WhereCotton is King

How Cotton is Picked and Prepared for the Market.

Where Our Crop Comes From and What It Is Worth—It Produces More Wealth Annually Than the Gold Mines of the World—Queer Facts About Our Cotton Competitors in Egypt, India, Japan and China—How We Lend the World and How Our Crop is Increasing—The Production of 1896—Some Shots at Pickers in the Fields and Other Matters About One of the Greatest Money Producers of the Union.

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Special Correspondence of the NEWS.

ATLANTA, November 11th, 1896.

DURING the past week I have been traveling through some of the richest cotton districts of the south. I came from Washington to Atlanta over the Southern railway. The line runs down through Virginia and crosses the head of the pine level splands of North and South Carolina into Georgia. I rode for hundreds of miles through fields loaded with the woolly white fiber, and here in Atlanta I am in one of the chief cotton states of the Union. Those who have not traveled through the south in the autumn have an idea of the gorgeous splendor with which nature here decorates the dying year. The mountains are now ablaze with color. You ride through forests where the green pines mix with the leaves of other trees of all the colors of the rainbow. The contrasts are greater than those of the north. The green is greener, the red leaves range in color from that of fresh blood to a royal purple, and the yellows are of every hue from a pale delicate lemon to that of the purest gold. Such trees are often the setting of the cotton plantations, which consist of thousands of little green and brown bushes which are now weeping their precious tears of snow. In other fields the green bolls or bolls containing the cotton are just ready to open. In others the ribs of the bolls have cracked and the field of brown and green is spotted or dotted with white. Again you see places where the crop is ripe to bursting and the great tufts hang out ready to drop to the ground or into the hands of the pickers. Some of the fields are alive with men and women gathering cotton. Negroes and whites walk through the rows and pick the white bolls. The darkies sing as they pick and their rich, soft voices float into the car windows as we fly by. At many of the stations there are bales of cotton ready for shipping to the factories of the north and south. Nearly every little farmhouse we pass has one or more bales in its yard. The roads are lined with wagons full of it and in the distance looks like newly washed wool, but which is freshly picked cotton being carried to the gin, where the seed must be taken out before the cotton can be sold. Other wagons haul bales of cotton, bringing the ginned article back to the farmer's home. The drivers seem happy. Hear the old negro sing as he hauls six three bales of cotton along to that old car drawn by an ox. He is rejoicing, for he sits on his year's crop, and he knows it will bring him the money for his winter's supplies.

WHERE OUR COTTON COMES FROM.

The cotton crop is the great money crop of the south. It is in good measure the source of the wealth of both parties, white and black, and more than 7,000,000 souls reason. If but, there is a cry of hard times, and want creeps in at the cabin door. The extent of the cotton area of the country is not well understood at the north. The cotton belt covers twenty-four degrees of longitude and about ten degrees of latitude. It now measures about 800,000 square miles, or, according to the census of 1890, almost one-third of the settled parts of the United States. This area of cotton growing territory could be greatly increased, and as it is, only about one-twentieth of it is used for raising cotton. There are in fact only about 50,000,000 acres of cotton plantations, and we have an empire of cotton not which has never been tilled. The cotton belt has a population of about 13,000,000, of whom 6,000,000 are negroes. These people produce more than half a bale of cotton per capital every year, or more than three bales annually to each family of five, or from seven to nine million bales of cotton every year. The cotton we export annually amounts to more than the entire of the gold mines of the world. It is almost double that of the gold and silver mines of the United States. In 1892 it touched up the sum of $275,000,000, and in 1895 we had one of the biggest cotton yields of our history. The cotton then raised amounted, in round numbers, to 9,000,000 bales. This is more than half of all the cotton grown in the world. We are, in fact, the greatest cotton growers of the universe, and could we sell all the cotton our lands could produce at high prices, the south would be the richest part of the United States. Today cotton brings between seven and eight cents a pound, and at this the planters can make money. They are nothing money now, and the only people complaining are those who are talking of hard times are the politicians, the office seekers and the political agitators. The cotton crop will run over 7,000,000 bales. We will get more than $500,000,000 in gold from Europe for our cotton within the next few months, and the present prosperity in our gold reserves comes largely from cotton.

OUR COTTON TERRITORY.

But let me tell you where the most and best cotton is raised. During the past few weeks I have met some of the biggest cotton growers and cotton factors, and have collected some facts which are now weeping their precious tears of snow. In other fields the green bolls or bolls containing the cotton are just ready to open. In others the ribs of the bolls have cracked and the field of brown and green is spotted or dotted with white. Again you see places where the crop is ripe to bursting and the great tufts hang out ready to drop to the ground or into the hands of the pickers. Some of the fields are alive with men and women gathering cotton. Negroes and whites walk through the rows and pick the white bolls. The darkies sing as they pick and their rich, soft voices float into the car windows as we fly by. At many of the stations there are bales of cotton ready for shipping to the factories of the north and south. Nearly every little farmhouse we pass has one or more bales in its yard. The roads are lined with wagons full of it and in the distance looks like newly washed wool, but which is freshly picked cotton being carried to the gin, where the seed must be taken out before the cotton can be sold. Other wagons haul bales of cotton, bringing the ginned article back to the farmer's home. The drivers seem happy. Hear the old negro sing as he hauls six three bales of cotton along in