

King Corn Breaking Into South to Dethrone King Cotton



CHAMPION CORN RAISERS OF ELEVEN SOUTHERN STATES' SEC. WILSON AND OFFICERS OF FARM DEMONSTRATION WORK IN TEXAS.



JERRY MOORE'S 228 BU. AND 3 PEAS TO THE ACRE



SPRING MEETING OF BOYS' CORN CLUB, GIBSON CO. TENN.



133 BUSHELS PER ACRE

Copyright, 1911, by Frank G. Carpenter.

WASHINGTON.—(Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—"Three years ago I was a bankrupt. I had borrowed all the money I could on my farm and my credit was so bad at the stores that they would not trust me for a plug of tobacco. I could not pay my interest, and I had decided to give up the farm for the debt and go back to renting. Then one of Uncle Sam's demonstrators got me to plant corn and cotton, and to work it after the plans of the Agricultural department. I thought him a fool, but I was desperate and I followed his rules. The result has been that the merchants are now chasing me for my custom. I have paid off my mortgages and I have money in the bank."

The man who spoke thus lives in Alabama.

A Voice from Georgia.

"I had always laughed at book farmers." It is a Georgia man who is speaking. "I was bred and bawn like Brer Rabbit, in a brier patch. I was brought up in the cotton fields and corn fields, and I thought I knew all about my land and what it would raise. I didn't want no white-shirted man from Washington coming round to tell me how to manage my farm. I was raising from 100 to 200 pounds of cotton to the acre, and when my crop of corn was over fifteen bushels I thought I did well. Then one of these demonstrators of the Agricultural department came along, and asked me to set out an acre and cultivate it his way. He told me I could double my crop, and that I might raise forty, fifty, sixty and even eighty bushels of corn on the same ground where I had been raising twelve or fifteen. I laughed at him and told him he did not know what he was talking about. 'This land,' said I, 'is just naturally poor, and it won't raise corn anyhow. I ain't going to waste my time for nothing.'"

"Well, at that, Mary came out. Mary's my wife, and a mighty good wife she is, too. She leaned beside me over the fence and we talked to the agricultural man who was out in the road. Mary begged me to try it, and the man begged. He was a powerful nice man, and so to oblige the two I said I would do it."

"I put out that corn. He made me take my old mule team and the heaviest plow and throw up the ground to a depth of ten inches. Then he made me harrow it. I never heard of harrowing for corn. We did this in the fall, and the next spring we plowed deep and harrowed and harrowed again. I got the best seed I could find and cultivated the corn as he said."

"At the same time I concluded there might be something in it, and that if one acre was good, forty acres was better. So I took a field of forty acres away off behind some woods on another part of my farm, and cultivated it just the same way. My acre near the road, which the man watched and told me just how to handle, grew so that everybody stopped to look at it, and to make a long story short, we husked sixty bushels of shelled corn from that acre. When the corn was ripe the agricultural agent asked me whether I thought he had made good. I replied that he had, but that I had other corn on the place that was worth looking at. I then took him through the woods to my other forty acres, which was just as fine as that on the road. You'd ought to see him look. Well, I got 2,000 bushels off of that forty acres, and I now do all my farming that way."

What a Colored Man Did.

My next human document comes from a colored man. He writes from Mississippi to the head of the farmers' co-operative demonstration work in the south. After years of poverty and despair, he has started raising cotton under government supervision. The spelling of the letter is as it is written. The penmanship I cannot reproduce: "A. D. 7, 16, '10."

"Sir: I rite you a few lines in the garden of farming agricultur. I do sey that your advice has Ben Polard, and your direction have Ben o Baid, an I find that I am successful in Life. Sey, Mr. Knapp, I do know that there is gooder men as you an as fair as you. But o that keen eye o yours that watches ever crock in farming, that can tell ever man whichever way to Gro to be successful in Life. On last yer I foleard your advice, an allso on yer Befor last. On 1908 I made 14 Bails of cotton, and in 1909 17 Bails. I started with one mule and now I own 3 head o the great worthies. Thanks to you for your advice a Long that Line, an Great success in your occupation to you. "Sey, Mr. Knapp, I am a culered man. Live near Graysport, Mississipp. Corn a plenty, allso make a plenty Sweet Potatoes. But I read your advice About them. Will close. Yoursse, (Signed.) "WM. WASHINGTON."

King Cotton Dethroned.

The above bits of evidence are mere straws to show how the wind blows. Uncle Sam has a mighty stack of them in his Department of Agriculture and

his mail is loaded with similar letters each day. He is teaching the south how to raise cotton and corn and is creating a revolution which has already added hundreds of millions to our national wealth. He has now something like 90,000 men and almost an equal number of boys who are raising corn under government direction, and the result is the creation of a new industrial empire.

Until within the last decade cotton was the money king of the south. It was the cash crop and it paid all the bills. The farmers imported the feed for their stock, and the corn lands of the north furnished the hog and the hominy. Then the boll weevil came in and with its snoutlike nose began to eat into King Cotton, even as the worms ate into King Herod the Great, and King Cotton seemed like to give up the ghost. Uncle Sam, patriarch, saw the wrinkles of ruin springing up on the faces of his multitudinous children throughout the south, and he sent his legions of angels in the form of agricultural scientists to fight down the weevil, and planned the raising of crops which should add to or take the place of the cotton. The chief crop was corn, and as a result the people of the south have sprung from being the poorest to potentially the richest of Uncle Sam's children. The growth has been almost all accomplished in the space of four or five years and it means hundreds of millions of dollars.

Five Hundred Million Dollar Crop.

The corn crop of the south during 1910 was one-third of that of the whole country. It was nearly 1,000 millions of bushels, and at the low price of 50 cents a bushel it was worth \$500,000,000. It exceeded by many millions the output of the gold mines of all the world for that year, and not counting the value of the fodder was more than half the value of the cotton, including both lint and seed. The increase of the corn crop of nine southern states over that of 1909 was more than 158,000,000 bushels, or a value of nearly \$80,000,000, and this increase is 45 per cent of the total increase in corn of the whole United States during that year. These states were Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas and Texas. The total crop, as I have said, was almost 1,000,000,000 bushels.

One billion bushels! As a whole the figures stagger the mind, but load the corn upon two-horse wagons at a ton to the load and let each team take a space of forty feet on the roadway and the train of teams would reach almost eight times around the globe at the equator, the first wagon being nearly 200,000 miles distant by the time the last wagon was loaded.

Two Hundred Thousand Farmers at School.

But the work is just at its beginning. It was originated and organized by the late Dr. Knapp only about five years ago. But there are already 200,000 farms scattered over the southern states on which experiments are being made by boys and men as to the new ways of corn cultivation, and each of these is a school for the community where it lies. The government has 550 traveling agents, who supervise the work, and each of these has a large number of demonstrators or teachers who visit the farmers every week or so and instruct them just how to go about raising the crop. Where possible they have these experimental plantations set out close to the roads so that the people can see the results as they go by on the way to or from town. They have organized farm clubs in several thousand communities and have caused the institution of hundreds of county fairs in the interest of improved agriculture.

Not only the government, but the states, counties and towns, are interested in this movement and are giving to it large sums of money. The appropriation of congress last year was \$250,000, but to this \$113,000 was added from the Rockefeller fund, and many thousands were given by the business organizations and the bankers, merchants and wealthy men of the

various communities. In addition to the large number of farms or experimental patches on farms under the direct charge of the government agents and their demonstrators, there are more than 70,000 farmers who are receiving instruction from the Agricultural department by letter and are reporting the results. This makes a mighty correspondence school which is increasing each week. The work is not confined to corn, alone, but to the proper cultivation of cotton, oats, cow peas and hay.

Big Money in Southern Lands.

I wish I could give you some idea of the results that have already been accomplished. I have spent the week at the Agricultural department talking with the agents of the farmers' co-operative demonstration work who have just come in from the fields and who are handling this enormous mass of correspondence. I have also talked with Mr. Knapp, who, with his father, the late Dr. S. A. Knapp, has special charge of this work.

They tell stories of hundreds of farmers who within the last three or four years, through proper farming, have climbed over the hill of difficulty into easy street, and of a large number who are making big sums of money. One man, for instance, a Mr. T. O. Sandy, bought a tract of land about three years ago south of Richmond in Nottoway county, Virginia. He paid \$4 an acre for it and began to raise hay after the rules laid down by the department. At the end of two years he was getting five tons of hay per acre from that \$4 land and was selling the hay at \$25 a ton. In other words, his gross income from land that cost him \$4 per acre was \$125 per acre. That man is still farming.

One of Uncle Sam's clerks has bought 1,200 acres within twenty-five miles of the national capital, and he is putting it out in corn after government methods. The land cost him \$10 per acre, and it is close to the railroad, within easy access of Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York. The scientists of the department tell me that the land needs only cultivation and the right crops to make it produce as much corn as the best soil of Illinois, Kansas or Iowa. It is within a half hour's ride by rail of Washington city and it was bought at a much lower price than that of the second-class lands of Texas or other states beyond the Mississippi.

Another farmer was induced to cultivate five-eighths of an acre of cotton after government methods. His plantation was then producing something like 200 pounds of lint to the acre. He began his experiment in 1908, at which time he could not afford to send his children to school. He succeeded so well that in 1909 he planted his whole plantation that way and raised 1,200 pounds of seed cotton per acre. He also tried corn, raising as much as 150 bushels on a single acre of ground. It is now two years and that man has paid all his debts and has money in the bank. His boys are in the high school and his daughter has gone to college.

Eighty Thousand Boy Corn-Raisers.

One of the most important features of this revolution is the work being done by the boys. At the present writing the government has on its rolls 80,000 southern boys, each of whom is now cultivating one acre of corn under government directions. These boys are in 700 or 800 counties, covering all the states of the south.

They belong to corn clubs which have been organized in various localities and are working for prizes offered by the bankers, merchants, boards of trade, county clubs and public-spirited individuals of their neighborhoods. They are also working for the prize given to the best boy corn-raiser of their respective states, consisting of a diploma from the Department of Agriculture and a free trip to Washington, where they may spend a week, and see the president and congress and the interesting features of our national capital. The prizes given to such boys by the local-

ties last year amounted to \$40,000 and more. They will probably be twice that this year. They consist of cash, farm implements, ponies, pigs, bicycles, watches, guns, books and everything which will tend to gladden a boy's heart and make him work.

The number of southern boys competing in 1910 was, according to the government rolls, 46,225. Each of these planted an acre of corn and worked it under government directions, producing crops which staggered their respective communities. In Mississippi, where the average corn crop last year was less than twenty bushels per acre, forty-eight of these boys raised on the average ninety-two bushels per acre. In one county of South Carolina, which state has an average per acre of less than nineteen bushels, twenty boys produced 1,700 bushels of corn on twenty acres and 140 boys averaged sixty-two bushels. The governors of the different southern states are now giving diplomas of honor to all boy corn-raisers who can show a crop of seventy-five bushels per acre, and at the national corn show at Columbus last fall an automobile was presented to the boy who had raised the most and best corn on one acre at the lowest cost.

How a Boy Won an Automobile.

The automobile was awarded to Stephen G. Henry, who produced 139.5 bushels of corn on one acre at a cost of 13.6 cents per bushel. Stephen comes from Melrose, Ia. He is the youngest of five boys of a family, and he has been raising corn for three years by the government directions. He has won a number of premiums, and last year he received a gold watch from the governor and also a pig, two sheep, \$25 in gold and a diploma. The club to which he belongs contains 200 members, and Stephen's brother is also a prize winner.

I give you in brief the way Stephen raised his last crop of corn. He broke the ground in the fall, plowing it eight inches deep. He turned the soil again in March and went over it with plow and harrow until it was thoroughly fine. He put on two tons of stable manure at that time and then planted the corn. This was on March 17. The seed sprouted all right, but a part of the crop froze, and he had to replant May 20. After that the corn was cultivated again and again with a hoe and cultivator, all the suckers being pulled from the hills. When he laid the corn by, he planted cow peas between the rows to increase the fertility of the land for the next year. The corn was harvested, shelled and weighed, and at fifty-six pounds to the bushel it measured 138.8 bushels.

The Question of Cost.

But this yield would not have given Stephen the prize. There were many boys who raised more. There

were 100 who belonged to the corn clubs of the south who made an average of 133.7 bushels per acre in 1910. There were five who grew more than 200 bushels and quite a number who grew 150.

No, Stephen got the prize because he raised the most corn at the lowest cost. Jerry Moore's 228 bushels cost him 43 cents, and Morris Olgers of Virginia raised 168 bushels at 40 cents. Of the national prize winners who came to Washington, Ira Smith of Arkansas raised 119 bushels at a cost of 8 cents per bushel, while Floyd Gayer of Oklahoma produced ninety-five bushels on an acre at the same cost.

Stephen, like every other boy of these whole 80,000 who are now working, had to keep account of every cent spent on his acre. He had to charge himself \$5 for the rent of the land, and put down 10 cents per hour for every hour he or any other boy worked upon it. He charged himself 5 cents per hour for the time of each horse and \$2 for each two-horse load of stable manure, as well as the market prices for any commercial fertilizers used. By adding up his accounts and dividing by the number of bushels of shelled corn in the crop, he got the exact cost per bushel to raise it.

The Boys' Corn Clubs.

The boys' corn clubs of the south have almost doubled this year, and they will probably double again the year following. The boys belonging to them are from 10 to 18 years old, and some of the big prize winners are only 12. That is the age of Joe Stone of Georgia, who was so small that his father came with him during his free trip to Washington. Nevertheless, he produced more than 102 bushels of corn on an acre.

The rules of this work provide that each boy must plant his own crop and do his own work. He must present the results to the county superintendent of education. He must gather the corn and weigh it, and the land and corn must be carefully measured in the presence of at least two disinterested witnesses, who have to sign a certificate.

The boys must study the instructions given them and follow directions. Each has to write the history of his crop and how he made it, and the prizes are awarded not only on the number of bushels produced, but on the profit and the character of the corn. In making the choice the yield per acre counts 30 per cent, the best history of the crop 20 per cent and the highest profit 30 per cent. When it is remembered that all these things are tested by the heads of the schools and a committee of farm experts, some idea may be had of the educational and agricultural value of this mighty work of Uncle Sam, patriarch.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.