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The Real Menace in the Cotton Situation

By DANIEL J. SULLY.

Through the thoughtful kindness of our friend, Mr. J. T. Marion of New York, formerly of Chester, we are enabled to lay before our readers the following interesting article, which appeared in a recent issue of the New York Press, written by Daniel J. Sully, the New York broker who bulled cotton on its merits from 8½ to 10 cents the early part of the present year. He says:

The present serious condition in the cotton markets of the world and the danger threatening the textile industry of the United States, of England, France, Germany, Russia, Switzerland and Spain, can be traced to only one cause—the sterilization or impoverishment of the cotton seed. Serious as is the situation today, and high as prices are, the situation will be more serious and the prices higher and higher each year until measures are taken by which proper seed can be planted for the growth of the cotton crop.

Paradoxical as it may seem, the curtailment of the cotton crop is a natural result of the growth of the cotton seed industry. A quarter of a century ago the cotton seed was the bane of the cotton planter. He had great difficulty in getting rid of his surplus seed. It was burned, cast into the rivers, used to fill gullies and hollows and hauled away at no little expense. But since the discovery of the uses of cotton seed oil, cotton seed hulls and cotton seed meal, the demand for the seed has grown to great proportions. The south is dotted with cotton seed oil mills, and what was once regarded as refuse now brings nearly \$100,000,000 a year to the south.

This would be a magnificent asset were it not for the fact that the oil mills demand the heaviest and richest of the seed, leaving only the poorest for the planter to put back in the ground for the planting of his next crop. The fierceness of competition is such and the prices paid for seed are so large that within the last five or six years the planters have impoverished their seed supply to the utmost limit. Poor seed brings a poor cotton yield. Increased acreage is no remedy, even if it were possible under present conditions to extend the acreage much beyond its present limits.

Thoughtful men of the south see no prospect of a change in the immediate future. Surely none can be expected as long as the spinners have to scramble for cotton to keep their mills going and the cotton seed mills pay top-notch prices for their supplies.

The statistics of the last six or seven years show more conclusively than anything I could say how important a part this impoverishment of the cotton seed is playing in cotton affairs. Since 1897 the acreage planted to cotton in the United States has been increased from 24,000,000 to approximately 28,000,000 acres. Yet the yield has steadily decreased. In 1897 the south raised 11,200,000 bales of cotton on an acreage of 24,000,000. This season, with an acreage of 28,000,000, the government's estimate is 9,962,000 bales. Take the average yield an acre year by

year and the deterioration is shown more convincingly.

In 1897-98 the yield of lint per acre planted was 224 pounds. In 1898-99, it was 232; in 1899-00, 210; in 1900-01, 211; in 1901-02, 188; in 1902-03, 188; in 1903-04 (government estimate), 176.

But even these figures do not show the real decrease in the yield per acre. In 1897 and 1898 cotton was extremely cheap, and what represented hundreds of thousands of bales of lint were left unpicked in the field, because the planters did not think it would pay for the picking. This season, however, there isn't a cotton plant in the south that hasn't been picked of every ounce of its product.

The world absolutely requires 10,700,000 bales of cotton this season. It could use 12,000,000 bales and there would be no surplus.

Cotton is the most valuable money crop of the world today. It is used in more of the world's staples than any other of the earth's products. Its uses are constantly widening, and yet we are face to face with the condition of a constantly shortening crop. It is idle to charge the big advance in prices to manipulation of the market, to weather conditions in the cotton belt, to lack of moisture, lateness of planting or to any other of the stock causes. Every student of the cotton world who gives serious consideration to the subject will come back to the basic trouble of the impoverishment of the seed.

This subject is of far greater importance than the average man realizes. It is of as great importance to the North as to the South, not only because of the manufacturing industries of the north that are dependent upon the cotton crop, but because everybody wears cotton goods and because the financial world depends upon the cotton crop to maintain the financial parity between this country and Europe. Without our cotton the money market of the United States would be in a sad way. Cotton bills are payable in gold, and it is through the payment for cotton exported to Europe that we maintain our gold balance with the rest of the world.

You cannot look for any change in the South until the danger from the impoverishment of the cotton seed is brought home to the planter. At present he is blind to this menace. The present crop will bring to him at least \$150,000,000 more than any other crop he ever raised. That would seem to prove that he is favored by fortune. The crop of next

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