

KING COTTON IN EGYPT

A CROP THAT IS MAKING RICH THE FARMERS OF THE NILE.

(Special Correspondence of the Deseret News by Frank G. Carpenter.)

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ALEXANDRIA.—I have spent the whole of today wandering about the cotton wharves of Alexandria. They extend for a mile or so up and down the Mah-mudlych canal, which joins this city to the Nile, and are flanked on the other side by railroads filled with cotton trains from every part of Egypt. These wharves lie under the shadow of Pompey's Pillar, and they extend all along the canal almost to the harbor. Upon them are great warehouses filled with bales and bags. There are cotton presses nearby, and in the city itself is a great cotton exchange where the people buy and sell just as they do at Liverpool—from the samples of lint which represent the bales brought in from the plantations.

THE ALEXANDRIA COTTON MARKET.

Indeed, cotton is as big a factor here as it is in New Orleans and the banks of this canal make one think of the great cotton market of that city. The warehouses are of vast extent and the road between them and the water-way is covered with bales of lint and great bags of cotton seed. Skid-ded, oak-grooved, Egyptian rollers high upon the bales—long-bedded wagons hauled by mules. Other Egyptians are unloading the cars and boats and others are carrying the cotton to the warehouses. They tote the bales and bags on their backs, and now and then a man may be seen carrying a bag of loose cotton weighing a couple of hundred pounds upon his head. The cotton seed is taken from the bales in the same way, seed to the amount of 300 pounds often forming a load for one man.

Late in the afternoon I went down to the harbor to see the cotton steamers. They were taking on cargoes for Great Britain, Russia, France, Germany and the United States. Cotton forms three-fourths of the exports of this country, and something like \$700,000 worth of it is annually shipped to the United States. This is so notwithstanding we raise more than two-thirds of all the cotton of the world. The total product in 1906 was almost 18,000,000 bales, of which we raised over 13,000,000. Egypt then produced a little less than 1,100,000, and its product brought more per bale by far than ours. There is always a big demand for Egyptian cotton. It is worth more on the average than that of any other country, and it is in fact, the chief money-maker of the Nile valley.

COTTON IS KING.

Cotton is the great white Pharaoh which the Egyptians worship. He has the majority of the Nile farmers in his employ and he pays them royally. He has rolled up a wave of prosperity which is now enervating the Nile valley from the Mediterranean to the Ca-teracts, and the prospects are that he will make his country "row richer from year to year."

Cotton is now pouring about \$80,000,000 of new money into the laps of the Egyptians every 12 months, and this means an average of about \$40 per family. In addition about \$10,000,000 are annually realized from the sale of cotton seed and cotton cake, so that every man, woman and child in the valley of the Nile has, on an average, \$9 worth of new money from this crop alone.

A GREAT FUTURE.

In the past few months the British government has decided to raise that dam. This will almost double the amount of water which can be used for the cotton crop, and that means more cotton and more money. Lord Cromer, the British governor general, says that the greater part of upper and lower Egypt can be made to grow cotton, and that the cotton plantations will eventually cover more than 5,500,000 acres. If 40 per cent of this area is annually put into cotton, at the present average yield of 450 pounds per acre, it will produce something like 2,000,000 bales annually, or one-ninth as much as the present cotton of the world. Sir William Garstin, one of the great irrigation engineers of modern times, and the man who had much to do in building the Assouan dam, says that 2,000,000 bales is one of the possibilities of Egypt's future, and that it will be 10 or 15 years before the crop reaches that amount. In addition to this, there may be further increase by putting water into some of the oases which lie in the valley of the Nile outside the river bottom, and also by draining the great lakes about Alexandria and in other parts of the lower delta.

EGYPT'S COTTON CROP.

As it is now, Egypt is fast taking a high place among the cotton countries of the world. The United States stands first. She produces about 12,000,000

bales annually. East India has had the second place, her annual product ranging from 800,000 to 2,900,000 bales, with Egypt far in the rear. Since the building of the Assouan dam the crop of Egypt has been steadily increasing, until last year it was six and three-fourths million kantars, which, at 100 pounds to the kantar for easy figuring, make 675 million pounds, or over 1,300,000 500-pound bales. Egypt produces more cotton for its size and the area planted than any other country of the world. Its average crop is 450 pounds per acre, which is far in excess of ours. Dr. Webber, of our department of agriculture, says that our average is only 190 pounds per acre, although we have, of course, many acres which produce 500 pounds and more.

BRINGS BIG PRICES.

Egypt cotton brings big prices. There are some kinds which sell for double the amount of our cotton. It is, in fact, the best cotton of the world with the exception of the Sea Island cotton, which grows on the islands off the coasts of Georgia and South Carolina. The Sea Island cotton has a little longer fiber than the Egyptian. The latter is for the most part brown in color and is used for its softness, which makes it valuable for manufacturing mercerized cotton. We import an enormous quantity of Egyptian cotton to mix with our cotton. I hear of cotton here selling for 20 and 25 cents a pound, and am told that there is a great difference in the varieties raised, and also as to the parts of the Nile valley in which each kind is raised.

The very best cotton grows in the delta, and that region is now producing more than four-fifths of the crop. Less than a quarter of a million acres are in cotton in the valley of the Nile above Cairo, and the yield is neither so large nor so good as that of the delta.

EGYPT'S COTTON PLANTATIONS.

I wish I could take you with me on a trip through the cotton fields of the Nile valley. The scenes there are nothing like those of our southern states. Much of the cotton is raised on small farms, and every field is marked out with little canals into which the water is introduced from time to time. There are no great farmhouses scattered over the landscape, and no barns. The people all live in mud villages and go out to work in the field. They use animals for plowing and harrowing, and the crop is handled in a different way. Let me give you a few pictures as I have made them while traveling through the country.

Take a look over the Delta. It is a wide expanse of green spotted here and there with white patches. The green consists of alfalfa, maize, corn, or beans. The white is the cotton. I can see it stretching out before me as far as my eye can reach.

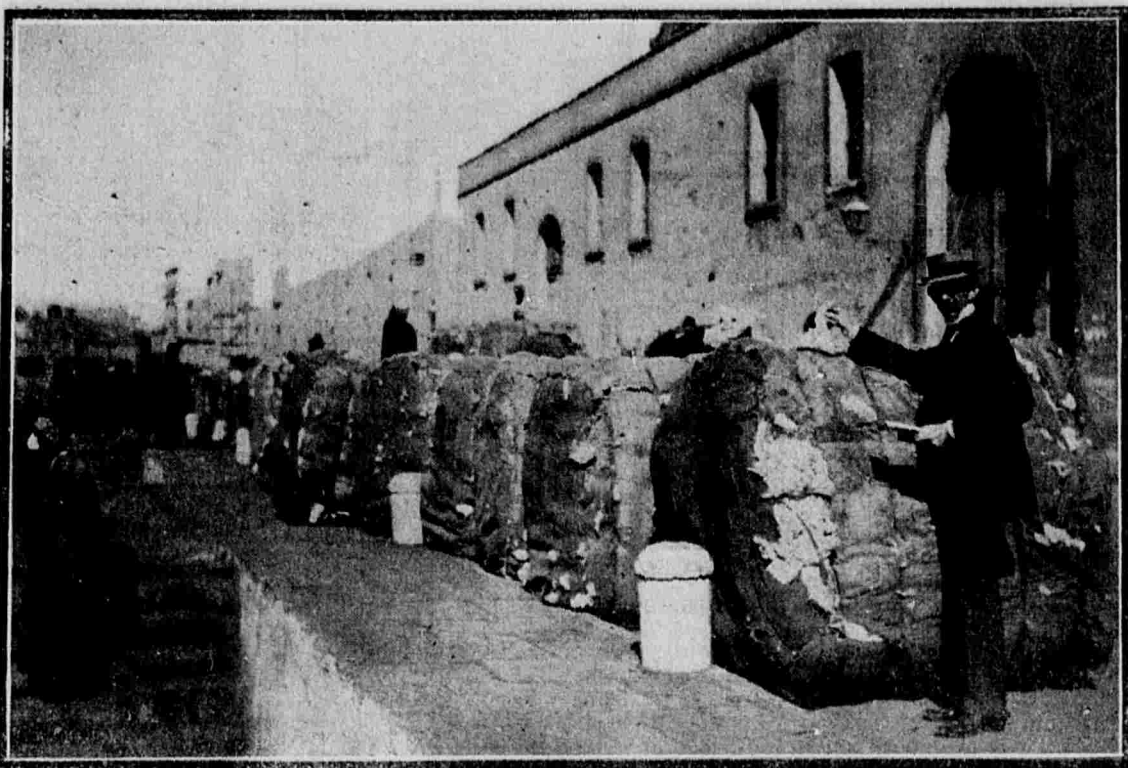
Here is a field where the lint has been gathered. The land is black, and it has windrows of cotton stalks running across it. Every stalk has been pulled out by the roots and piled up. Further on we see another field in which the stalks have been tied into bundles. They will be sold as fuel and will produce a full ton of dry wood to the acre. There are no forests in Egypt, and all sorts of fuel are scarce. The stalks from one acre will sell for \$2 or more. The cotton stalks are used for cooking, for the farm engines on the larger plantations and even for running the ginning establishments. In that village over there you may see great bundles of stalks stored away on the tops of the flat-roofed houses. Corn fodder is piled up beside them, the leaves of the fodder having been torn off for stock feed. Is not this a queer country where the people keep their wood piles on their roofs?

Here is a field where they are picking cotton. There are scores of little Egyptian boys and girls working away among the white bolls. They have dark

skin, and they are dressed in simple, but clean, white clothing. They are working with great industry, and the air is filled with the sound of their voices.

The telharmonium of Dr. Cahill produces music from electricity with-

How it is Grown and Marketed—Cotton Plantations and Their irrigation—Scenes in the Fields—The Boll Weevil Which is Fought by Forced Labor—What the Cairo Agricultural Department is Doing—Improved Seed and Artificial Fertilizers.



THE COTTON WAREHOUSES ARE OF VAST EXTENT.

Frank G. Carpenter, Taking a Sample—Photographed for the "News."

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COTTON PICKING.

Here is a field where they are picking cotton. There are scores of little Egyptian boys and girls working away among the white bolls. They have dark

skin, and they are dressed in simple, but clean, white clothing. They are working with great industry, and the air is filled with the sound of their voices. The cotton is picked by hand, and the workers are paid by the pound. The picking season is from March to September, and the first picking begins in September.

CAMELS AND COTTON BALES.

After the cotton is picked it is put into great bags and loaded upon camels. They are loaded four such beasts in that field at the side of the road. The camels lie flat on the ground, with their long necks stretched out. Two bags are

a load for each camel, and together they will weigh about 600 pounds. Each bag is as long and wide as a single bed mattress, and about four feet thick. Listen to the camel groan as they load them. There is one which is actually weeping. You can see the salt tears run down his cheeks.

Now watch the camels get up. Each rises back and first, the bags swaying to and fro as he does so. How angry he is. He goes off with his lower lip hanging grumbling and growling like a spoiled child. How odd the camels look as they travel. The bags on their backs reach almost to the ground, and each ungainly beast seems to be walking on six legs.

Looking down the road, we can see long caravans of camels loaded with cotton, and on the other side of that little canal is a small drove of donkeys bringing in cotton. Each donkey is hidden by a bag which covers its back

and all but its little legs. It looks like a bedtick walking on upon legs. In this way the cotton is brought to the railroad station and to the boats. The latter go out of one little waterway into another until they get into the Mahmudiych canal, whence to Alexandria. The railroads are filled with cotton trains during the harvesting season, and just now there are long strings of cars loaded with cotton coming in to this city. Some of this cotton has been ginned and baled upon the plantations; other is sent in to the seed and ginning establishments at the larger cotton markets of the interior, many of which are run by steam and which have as up-to-date machinery as we have. At these gins the seed is carefully saved and shipped to Alexandria by railroad or by boat.

HOW THEY PLANT COTTON IN EGYPT.

These Egyptians spend more work on their crops than our southern farmers. In the first place, the land has to be plowed with camels or buffaloes and prepared for the planting. It must be divided into basins, each walled around so that it will hold water, and have little canals leading to each basin. The water is poured over the land during the rainy season, and it runs in and out through every row. The whole field is cut up into beds of this description, ranging in size from 24 feet to 25 feet square.

The cotton is planted in rows 35 inches apart, the plants being from 14 to 20 inches apart in the rows. It takes a little more than a bushel of seed to the acre. The seeds are soaked in water before planting, and any which rise to the surface are thrown away. Planting is done by men and boys, and the seed is sown in the ground with a hoe. The seeds soon sprout, and in 10 or 12 days the plants appear. They are now thinned by hand, then water is let in upon them, the farmer being careful not to give them too much. The plants are frequently hoed. They have water every week or so, and this is kept up almost to the time of picking. The planting is usually done during the month of March, and as I have said, the first picking begins along in September.

THE WHITE NILE MAKES THE COTTON.

It will surprise many to know that the cotton crop of Egypt is not fed by the rich mud of Abyssinia, which comes down in the waters of the Nile at the time of the floods. That mud is brought to Egypt by the Atbara and the Blue Niles, and on the other side of that little canal is a small drove of donkeys bringing in cotton. Each donkey is hidden by a bag which covers its back

and all but its little legs. It looks like a bedtick walking on upon legs. In this way the cotton is brought to the railroad station and to the boats. The latter go out of one little waterway into another until they get into the Mahmudiych canal, whence to Alexandria. The railroads are filled with cotton trains during the harvesting season, and just now there are long strings of cars loaded with cotton coming in to this city. Some of this cotton has been ginned and baled upon the plantations; other is sent in to the seed and ginning establishments at the larger cotton markets of the interior, many of which are run by steam and which have as up-to-date machinery as we have. At these gins the seed is carefully saved and shipped to Alexandria by railroad or by boat.

I am told that cotton, as it is grown here, exhausts the soil and that the people are injuring the land by overcropping. It is used to be that cotton was planted on the same ground

only ever third year, the ground being used for other crops or allowed to lie fallow during the remaining two years. At present some of the cotton fields are worked every year and others two years out of three. On most farms cotton is now planted every other year, whereas the authorities say that in order to have a good yield not more than 40 per cent of one's land should be in this crop from year to year.

FIGHTING THE BOLL WEEVIL.

Egypt has had a lot of trouble with the boll weevil. This pestiferous cotton worm is to be found all along the valley of the Nile, and I am told that it is doing great damage on the plantations of the Sudan, 1,000 miles above Alexandria. It is said that more than \$10,000,000 worth of cotton was destroyed by it in 1904, and that hundreds of the smaller farmers were ruined. In the meantime the government has been doing all it can to wipe out this plague, but it is working under great disadvantage. The Egyptian Mohammedans are fatalists, and they look upon such things as the boll weevil as a judgment of God and think they can do nothing to avert them. The government has had to inaugurate a system of forced labor in consequence. It has made the boys and men of the cotton region turn out by the thousands to kill the worms under the superintendence of the officials. The results have been excellent and as those who have been forced to work have been well paid the farmers are beginning to appreciate what has been done for them.

The government has been helping the farmers in other ways. It has an agricultural department, which is working much as ours. Last year it sent out selected seed for planting 10,000 acres in cotton, contracting with each farmer who took it that it would buy his seed at a price above that of the market. The seed, which has come in from that venture is enough to plant 75,000 acres this year, and this is to be distributed at cost price to such farmers as want it.

FERTILIZING EGYPT.

The government is trying to induce the farmers to use artificial fertilizers. It began this six years ago, when it was able to distribute \$30,000 worth of chemical manure. The demand had so increased for such fertilizers that more than 10 times as much was distributed last season.

With our knowledge of the Nile lands it seems a queer thing to talk of their need of fertilization. But there is no soil on earth where manuring pays better. On the grain lands, where this stuff has been used to the extent of about \$5 per acre, the crops have increased from \$15 to \$20 per acre, and the probability is that the demand here for fertilizers will steadily grow. During the past year the government has lent to the agricultural department \$100,000 at 2 per cent per annum, with the understanding that the money is to be used in buying and distributing manures.

In another letter I will describe the wonderful fertility of the Nile valley and tell you something of the Abyssinian mud of which it is made. It has been farmed for ages with almost no manure whatever, and the conditions are such that if manure at all is to be employed it must be brought in from abroad. As it is now, the droppings of cattle are gathered up by the farmers and their bare fields are patted into cakes to be dried for fuel, and about the only manure that is saved, is that of pigeons, which are raised by the millions throughout the valley of the Nile.

Another fertilizer is that afforded by the ruins of the ancient towns, which were built of unbaked clay, and which now are mere mounds of earth. Out of the mounds, made of the rubbish of 1,000 years, comes a kind of earth containing a large percentage of soda, ammonia and other salts. This stuff is carried by the peasants out to the cotton fields and sprinkled over the ground, and the result is an extraordinary increase in the yield.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

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