

## The American Cotton Bale Must be Reformed.

President Harvie Jordan, Profoundly Impressed by What He Saw on His Trip to the Foreign Cotton Centres, Makes a Powerful Plea for Reform in the Baling and Handling of Cotton.

No word has been spoken in regard to the handling and shipping of cotton that is of more vital interest to the Southern farmer than that which we are reprinting on this page from President Harvie Jordan's recent article in the Baltimore Manufacturers' Record. What Mr. Jordan says is not guess-work. He went abroad to see and find out things that affect the price of the Southern farmer's cotton, and he has written the results of his investigation. As long as the American farmer sends abroad two out of every three bales of cotton that he raises, the foreign buyer will be a factor in the fixing of price that the farmer cannot ignore. And when it is demonstrated, as Mr. Jordan demonstrates it, that the shabby clothes our King Cotton wears when he is abroad stimulates the cultivation of the staple in foreign countries and that ragged cotton bales abroad make ragged cotton farmers at home, it is high time our growers were taking up in dead earnest the matter of enforcing a superior and more attractive method of covering and handling their export cotton. But we will give Mr. Jordan's presentation of the matter, and nothing we have printed on the subject is better worth your serious reading. He says:

The average grower of cotton in the Southern States has been educated to believe that cotton of good quality and in large quantities can be grown only in America, and that therefore it made no particular difference as to how badly the cotton crop was handled, the spinning world had to take it and make the best of it.

There is no doubt upon my mind that we are in error as regards the idea that foreign countries do not possess land and climatic conditions favorable to the production of the best grades of cotton in large quantities. The trouble in more rapidly increasing the production of foreign-grown cotton lies not so much in unfavorable climatic conditions as it does in the education of the people in those countries where cotton could be grown to take hold of the industry and push it. In Brazil, Peru, Argentina, Australia, Egypt, India, Mexico, South Africa and other countries where the staple can be grown the natives are as yet but semi-civilized and where but few of the modern facilities for agriculture and transportation have been introduced.

### Amazing Increase of Foreign Production.

Anyone who will take the pains to carefully investigate the imports of cotton from all sources into Great Britain and the Continent each year will soon ascertain that a large number of countries are now growing cotton and that the annual production of these foreign cottons, is increasing, and in some sections to an amazing degree. While these shipments, aside from Egypt and India, are not large, still so many small shipments are beginning to foot up largely in the aggregate. India alone produced in the past year 4,000,000 bales of cotton, weighing on an average of 400 pounds per bale. This is as large as the American cotton crop was a few decades ago. One large firm, Platt Bros. & Co., which I visited in Manchester, alone turns out annually 3,000 new gin outfits, none of which comes to America, but all are shipped out to meet the demands of other countries.

### King Cotton at Second Table Because of Shabby Clothes.

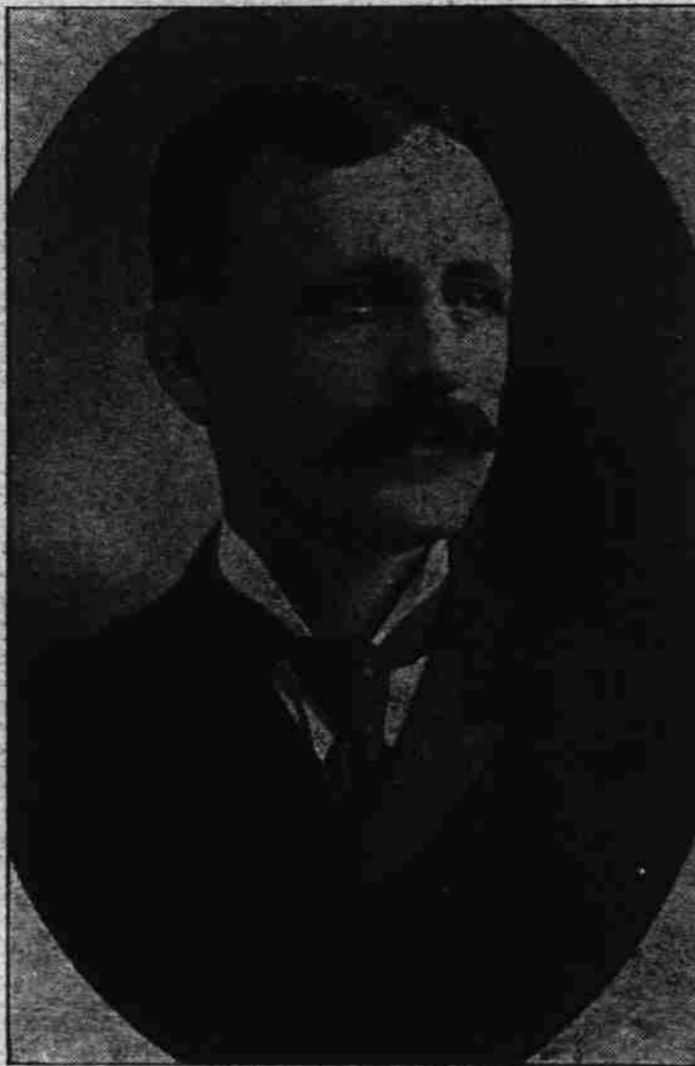
Undoubtedly the South holds a commanding position in the predominating supply of the world's cotton and will perhaps always maintain her prestige, but American cotton is bought by foreign spinners under protest, and only after similar grades of foreign-grown cotton has been exhausted, not because foreigners are prejudiced against American-grown cotton, but because of the bad manner in which American cotton is baled and delivered abroad.

American cotton is the only cotton in the world where every bale is sampled and carefully examined by every hand through which it passes from the local cotton buyer in the interior, on through the hands of the foreign cotton merchant, and finally by the spinners under the roofs of their mills. It is the only cotton in the world where grades in the same bale are not uniform and where deductions have to be made for "country damage."

If the growers and handlers of American cotton do not reform the present methods of delivering our cotton abroad, it will only tend to intensify the determination of foreign spinners to induce a larger production of cotton in other countries. I make this plea in behalf of American cotton after having visited the great cotton centres of Europe and personally investigated the facts herewith recorded.

### Reform of American Bale Urged Everywhere.

I personally inspected large cotton warehouses at Venice, Bremen, Manchester and Liverpool. At



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every point visited, accompanied by my associate, Mr. Walter Clarke, of Mississippi, we were shown every courtesy by the large cotton merchants, the members of the exchanges, and shown through all the warehouses we cared to inspect and freely given all the information we wished.

Everywhere, in response to our questions as to American cotton bales compared with other cotton, the answers were the same, namely, that American cotton was generally received in bad condition; that it required more sampling, carried higher rates of insurance, heavier tare, expensive arbitration and losses from what is termed country damage or rot. Everywhere we were asked if the American bale could not be reformed. We had fine opportunity for judging comparisons, as we found thousands of bales of American cotton stored side by side with thousands of bales of foreign-grown cotton.

The American bales were cut all to pieces from numerous sampling, the lint hanging out from these jagged bales, while the jute bagging in which the bales were originally wrapped was torn, cut and hanging in shreds. The bales were neither uniform in length, breadth or thickness. On the other hand, the cotton received from other countries was baled in nice packages, wrapped in closely-woven canvas and of uniform size. Only one bale in ten, as a rule, is sampled of foreign-grown cotton, while the cost of handling, rate of insurance, etc., is far less as compared with American cotton, and no arbitrations for "country damage." As a Southern cotton grower and a close observer, I was profoundly impressed by these revelations, and I sincerely trust that my exposition of the facts stated will have some tendency in turning the tide of sentiment in the South in favor of improving the American bale, which under existing methods is costing Southern cotton growers a heavy penalty for their apparent indifference.

### Great Big Hospital for "Country 'Damaged' Cotton.

We were shown through the warehouses of the Manchester Ship Canal by the president of the Association, Mr. Robinson. Here we found the finest warehouse facilities in the world, a solid warehouse nearly one mile in length, four stories high, and built entirely of reinforced concrete. In one apartment of this warehouse is a large space set aside for picking American cotton bales

of the so-called "country damage" or rot. No other cotton shipped from any other part of the world carries a loss for country damage. On the tracks on the outside of this section of the warehouse I found ten car-loads of cotton being unloaded to be sent into this section for picking on account of damage. I found that all of this particular lot of cotton came from Memphis. Some of the bales being picked showed a loss of at least 200 pounds to the bale in solid rot.

Upon my inquiry as to who stood these heavy losses, which was due entirely to the storing of this cotton through the past winter on the streets of Memphis, I was amazed to find that the marine insurance companies paid all losses from country damage on American cotton. I naturally supposed that the cotton factors or exporters of this damaged cotton from Memphis would stand some loss on account of their negligence in allowing these bales to rot on the streets of Memphis, but I found that the insurance companies paid the full damage, and that the cotton shippers from Memphis got full pay for every bale they shipped, whether damaged or in good condition.

### The Growers Have to Pay.

I then decided to call on the officers of some of the largest marine insurance companies in Liverpool. I met several of them the next day and was informed that what I had heard was substantially correct, and that the insurance companies protected themselves by charging a high rate on American cotton. They said that affidavits were made by American shippers that cotton was damaged after it was insured, and they had no recourse but to pay.

The point which I wish to make is that this excessive rate of insurance on American cotton made to pay damages on cotton improperly cared for is one of the fixed charges which the growers have to pay and for which they are in no wise responsible, as cotton sold by farmers in a damaged condition is usually picked at the local warehouses when the purchase by the buyers is made. We should have some stringent laws along this line which will force the large cotton centres of the South to more properly store and protect our cotton from these heavy losses.

### Strong Demand by Prospering English Mills.

Never before in the history of the cotton trade has such activity been displayed in the building of new cotton mills in the Lancashire district and elsewhere. Millions of new spindles are being put in annually, and new mills can be seen going up on every hand. The foreign spinners are making more money than ever before, and their only fear is that at the present splendid condition of the business too many mills will be built. There is but little fear of lower prices for either the raw materials or the finished product within the next year or two, and there need be no fear that every bale of good normal crops of American cotton will not be demanded at good prices. The one essential thing for the Southern cotton grower to learn is to raise his food supplies largely at home, curtail the credit business and begin at once to improve the present method of the baling, handling and delivery of his cotton to foreign ports. We should make the American bale of cotton as attractive from every standpoint as any other bale of cotton grown on any other land in the world. This should be so not only from a matter of pride, but from the economic demands of the present time in good business methods.

### How the Cotton Grower Can Get His Own Price.

With these problems solved, we will be a long step forward on the highway of bringing about still closer relations between the growers and spinners of American cotton.

The growers and spinners of American cotton are more vitally interested in the cotton industry than all others combined; hence it is eminently proper that these two interests should cordially co-operate to the mutual advantage of each.

Manchester spinners insist that farmers first ship their cotton to Manchester, and if grades are satisfactory upon examination by their experts, then the trade is consummated, but they are very much opposed to paying for cotton on this side before shipment. It seems to me, therefore, that the growers must first inaugurate the reforms noted with respect to baling and delivery, build warehouses in which to store and finance their cotton, and get into a position strong enough to demand such prices from the buyers, whoever they may be, as will secure for themselves a fair and just profit upon the products of their labor.

Sincerity is the foundation of all honest work.—John Trainor.