

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE ANNUAL
CONVENTION OF THE SOUTH
CAROLINA. AGRICULTURAL &
MECHANICAL SOCIETY, HELD IN
COLUMBIA, S. C. NOV. 10-12, 1869**

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PROCEEDINGS.

COLUMBIA, November 10th, 1869.

The South Carolina Agricultural and Mechanical Society met in the Courthouse at 7 o'clock, and was called to order by the President, who delivered the following address:

Gentlemen of the State Agricultural and Mechanical Society :

More than eight years have elapsed since the last meeting of the Society whose successors you are. For four of these the voice of peaceful industry was hushed amid the clash of arms; the energies once devoted to its advancement were directed to the preparation and wielding of the implements of war; and the accumulation of two centuries of labor was freely devoted to a cause in which all of it that was destructible perished. For other four of these years we have been recovering from this fierce paroxysm of civil strife, and have moved "as a sick man in his sleep."

It was the teaching of our States' Rights politicians, apart from its being so nominated in the bond, that with the maintenance of their dogma, the material prosperity of the Southern States was inseparably connected; of our theologians, that our system of labor had its sanction in Divine decrees; and recent experience in adjacent countries had shown that, without it, in tropical climates at least, a race composing one-third of our population could not be utilized, and would relapse into fetichism. What wonder, then, that at the results of the war our people stood aghast; that the emigrant spirit of their ancestors partially revived; that for a time the voice of Hope herself grated harshly upon the ear—that it became fashionable to be poor and patriotic to be despondent. But, thanks to the reviving energies of our blood, and the sunny skies and teeming soil with which a bountiful God has blessed us, to-day in productive capacity our glorious land nearly equals the value, if not the quantity, of the days of her prosperity. Time, which "makes all things even," has toned and mellowed the partisan exaggeration with which we held our peculiar views; and while with reverent loyalty we bury the dead past, we now accept the inevitable present, and stand ready to grapple with its difficulties. It is in this spirit you are to-day assembled—that you are here marshalling your forces for one more advance in the battle of material progress. Where are the gaps in our line? What means have we left with which to bear worthily our part in this renewed effort at prosperity?

The destruction of buildings, fences and stock, of capital invested in banking, manufactures and trade, of human life, and the time devoted to the war, or lost in the prostration that followed, is so much clear loss. It is idle to go into statistics to estimate it. We know and feel its magnitude; and time and labor can alone make it good. The loss resulting from the enforced change in our system of labor is, however, that which most prominently attracts attention—as involving both a loss of capital invested and of the means of recuperation. Let us endeavor to make some estimate of its extent. The capitalist desiring, under our old system, to invest \$100,000 in planting, found that about \$40,000 was required for land and stock and furnishing the plantation; while the remaining \$60,000 was required for purchasing the community of laborers for the place—all of which were consumers, and something like half only of which were producers. With his business well managed, at the end of the year he found that 33 per cent. of the gross product of his plantation had been consumed by, or been expended upon this community—being in fact the wages of the labor of the producers among them—and his balance sheet probably showed a profit on his investment of from 4 to 7 per cent. from current income, with an addition of 2 to 3 per cent. to his capital from natural increase of his purchased labor. I feel assured that these figures nearly approximate accuracy, especially in the item of the annual cost of slave labor. A strong proof of this is to be found in the universal and simultaneous determining throughout the South upon the third as the proper compensation for farm labor when emancipation made the payment due to the worker himself, and threw upon him, and not upon the employer, the support of the community of which he was a part. Farmers, generally, do not trouble themselves much with the details of book-keeping, but most of them, by a lumping process, have a shrewd idea of how their business stands. They knew that they could hope for no reasonable profit, and pay more for labor than they had paid before, however the form of payment might be varied. Now suppose for a moment that after emancipation this community of laborers had remained undisturbed upon the plantation, and that their labor was as efficient as before. The income of the planter would have remained the same, and he would not have realized a change in his affairs, unless he endeavored to sell out and abandon the business. Then he would have found that he could no longer make a title to the largest portion of the investment in which he had placed his money. Individuals among us could and did often sell out to each other, and realize their slave capital. But to whom could a community of slaveholders—the State—sell out? And if the \$60,000 was to remain an investment permanently locked up in the ownership of labor, it mattered not to the State (the la-

bor remaining equally efficient) whether the employer owned the laborer, or the laborer owned himself. Nor can I see, if as supposed, the employer's income from his plantation remains the same after emancipation as before—if the percentage on land and slaves which tempted him into the business is now realized from the land alone—what he has lost by the change in the legal relation between himself and his laborers. He has lost the portion of his capital invested in slaves, but his land has appreciated to exactly that extent. He is getting from it the customary rate of interest upon the amount of his original investment, and continuing to do so, in a healthy and normal condition of public affairs, his land when sold would reimburse him.

These, however, are unfortunately not the results of emancipation in our case; and ignoring the potent influences of the political tinkering to which we have been so mercilessly subjected—the cause lies in the reduced efficiency of labor. The extent of this, and not the amount of the original investment in slaves, appears to me to be the true measure of the loss sustained by the change in our system.

The novelty of freedom has worn away, and the characteristics of the negro freedman as a laborer are now pretty well established. Released from the discipline of slavery, unappreciative of the value of money, and but little desirous of comfort, his efforts are capricious; and while at some kinds of labor the old slave tasks may be readily obtained, there are others in which no amount of persuasion or pay can keep him steadily up to the slave standard. He has, too, an aversion for steady work for his women and children, which nothing but the necessities of subsistence can overcome, and with the first gleam of prosperity, he remits them to idleness or to casual day labor. These characteristics have reduced the value of negro labor fully one-half, and the instances are exceptional in which plantations are worked now with less than twice the numerical force required before emancipation. The cotton crop, which, in the almost exclusively agricultural nature of our pursuits, is the best criterion of our industrial efficiency, is with difficulty pushed up to half its aggregate of the years before the war, notwithstanding the amount of white labor now diverted in that direction.

It is true that, when a full force of negroes is attainable, plantations are worked successfully, and with a larger interest upon the investment than formerly—the heavy bonus required in the procuring of labor by purchase being stricken from the account. But, gentlemen, we never had in the South in her best days a tithe of the labor necessary to develop even her agricultural wealth. Her rich mining and manufacturing resources were almost entirely neglected. Now, more than ever,

population is our need, and population we must have, if we are once more to place ourselves alongside of the nations in the grand march of material progress. From the shores of Europe—our ancestral home—we must draw an accession to our numbers, which will fuse with and become part of us. No effort should be spared in that direction. It is our best and safest resource. But pending, or in default of their coming, from the teeming hive of Asia we must satisfy our vital need. Should the frugal and industrious Asiatic, as his habit has heretofore been abroad, prove only a sojourner with us—among us, but not of us, except in his industrial relations—his presence will have been a blessing to us both. And should he make this his home, there is no reason why we may not dwell together in the same harmony which has marked our intercourse with another race during all the vicissitudes of the years that have gone by since the first negro was landed from the Dutch vessel in James River. We have not found their presence here intolerable. Alongside of the Southern white man the negro wielded the axe of the pioneer; under his direction he advanced the productions of our agriculture, until the markets of the civilized world became tributary to it; during our desperate struggle for political independence, he supplied our commissariat; and in our efforts at recuperation from the ravages of war where would we have been without his presence—even with the efficiency of his labor depreciated as it is by causes perfectly natural to humanity? In pressing immigration, whether European or Asiatic, it is in view of the work before us, and in no spirit of hostility to the negro. I would exclude not one of them from this broad field of labor, nor withhold from him one particle of the fruits of his honest exertions.

We have thus glanced, gentlemen, at some of the losses sustained in the eventful period since the last meeting of an Agricultural Society in this State. But have we gained nothing? Will the habits of economy engendered by reduced circumstances, avail us nothing in the struggle for future wealth? Will the fortitude under disaster, the patient energy in retrieving it, which misfortune has developed, be worthless to us? Napoleon said that, in war, the moral was to the physical as three to one; and if this be true where brute force most avails, how much more shall the severe discipline our people have undergone aid them in attaining those victories which peace may achieve.

It is, therefore, with a hopeful and a confident spirit that I look forward to our future, and greet the organization of this Society as the first cheering glimpse of the coming day. Representing, as you do, all of the capital and intelligence that we have among us devoted to industrial pursuits, a grave responsibility rests upon each and every one of you, to see that, so far as in him lies, the good work goes bravely on. Weakened by

the destruction of more than half of our resources; saddened by the memories of the past; oppressed by agencies in the present, over which we have but little control, the struggle may have in it a tinge of bitterness, but it has in it, too, something of the heroism that thrilled the veins while yet the red cross-banner floated in the breeze.

"Tell Governor Pickens," said Maxcy Gregg, as his life-blood ebbed slowly away upon a Virginian battle-field, "tell Governor Pickens that I cheerfully die for South Carolina." It is our fortune now, to owe as high a duty to the dear old State. We must live for her.

The President next called upon the standing committees for their reports.

Mr. John S. Green read the report of the Committee on Fertilizers, which, on motion, was ordered to be published.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON FERTILIZERS.

Mr. President: The committee appointed to report on fertilizers have been in great doubt how best to perform the duty assigned them. A subject so varied and so important under any circumstances, could only be treated in a most general and superficial manner in a report. Volumes have been written, and the best chemical science of Europe and America has been directed to it. To report on fertilizers is to report on a large number of the elements known to chemistry, besides innumerable compounds. But the difficulty does not cease here. In the organization of the committee no practical chemist has been named; a defect which has seriously embarrassed its action, and which must equally affect the value of the report. Under these circumstances, your committee must ask the indulgence of the Society for the very general and imperfect suggestions which they may present for the consideration of its members.

At the very outset, without any hesitation, your committee are of the opinion that the importance of using what are generally known as commercial manures upon our worn and badly-tilled lands of the Atlantic States, cannot for a moment be doubted by any one who has given them a fair trial.

According to Johnson's estimate of the agricultural products of England, its capacity to support its population would have been reached in 1860, when its population was estimated at 26,000,000. But, as he well says, "If we glance at the history of British agriculture during the last half century, from the introduction of the green-crop system or the alternate husbandry from Flanders into Norfolk up to the present time, we find the result of each successive improvement more remarkable than the former. The use of lime, a more general drainage of the soil, the invention of improved plows and other agricultural