

## INTER-STATES FARMERS' CONVENTION.

## The Cotton and the Corn Lords in Convention.

Delegates from ten States Present—Five Hundred Agriculturists Discussing Their Needs.

[From the Atlanta Constitution.]

Just as Commissioner Henderson stepped to the front of the stage at DeGives Opera house yesterday morning for the purpose of reading the call for the interstate convention, a good breeze began to blow into the opera house through the open windows at the rear of the stage. The pit, dress circle and first gallery were crowded with ladies present at the opening exercises, delegates from ten southern states and spectators generally.

The opera house was crowded and the pleasant breeze was a welcome attendant upon the crowded convention. While Judge Henderson was reading the call, an opportunity was given for an examination of the delegations. It was impossible to compare one delegation with another, as the members did not sit together but were scattered all over the house; but the blue and gold badges floating from the lapels of the coats marked them everywhere.

A finer looking body of men never assembled in the south than the farmers' convention. Strong, brawny looking men, mostly bearded, with sun tanned faces and necks, with a hardy color of good health, they attracted general comment by their fine appearance. The former could be seen everywhere. It was not a convention of theorist dreamers; but the knotty hand and tanned faces betokened men who in reality and in sober earnest tilled the soil for the generous products it yielded in return. Such was the impression the convention made upon the interested spectators, and the exercises that followed showed the interest that the delegates felt in the proceedings and the solicitude they entered as to the general result of their deliberations.

## GETTING READY FOR BUSINESS.

In calling the convention to order Commissioner Henderson made a few appropriate remarks, and then a prayer was offered by the Rev. H. C. Morrison, of Atlanta.

Commissioner Henderson, after making a statement touching the agricultural interests of the country, introduced as the temporary chairman Governor John B. Gordon.

## GOVERNOR GORDON'S ADDRESS.

Upon taking the chair the Governor spoke as follows:

GENTLEMEN OF THE CONVENTION: I wish I could also say ladies of the convention, for this is one body into which the purest and the best could be incorporated with great propriety. [Laughter and applause.]

It has been made my duty to preside as your temporary chairman. In calling you to order, I ask your indulgence for a very few moments. Your coming together will be hailed by all thoughtful men as a promise of good to yourselves and the country. It might be truthfully said that you are here on a mission of universal philanthropy, because in the special interest of the husbandmen are involved the universal interests of humanity. [Applause.]

The basis of agriculture is as broad as this earth; and the science of agriculture is as comprehensive as the all-encircling air around this earth. What is it that is not comprehended in the science of agriculture? It embraces not only the understanding of the soils and their mode of treatment, but of heat, of moisture, of the laws of labor, of supply and demand, of finance and taxation. Agriculture is at once the foundation, the support and the guardian of all material interests of society. It is the greatest of the sciences, the noblest of arts, the most independent of calling; in a word, it is the fruitful mother from whose generous breast all the avocations of men draw their nutriment and their life. [Applause.]

Let him who doubts the accuracy of this statement, or regards it as the language of extravagance, imagine some fiendish power with death dealing wand, blighting and blasting at one fell blow all of the harvests of the world. Where then would life be found? You might check all merchandise, stop all commerce, destroy all manufactures, but agriculture could still live. The human race and animal life could still survive. But destroy agriculture, and where would be your merchandise, your commerce, your manufactures, your civilization, and human existence? Your mer-

chandise would perish, your commerce would cease, your factories would stand still, your civilization would die, and human existence would end. What universal ruin would immediately follow! Let agriculture die, and your great ships would rot at their wharves. Let agriculture die and your magnificent railway systems would become a silent mockery, and their myriad of cars would decay in heaps of idle lumber at the deserted depots. To the busy hum of your manufacturing art, would ensue the silence of the grave; and the burning wastes of the African deserts would be the fittest representatives of the lifeless ruins of your cities and of the world's desolation. [Applause.]

If it be true—and it is true—that agriculture is incomparably the most important avocation of man, no words of mine can sufficiently emphasize the propriety of this convocation of farmers. If it be the art of all arts, the science of all sciences, the life of all life, how vast are its avenues for increased benefits to mankind; how countless are the subjects for investigation and the possibilities for improvement! The value of every ray of sunlight that falls upon the fields and of every vine or growth that shades its surface; the value of every ton of manure and system of fertilization; the value of every improvement in machinery and change in tillage; the tendency of every law or governmental policy, state and federal, all furnish fields for thought, investigation and debate. All demands in the interest of the best efforts of men of science and of practical experiment. They summon to the investigation not only all the powers of the cultivators of the soil; but the most sanctified capabilities of the chemist, the philosopher, the philanthropist, the patriot and the statesman. [Great applause.]

And now I wish to announce a fact as axiomatic as a proposition in the Euclid and as true as the decalogue. The plow—the plow is the fore-runner, the foremost evangel, the truest prophet of the world's civilization. [Loud applause.]

The first law of the Deity, the prime necessity of humanity, the life principle of all progress and development is the tillage of the soil. [Applause.]

If this has to be renumerate, there is a fundamental mistake, a radical wrong somewhere. Where is it? What is it? To search for it, and if possible to find it; to understand it, to conquer it, and uproot it, is the high duty—the commanding obligation upon every lover of his country or his race.

To aid in discovering this wrong is the great purpose of this convention. It does not become as your temporary chairman to attempt to indicate where that evil lies, and to suggest the remedy. All that I could with propriety do, would be to submit, in conclusion, one or two suggestions of the most general character.

Let me then first state where the difficulty or wrong will not be found. It will not be found in your southern climate, seasons or soil. I will not say that the Almighty could not have made a goodlier land than this, or omniscience might have conceived and omnipotence might have created a better country. I will say, however, that it did not please him to do so. [Applause.]

The beauties, the blessings and the bounties of nature are found in no zone in richer profusion. In the freedom from the extremes of heat and cold; in the infrequency of cyclones, rain storms and parching drouths; in the uniformity of its seasons, the productiveness of its soils and the value of its staples, it is perhaps without a rival. Of all the countries that have been tested by long experience, this section combines more elements that are sought and fewer that are shunned by intelligent men in their search for profit in tillage and comfort in homes. It is a land of sunshine without the sunstrokes. It is, perhaps, a little sunburnt but greatly sunblessed. [Applause and laughter.]

If, therefore, we are not growing rich as farmers, let us not look for the cause of depression in a lack of lavish kindness and endowments by Mother Nature. The fault does not lie at her door.

Nor can it be found in the character of your occupation. As already shown, the farmer carries upon his back all the industries of the earth, and is entitled, therefore, to earth's surest and richest rewards. Where then is the enemy to your profits and prosperity? Where are the false friends or brawny foes, whose diverting power is sufficient to turn into other pockets the profits which should come to yours? I'll tell you where they are. They

are either in the farmer's practices or the government's policies; or perhaps in both. If by the production of the staple to be sent abroad, and the underproduction of staples to be consumed at home, you have lost your individual financial independence, let that process be reversed. The granite foundation of general prosperity is home-made, home-conducted, unmortgaged, individual independence. [Applause.]

On the other hand, if legal enactments, or laws of taxation, or other governmental policies, are hurtful to others and hurtful to you, I have only to say your power is great enough to dictate the policies and to change the laws. [Applause.]

If you need diversified industries and increased home demand (and you do) the encouragements to capitalists and manufactures are numberless. The encouragements are stamped on the whole face of the country. They are in the richness of your minerals, the fertility of your lands and the seductiveness of your climate. They whisper in your breezes, thunder in your water powers, and throb in the great heart of generous people. [Applause.]

In calling to order this convention of husbandmen I know you will unite in the earnest aspirations that the God of husbandmen will guide our deliberations; discover to us the enemies of our just rewards, arm us for the conflict and vouchsafe to us the victory. Governor Gordon introduced Mr. Henry W. Grady as follows:

Gentlemen of the Convention: When I announce to you the next speaker you will thank me that I have ceased talking. The next speaker is Henry W. Grady. [Applauses.] I cannot turn over to him the State—I wish I could. [Applause and laughter.] But I have turned over to him the responsibility of talking for the state, and he can do it better than any man in the state. [Applause.]

I am not going to introduce him; I have nothing to say about him. I have ordered him, as commander-in-chief of the army of this great commonwealth, to welcome this great convention and all their friends to the hospitality of this state. [Applause.]

Mr. Grady appeared, and was greeted with applause. His speech had not been prepared, and the rapidity with which he talks renders it almost impossible to get a stenographic report. The following is a synopsis:

"It was announced in yesterday's CONSTITUTION," said Mr. Grady, "that I was to deliver this address of welcome, and as it is my duty to maintain the veracity of that highly respected newspaper, even to my embarrassment and your discomfort, I am here. I am astonished that Governor Gordon, at once my governor and my friend, who, in delivering a welcome himself, would have added a magisterial authority I do not possess to an eloquence I never hope to have, delegated the duty to me. I am astonished that he, foremost in every charge for your promotion and last from every breach in which your rights are threatened, should have shirked this duty and laid it on the shoulders of his humble but loving constituent, leaving me to march behind the blazing path of his eloquence, much as a one-armed wood-chopper would follow the track of a south Georgia cyclone. [Laughter.] He has not done so because of my agricultural knowledge. He knows that I am the only living man who knows less about agriculture than he does. [Laughter.] But he knows that he can't beat me being glad to see you. [Applause.]

"They say that when you wake a Georgian from sudden sleep he extends his hand and says 'howdy; I am glad to see you,' as he rubs his eyes. How much more welcome then are you who come at urgent invitation and in pursuit of a noble purpose. It is good that this welcome is spontaneous, for my duties have been so pressing that I have not had time for thinking. Straight from my heart to my lips and from my lips to you I bid you welcome to Georgia. We are glad to see you. Now, I have said that so cordially and so completely that I have nothing else to say. As mortal hand cannot gild the sunset nor refine the lily, so is there no heartier welcome than when a Georgian says My friend, I welcome you to my home."

Mr. Grady then said that he had a few thoughts which had come to him casually and had been churned into coherence by the blessed brass band. After this introduction Mr. Grady eulogized the farmers as a man who measures strength, not with man but with seasons, who draws his fortunes from the amplitude of nature, exhausted to those who tap it wisely, and

free as the water of Horeb's rock. Profiting in no man's detraction, rising no man's ruin, strengthening no man's adversity, but striking the earth no her springing breast and filling his veins from her flowing fountains. Stirred not by passion, poisoned not by envy, troubled not by ambition, but tranquil, deep breathed, standing stalwart and independent in the sweat of his brow as he locks the sunshine in the golden glory of his harvest and spreads the showers in the verdure of his fields, conscious of the integrity of his labor that enriches man while it honors God.

He then discussed the cotton plant and its enormous revenue to the south. Of cotton he said:

"What a royal plant it is! The world waits in attendance on its growth. The shower that falls whispering on its leaves is heard around the earth. The sun that shines on it is tempered by the prayers of all people. The frost that chills it and dew that descends from the stars is noted and the trespass of a little worm on its green leaf is more to England than the advance of the Russian army on her Asian outposts. It is gold from the instant it puts fourth its tiny shoot. Its fibre is current in every bank, and when loosing its fleeces to the sun it floats its snowy banner that glorifies the field of the humble farmer, that man is marshalled under a flag that will compel the allegiance of the world and wring a subsidy from every nation on earth."

He then said that this income was fixed and peculiar to the south. Not hers this year and her neighbor's the next, but hers every year.

"The heritage that God gave to this people forever as their own when he arched our skies, established our mountains, girt us about with the ocean, loosed the breezes, tempered the sunshine and measured the rain. Ours and our children's forever. As princely talent as ever came from His hand to mortal stewardship."

Mr. Grady then said:

"If this enormous revenue of four hundred million dollars per annum could be kept at home, if the supplies that we eat were raised on our farms, and the articles we buy were manufactured in our cities, in ten years the cotton states would be the richest section of the globe."

He then showed that the cities were doing their part in keeping at home this enormous revenue. He said:

"There are 230,000 artisans at work in the south today that were not here in 1830, and this does not include the thousands that are building new enterprises. We manufactured last year \$213,000,000 worth of articles that six years following the cotton exposition 173 new cotton mills have been built in the south, starting 1,000,000 new spindles. The south is witnessing today an industrial revolution for which history has no precedent. Figures do not measure it and amazement is simply limited by comprehension. If the Piedmont exposition can fairly epitomize it, that show will be the miracle of the day. At every turn we stop the outflow of money. Six years ago Georgia bought 166,000 tons of commercial fertilizers, for which she paid seven million dollars, every dollar of which went north. Last year she used 160,000 tons, of which 125,000 tons were made in Georgia, of Carolina phosphates, Georgia cotton meal and sulphuric acid reduced from natural iron pyrites. Thus one state in one item has checked the outflow of six million dollars per annum and will double the capacity of her factories in another year. Twenty years ago we wasted three million tons of cotton seed by dumping in the river or burning it. Last year we run eight hundred thousand tons through one hundred and forty-six oil mills, extracting eight million dollars worth of oil refined into fourteen million dollars value and turned back the cotton meal to the farmer, better for food or fertilizer than before it was robbed of its oil. One company is now building ten oil mills in the south that will treat next season two hundred thousand tons of seed making one million tons or one third of the crop, and producing ten million dollars worth of crude oil. The fertilizing value of the cotton seed which was burned or drowned twenty years ago is one hundred and forty million dollars more than the rye, oats and wheat crop of the north-west combined. More amazing than all, in 1880 the south produced four hundred thousand tons of iron; in 1887, eight hundred and fifty thousand tons. This increase of four hundred and fifty thousand tons in seven years started the world, but there are now in actual process of erection thirty-one iron furnaces in the

south with a capacity of 3,000 tons per day or 1,000,000 tons per annum, so that where we increased 450,000 tons in seven years we will now increase 1,000,000 tons in one year."

Mr. Grady gave other figures at length, showing the enormous growth of industrial movements in the south. He then praised the work of southern farmer, who, out of nothing twenty years ago but bare lands and desolated fields had produced last year a crop of \$715,000,000.

"Indeed," he said. "I think the farmer deserves more credit than his friends in the city. I shall always maintain that there is no record of heroism to surpass the rebuilding of the south by her sons returning from war. This work glorious everywhere was easier in the city than in the country. There amid the clamor of the multitude, quickened by the sense of comradeship hearing the heart beat of a friend on every side, led by example and stung by criticism the work was easy for inspiration was constant. But have you thought of the farmer that had returned to the solitude of his desolated home? Have you thought of him as he wandered through his empty barns, his desolated fields, his stock, labor and implements gone, his neighbors slain, and even the son who was to be the staff of age, or the father who was to be the guide of youth and the brother at once comrade and kinsman resting beneath the same far off sky, happier in his tranquil grave than he who was left in this sad perplexity. Think of him as he gathers together the fragments of his wreck and goes afield, urging with kindly hand his borrowed mule, planting cotton at twenty-five cents and marketing it at fifteen, paying sixty per cent usury on all he buys, and buying everything on credit, his crop mortgaged before it is planted his children in want, his neighborhood in chaos, without church or school, working under new conditions without guidance, retrieving each error by a wasted year, and struggling to every truth through costly experience, working all day long adown the furrow, and at night almost hopeless, going back to his dismantled house broken and cheerless, where his wife—thank God—cheerful even in her sorrow, leads him to forget his troubles as she brings him to listen to the chirping of the cricket beneath their hearthstone, while she ministers with infinite grace to his loving heart. I love to think of him, for he is my countryman, as he walked those terrible days, day after day, behind his plow, hearing no voice save the approval of his conscience, and having no friend near him save Nature that smiles back at his earnest touch and God that sends him the message of good cheer through the passing breeze and whispering leaves."

Closing he said:

"I thank God over and again for the time and place of my birth—that I came into manhood when the south, merging from unspeakable sorrow, prostrated and impoverished, called her sons to her side, and that I was born of her bosom and sworn to her service. Had I been an alien her sorrows would have touched me, and I should have sought her banner, but born of her soil and holding heirship to her sorrow I have never had an aspiration that would not hallow hers. Have you thought, my countrymen, of the glorious work at our hands, and the glorious crisis in which we were born? We stand for the integrity of a splendid civilization, from the spirit of which we cannot in honor or reverence depart but which we must carry unstained into new conditions. It is ours to show that a land that prospered with slaves shall prosper yet more with freedom, that a people defeated in war shall triumph in peace and that set apart for a century they shall enter the lists in poverty and emerge in prosperity—holding sacred every honorable tradition yet turning their faces steadfast and dauntless to the future. How are we keeping this trust? There are those who say that our farmers are losing ground and being driven backward from their farms as our fathers were driven backward from Appomattox and Chattanooga. This convention may decide that the farmers in the south are in worse condition than they were ten years ago. Is this true, and if so, why is it? We have a land unsurpassed in richness and fertility. A climate in which winter is but a passing breath and spring and autumn meet in the heart of summer. Corn, cotton, clover, tobacco, wheat and the grasses grow in one inclosure. The peach and apple ripen in the same orchard and we grow every fruit from the pineapple to the Siberian crab. Our forests are exhaustless, our mines rich, our quarries untouched, our lands perfect. Are