work is so much easier.

We have said that with forty cents per pound once established as the price of cotton (or even twenty-five cents per pound), good order will be secured and ill treatment of the laborer impossible. Every landholder will endeavor to plant the largest possible crop, and he who ill-treats or underpays his hands must lose them. And here must come the solution of the labor question. It is believed that the Northern planter will succeed, because he will be familiar with the Northern system of piece or job work, while the old planter will fail in the attempt to secure persistent labor on the old task system of slavery, which put every man on a dead level.

The first requisite for the free-labor cotton planter is to recognize two facts:

- 1st, That the negro is a man.
- 2d, That there is a great deal of human nature in man.

Now, every one familiar with human nature, as developed in the laborer, knows that work by the job or piece establishes as the standard of accomplishment the amount of work done by the best man, while work by the day or month, or by the task, establishes the standard by the laziest or most incompetent.

The plan of sharing the crop with the laborer, or what is called the contract system, is an unfortunate necessity now, because the planter has not the means of making weekly or monthly payments; but it would be very unreasonable to expect the great mass of negro laborers, just emerging from the barbarism and ignorance of slavery, to work faithfully and persistently for a share of a crop of uncertain value, payable at a distant date by men who have up to this time defrauded them of their natural rights. Verily, if the negro does work well under that system, he will prove not only his equality but his absolute superiority over any other class of laborers in the world.

The plan by which Northern men will succeed (and this is no theoretic plan, but one which has been fully tried upon the Sea Islands, and from which results have been obtained in two years of over two hundred per cent. upon the capital invested, and which has also been tried with success upon the Mississippi River and in Tennessee)—the true plan is, to cultivate cotton by job or piece work, with prompt weekly or monthly payments of moderate amount, not sufficient to induce idle-

ness from excess of wages, with full payment completed when the crop is made and baled; and with this may well be combined a small share in the result. But the essential element is a moderate payment, at short stated periods, based upon the amount of work done. By this the human nature in the negro man will be worked upon, individuality will be developed, the intelligent and industrious will reap his reward—the lazy and thriftless will be discharged.

On a Sea Island plantation the old slave-master's task for ginning Sea Island cotton on a hand-gin was thirty pounds per day, and this was considered hard work; but on the same plantation, the old, superannuated laborer made free, who had been almost cast aside by his owner as past service, found that at two cents per pound he could gin sixty pounds per day. This is absolute fact.

There can be nothing more simple for an intelligent employer than to cultivate cotton by the job or piece. Let him allow each laborer to assume charge of as much cotton land as he will undertake, not exceeding ten acres; hold him responsible for raising or purchasing his own food; furnish him good tools, charging him for breakage or loss; pay him for ploughing and listing by the acre, for hoeing by the acre, and if he hoes it oftener than usual, so much the better; when picking comes on, the hardest work of the season, pay him by the pound, ginning by the pound, and packing or baling by the bale. Pay him promptly, at each date agreed, all that you have agreed, and at the end of the season his bonus or share, and a good crop cannot fail to be made; on good land, not less than a bale to the acre.

The great danger to the negro will be that such will be the competition for his labor as to cause his wages to increase faster than his wants, and thus cause him to become idle. The only possible cure for this is, by education to raise his standard of life; and how rapidly this will be accomplished, has been proved by the demand of the stores established upon the Sea Islands changing from the coarse and simple requirements of a slave population to a demand nearly like that of a New England village.