

(C)

~~A~~

well-written
~~commonplace~~

THIRD PRIZE

NAME.....Douglas Robertson

Date of Birth.....

Name of School.....Sedbergh School, Montebello, Que.

Entry.....Class "C"

A COTTON THREAD

Many centuries ago the people of Europe heard from Eastern travellers of a plant whose flowers turned into little lambs with soft, fluffy wool. The travellers told how people in the East plucked these lambs and made thread which they wove into cloth. This cloth, they said, was very soft and cool and the kings and Princes made clothes from it.

Europeans of that time wore thick heavy home-spun broadcloth as they did not know that the "Vegetable Lamb" for so it was called, was really the common cotton plant.

The earliest records of cotton being grown came from India. The people of India were spinning thread from cotton long before it was known in Europe. This plant was also grown in China but at first was used only as a garden flower.

An ancient Greek writer, Herodotus, told of wool growing on a plant in India which was better than sheep's wool for clothing. Alexander the Great told of a cloth in India far softer and whiter than any he had ever seen. It was so fine it was called "Webs of Woven Wind".

Cotton cloth is made from fibres taken from the cotton plant. This plant can only grow in tropical or semi-tropical climates. The plant grows from three to ten feet high and has blossoms similar to those of the Holly-Hock. From the seed pod called a cotton boll the fibre is obtained. When the boll ripens it bursts and exposes a bunch of soft white fibres. The cloth is made from this fibre.

Each fibre is flat and twisted, it is because of this twist that thread can be made. Cotton material is cooler than silk and is excellent for clothing in hot countries.

The seeds of the cotton plant and the outside husk had to be removed; this was a slow and tedious job and it took a great deal of time for even a few pounds of cotton to be cleaned.

Eli Whitney invented a cotton gin for use on the New England plantations. The machine was a large box-like affair with rows of metal teeth and a handle. The teeth were designed to tear the seeds and husk from the boll. This machine was such a success it soon spread all over the world.

Some of the best cotton comes from Egypt. It is grown on the banks of the Nile. Little rain falls there and water must be carried to many cotton fields, yet Egypt grows nearly a third of the world's cotton for use in industry and clothing.

Cotton planters must spend a lot of money in growing and protecting cotton, for it has many enemies and the fields have often to be sprayed with D.D.T. or some other poison.

Cotton takes many weeks to mature and when the boll at last bursts, men, women and children go out in the fields to gather the fluffy harvest. Machines have been made to pick cotton but most today is picked by hand.