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THE COTTON SITUATION AS SEEN FROM THE FIELD

LOW PRICES APPEAR INEVITABLE

We Must Hold Cotton and Plant Food and Feed Crops

THE week has brought no cheer to cotton market interests. In fact, the crisis has become more acute, and the situation is now the worst ever known. Practically the whole of Europe is engaged in a death struggle, and under the most favorable developments now conceivable, it will require a long time to heal the wounds. Not for a good while can we expect the cotton market to be restored to a normally healthy state.

Good middling is selling at eight cents in the Savannah market; in some sections it is said to be selling a cent lower. The country is evidently quite demoralized. People fail to see that they are putting the market on too low a basis, pending the development of the plans calculated to bring relief. It is quite likely that this competitive under-selling is more sporadic than general, but still it has its baneful effect all the same, for the demand, too, is very limited. Obviously, it is useless to pass resolutions agreeing to hold for a stipulated figure if somebody keeps on selling at any price he can obtain.

We must sell as much of the crop as consumers will take and use. We must, by cooperative action on a wise and prudent policy, get as much as we can for what we sell. We must not, if we can help it, sell the cotton to speculators to be held as a weight on the market over our heads. The important point is to take off the market, and keep off, all the cotton that we are unable to sell at fairly reasonable terms, to consumers.

When the demand broadens, as it soon will, for American mills will require 7,000,000 or 8,000,000 bales and exports will not stop altogether, a determined effort should be made to keep down the offerings. By so doing, the price may be worked back to something better than the present pittance. On the other hand, if the demoralization continues, the price cannot fail to fall to even lower depths.

A large part of this crop cannot be marketed this year, unless sold, or given away almost, to speculators. We must consequently realize that we will have to carry over a great deal for a year or longer. Low grades are not wanted at all, and only go to swell the total of the apparent supply. The man who can and will hold his crop, not merely for a few months, but steadfastly through the crisis, will fare better than the one who sells regardless.

The final step in the program is to plant something else next year. Food crops are high, and promise to be still higher next summer and fall. There is no hope for cotton at all if we make another normal crop. The profitable rule would be to hold this crop instead of planting another. Who dares this will win out in the end.

W. T. WILLIAMS.

Savannah, Ga.

Congress Should Help the Millions as Well as the Millionaires

THIS cotton situation is getting near a crisis. The silent millions of the South have so far had but little to say; they have thought that Congress, being Democratic, would make some provision for them. But now that over 20 days have passed and nothing tangible has been done, they are growing restless. The danger is that this mass will stampede; sooner or later they will; then our country will suffer more than if we were at war.

I notice that Congress was very prompt to come to the relief of the stranded tourists, mostly millionaires, in Europe when war was declared.

Fact is, I guess there was no precedent for Congress to act just as it did; but it was not bad, useless as most of those people are to the race. But when Congress is asked to act so as to protect a great section of the country from ruin, they find time to speculate on the true functions of government. All this section is asking for is that Congress treat the millions as it has the millionaires. Cannot you bring it to the minds of the real men at Washington that heretofore the Southern planter has been a voter of the Democratic ticket, in fact, been the mainstay of the party? Those millionaires never vote the Democratic ticket if they can help it, and if politics is to be played at all, it might be wise to play to those who have made the "Solid South" a reality.

Cotton is selling here in Enterprise today for about eight cents, if it is good cotton; seed are selling at \$13, and if a trade is wanted, the mills here offer us only 1,200 pounds of meal for a ton of seed. Two days ago they offered only 1,000 pounds of meal for a ton of seed. This spells calamity. Nine out of every ten farmers will have to be foreclosed if this continues, and most of the merchants will break. The section will not recover in 20 years. It makes me almost want to swear when I think that possibly it could all be averted if we had men at Washington who know that the acid test of efficiency is the ability to meet an economic crisis boldly, promptly and surely. Surely President Wilson does not fully comprehend the extreme gravity of the situation.

Pray excuse me for "blowing off." The Progressive Farmer has a great deal of influence and can be heard. There is but one question now before the South.

J. M. YOUNG.

Enterprise, Ala.

More About Cotton Grading

AFTER reading the article in The Progressive Farmer, headed "Will Cotton Be Properly Graded This Fall?" I feel like I must tell you about my experience with cotton buyers last spring. I had six bales of cotton which I carried to Henderson, N. C., and offered it for sale, and, as you say, buyer A made me an offer. I went to see B, C, D, etc.; they were either out of town or were not buying that day, so I went back to A to see if he would not give me a better offer, but he could not. His offer for some was 9 cents, some more 9 1/4, and for the balance 12 cents, as best I remember; there were two bales of 12-cent cotton.

I told him I could not take that for my cotton, and he remarked that that was a good price for my cotton. I told him so it was for the Harriet Cotton Mill, for it was no other than they making this offer, but was not a good price for me, and I would not sell my cotton at that price. So then one of my friends who knew something about the cotton market advised me to ship my cotton to a dealer in Norfolk, Va., which I did, getting about 100 pounds of cotton more than my bill of lading called for, but only a few pounds more than what I really had. But the point is, I got 12 cents for what they offered 9 cents, 12 1/4 for what they offered 9 1/4, and 13 cents for what they offered 12 cents. You see there was one-fourth of a cent a pound difference, but they were pricing me down so low.

Now the cost of shipping and selling was about half a cent a pound. My saving was between \$35 and \$40. I had a neighbor who was trying to sell some cotton. I told him about my sale and advised him to ship, which he did, being well satisfied with his sales.

The farmers will be compelled to ship their off cotton if nothing else, for where we are so badly hit around here is in off grades and off cotton,

If the people would begin to ship their cotton it would cause cotton buyers to sit up and take notice.

As your valuable paper says, so much of the farmer's hard-earned money goes to these buyers, who neither toil nor spin but lie around buying cotton away below its value. Consequently the majority of the farmers are always in hard luck. Take, for instance, the man who farms cotton, making probably five or six bales. If there comes a storm or much rain or if it happens so the farmer cannot get his cotton in until late almost all of it will be classed as off cotton, and that means to be sold for about two to two and one-half cents less than it is actually worth, meaning anywhere from \$10 to \$12 a bale, or from \$50 to \$75 on his crop.

Now that is for one man. By the time all or nearly all of these people have been treated this way it will mean a vast amount of money being taken out of the men's pockets it belongs in and put in the speculators' pockets.

Louisburg, N. C. W. M. PINNELL.

Let the Government Insure Cotton Exports

NOTING your Farmers' Convention in Washington, the other day, about legislation and other methods needed for keeping the prices of cotton up to normal, and considering the circumstances under which we are placed, I did not observe that anything was said about the Government's insuring the cotton that was to be shipped to foreign markets in our bottoms—American-built ships. I understand the insurance is, or was a day or two ago, 20 per cent, which is largely prohibitive. France was hardly engaged in the war before she took over the marine insurance practically, insuring everything shipped in French bottoms up to 80 per cent of its value.

It seems entirely proper for the United States to insure at some low rate or guarantee without rate, every bale of cotton and other produce shipped in American bottoms to European markets. Getting the cotton to market is the main consideration now in bringing about a normal status.

W. J. PEELE.

Raleigh, N. C.

Hold Cotton Until the Mills Need It

THE greatest good that can be done now is for everyone to talk of the value of cotton, and to strain every nerve, even to the point of discomfort, to hold on to this valuable product of our soil and toil until the world calls for it again. We will find that when peace is declared cotton will be in such demand that all the surplus we may be holding will be in demand at prices that will make us sick if we have let it get into the hands of the speculators.

Many have asked me what good have these meetings done? My answer is they are restoring confidence, they are showing our people the absolute folly of panic. And in the meantime before cotton comes in much volume the plans will be matured to retire all that the spinners will not take at a profit. We cannot do our country greater harm than by repeating and dwelling on low price talk; and next to the open market, we cannot do greater good than to look and speak cheerful and hold a stiff upper lip.

E. W. DABBS.

Two Issues Worth a Year's Subscription

YOUR Clover Issue and your discussion on the cotton situation were worth the price of The Progressive Farmer for more than one year. If all agricultural journals would make the fight for the farms and farmers that The Progressive Farmer is making, the South would soon take its stand in the foremost ranks of progress and prosperity.

R. V. JARRATT.

Waynesboro, Miss.