

VI. The Fijis. seed is very liable to rot in the ground ; so in many cases, owing to unpropitious weather, infinite trouble must be endured before the planter can obtain a stand of cotton. The plant appears about four days after sowing, and under favourable circumstances grows rapidly.

Sea Island cotton is generally planted in rows 6 feet by 6 feet, but some planters are drilling, as in America, the rows being 5 feet and the plants 30 inches apart. This variety grows much faster and arrives at maturity sooner than any other. I have observed the first blossoms upon a tree one month after planting ; at the end of the second month, the blossoms fell and the bolls appeared ; at the end of the third month, the bolls reached maturity, and the cotton was ready for gathering. The most experienced growers estimate each healthy tree will produce annually 5 lb. weight of seed cotton. There are three crops of this variety during the year—the first in January or February, the second in May or June, the third in September or October. The vicissitudes of the seasons, however, will forward or retard the ripening of the crop by a month. In ginning, this cotton loses two-thirds of its gross weight, 300 lb. of seed cotton producing 100 lb. of clean. Assuming that each tree would produce 3 lb. of seed cotton—1 lb. of clean fibre (1s.)—and that an acre of land planted 6 feet by 6 feet carries 1,031 trees, the gross value annually per acre would be £51 11s.

The demand for Sea Island cotton is limited ; but the diminished production of this variety in America, owing to the disorganization of labour, will probably afford the Fijian planter an opportunity of selling all he can produce at a remunerative figure for some time to come.

The kidney and Egyptian cotton is of much larger growth, requiring to be planted 12 feet by 12 feet. It is sown in the same months as the Sea Island. The picking season is in July. A second and lighter crop can be gathered in December. The average yield of this cotton is 1,200 lb. per acre, yielding about 350 lb. of clean fibre, the value of which, in Fiji, is about £15 sterling.

All varieties of cotton in Fiji are perennial.

The number of bales leaving Fiji during the present season will be 2,500, of which 90 will be Sea Island ; thus, the remainder, say 2,400, will consist of the less valuable varieties, Egyptian, &c., &c.

A bale of cotton weighs 350 lb. which, stated as above, is the produce of an acre.

I estimate the land at present in cultivation by Europeans as follows :—

Acres in cotton—Number of bales of 350 lb. ...	...	...	2,400
Acres in cotton, coffee, corn, beans, yams, and vegetables generally, one-third ...	...	...	800
Acres cleared and in course of cultivation ...	...	...	1,500
Total in cultivation ...	...	...	4,700
Estimated area of land held by Europeans ...	...	...	160,000
Uncultivated ...	...	...	155,300

The cultivation is carried on by labourers obtained from the neighbouring islands. The implements used are large knives and hoes. Like all Polynesian races, these people prefer sitting to standing whilst at any occupation ; therefore they cannot be induced to work with hoes or spades unless they be perfect toys. Nevertheless a fair amount of work is done, provided they are judiciously managed, well fed and cared for.

The expense in cultivating land in Fiji is the same as stated in the report of 1866.

Three years back there were only two cotton-gins and windmill in all Fiji ; at the present date there are about thirty gins, and five steam engines.

For short-stapled cottons the saw-gins are preferred, and for the longer, “ knife-gins.”

In the import of agricultural implements there is also an increase, several ploughs, harrows, and cultivators being now in use ; for the working of which, and for breeding purposes, seven horses and thirty-five head of cattle have been imported within the last few months.

#### Population.

The white population is steadily increasing. The following statement shows the number of residents subject to civilized authority :—

—	British.	British Half-castes.	Total British.	American.	American Half-castes.	Total American.	Various Nationalities.
Men .. ..	252	85	337	31	23	54	40
Women .. ..	45	63	108	1	21	22	1
Children .. ..	114	90	204	6	57	63	2
Total .. ..	411	238	649	38	101	139	43

The native population of Fiji may be roughly estimated at 100,000 ; they are, however, rapidly decreasing.

I have received the following authentic information of the births and deaths at three towns during the past year. The first town is situated upon the Island of Ovalau, which contains the principal port of the group, and is the residence of the greater portion of the white people. The second is at Sosi, a division of Bau, at which place only a mission family resides permanently, but