

WHEN TIMES WERE REALLY HARD

By CAPTAIN S. A. ASHE

It is said that the world is in trouble—but three years ago the outlook was worse than it is now. We all remember that our Federal Government bought a million bushels of wheat—and a large quantity of cotton—and that there were millions of families that had no work to do—and no food to eat. The condition was then hard—and it still is. We in this country are fortunate in having a sensible President. He said from the first that we should try to relieve the situation. Fortunately he did so, and the whole country has been benefitted. There have been some unusual happenings—storms, floods, earthquakes—and these have intensified the unfortunate conditions.

The depression certainly has been great. Fortunately, North Carolina has not been so seriously hurt as many of the sister states. At present the Federal Congress is arranging to spend four billions of dollars to carry on through these evil times. What is going to be the situation when that is all spent no one knows. But we can be hopeful.

I have some memories. Let us go back just seventy years ago. The Southern States had been overcome by the Northern States. The only money in circulation from Virginia to Mexico had been Confederate money and bank bills based on Confederate money. There was nothing else: and that was worthless. Can you imagine the people of the whole South—with no money! And indeed with but little to sell!

Every family has its recollections—I had a family of young sisters at Fayetteville—Sherman's soldiers had destroyed everything to eat. Fortunately, I had a horse and conveyance, and had access to some cotten thread. So I would carry this thread down into a part of South Carolina where Sherman had not been and swap my cotton thread, etc., off for bread and meat. That was my business in life.

Other families had other experiences. After months, I and a friend made some tar near Fayetteville, selling it to the North. Then by 1866—hurrah! The authorities of the Wilmington & Weldon R. R. employed me! Presently the

first sleeping car of the South was running between Wilmington and Weldon,—and I was the conductor! Later the sleeping car was put on from Wilmington by Augusta and by Atlanta to West Point, Alabama. It took two nights and a day to go, and two days and a night to return, and I was the "sleeping car conductor" until December 1, when I resigned and got my license to practice law.

No one can imagine the horrible state of the entire country at the period—after peace! But gradually our people got to work and made something to sell to the Northern people. Later our tar, pitch and turpentine were helpful. Then cotton was grown and brought us money. Personally, I was in some measure differently conditioned from other young men. A Yankee naval officer wrote me: "I do not know whether you are living or not. If you are living you will need money. I am just back from China. I have saved \$500. I would take it from you—you must take it from me." About eight years after that I was practicing law. He was to be married and I returned him his money—that had helped to save the lives of some ladies. Such are some of my recollections of that troubled period. [Captain Ashe had been a student at the Naval Academy at Annapolis just before the war; hence his acquaintance with the young Yankee Naval officer. His father had been president of the W. & W. R. R.; hence his good fortune in securing the job of conductor. But who would have thought the first sleeping car conductor in the South is still living and in the person of Captain Ashe? Tar making was a common escape from starvation.—Editor.]

During that period the railroads needed money. So they sought to induce the farmers to make some things that could be sold in the North—so that the railroads could get pay for the transportation. And so the farmers were induced to have a variety of things to sell. That had a lasting effect on many farmers in Eastern Carolina. Trucking in the southeastern part of the state has contributed to the welfare of the people of the whole state.

straight to the fields. That man, as Mr. King, of whom Claude Moore writes, made practically all he and his dependents needed. The more hands at work the more produced.

Similarly situated is Uncle Sam. He has plenty of land, plenty of tools, and of everything else to keep everybody busy and to make enough for everybody. Fine enough. But it takes an overseer, a planner too, to keep those hands profitably busy.

With Col. King planning, there was plenty for all; crops were produced in their due proportions. Provision for crops to be sold to secure goods not producible upon the plantation was made. Yet even this wise farmer probably produced much that went to waste while he was failing to conserve the land that had fallen into his hands. Uncle Sam is wiser, or should be. He must plan to produce everything we need to use, with no great surpluses of this or that and an utter lack of that or this. And he must also not only conserve his resources, but seek to restore the resources that were so ruthlessly exploited during one to three centuries. He must estimate the need of things unproducable on his domain and plan to produce those things that may be exchanged for what we need from other nations.

If Colonel King had left it for every son and every slave to pick his own land, choose his own crop, and work when and as he pleased, it is probable that the Yankees would have got very little when they came to the plantation home.

Planning Necessary.

To get everybody in America at work for his own good and the common good, planning is absolutely necessary, and John Q. Anonymous's much prized individuality must surrender to necessity. It has never been any great success at its best. There have been five underlings produced by the method to every self-secured householder. It is an impossible scheme for the future.

The problem is to discover the method of co-operation which will prove effective in securing the comforts of life for every American citizen with as little loss as possible of those blessings of individual liberty of enterprise.

A co-operative scheme may be accepted as necessary and at hand. Thought should be turned immediately as to the method of that co-operation. And the one big idea is to assure that no small group become lords of the whole manor. Yet it would be hard to find another system that would place the mastery of America's economic fate in as few hands as have controlled it in years not long past.

AT THE CROSS-ROADS OF DECREPITS.

I had never been on a hospital bed till two weeks ago. But in a short while I found I was at the cross-roads of decrepits and their families and friends.

Here come those who, like candidates for appendectomy, expect to return home within a few days well and immune to other attacks. Here come those who expect never to leave alive. Others come who are to receive sentence to perpetual pain and inactivity.

I myself got off with an order to reduce from high to low gear and even then to expect at times nigh (and finally wholly) killing pains.

If a native of Sampson county wishes to see a cross-section of the county's society, let him go to one of the Fayetteville hospitals (or better both). It is hardly believable how many old neighbors, there with patients from their homes or over to visit their ill friends, found I was there and called by to pay their respects. The fourth floor seemed almost entirely occupied by my old home folk.

Across the hall lay my cousin William Peterson's little daughter, Myrtle, who had undergone an operation for appendicitis. Rooms were as scarce as in Raleigh at a State Convention. Yet it happens that the two Petersons were located on the same floor. Myrtle's oldest sister is a senior student nurse, at present serving in the laboratory. She it was who whirled me along on a stretcher to the X-Ray room and helped manipulate the machines. These two girls and their father and brother and my own folk themselves, made a considerable home group. But there was Cleveland Pope, one of the 1884 Cleveland crop and reared within a mile of my old country home.

Only a few weeks ago, his second daughter had come for an appendectomy. As the operation was ending, her life went out like a candle. I had talked to Cleveland about the heart-rending bereavement only ten or twelve days earlier—a bright, even a talented, child she was, as most clearly indicated by a poem which she had written and left unshown to her parents, and which they could hardly believe she had written, though the elder sister declared she saw her sister write it.

And here now was that elder sister expecting to be operated upon on the very same table upon which her sister had expired a few weeks before! Would you blame her if she were frightened? Would you blame the surgeons if they should hesitate?—And I rather believe she was hoping to get by without an operation when I left the hospital.

On the same floor was Howard McKinnon's boy—another appendix case. And here are Mr. and Mrs. Will Bethune and Mrs. Holmes, Howard's sister, and Mrs. Ferd Johnson, all dropping in to howdy their old neighbor. And Rev. Mr. Somers, Presbyterian pastor, whom I had long desired to meet, also came in.

But now—what is stranger than all the above—on the same floor and recently having undergone a major operation, was our recent next-door Dunn neighbor, Mrs. Remsburg—fortunately on the way upwards from great depths.

The fathers and grandfathers of many of the people I have mentioned and scores of others would scarcely have heard of a hospital if it hadn't been for "the war". I run over in my mind those who died in our neighborhood in my childhood and youth and, with the exception of children, practically all who died, died as old men or women or of consumption or typhoid fever, or of some other now largely preventable disease. I am positive that no one died of anything that could have been deemed appendicitis.

Evidently it was a case of the survival of the fittest. The weaklings among the children were not able to survive the ordeal of being brought up. Those who survived required consumption, or some other deadly disease, or the wear and tear of a long life to kill them.

More Power Will Be Needed

Washington hears, with great federal power projects under way, that most sections of the nation are critically short of electric power. The Federal Power Commission recommends that construction start on new plants aggregating 3,000,000 to 4,000,000 kilowatts, costing about \$300,000,000. Increasing domestic consumption, little construction since 1930, and worn-out machinery explain the condition. Haste is called for. Normal industrial resumption would go power hungry—A sudden big demand, as by a war, would find the country far from sufficiently prepared.—Christian Science Monitor.

A WORLD ADJUSTMENT NOW NECESSARY.

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products reduced largely to the level of home consumption, it does not necessarily mean poverty to America, in the long run. But it does mean a considerable period of readjustments. There are millions of cotton growers more than needed: there are millions of textile operatives more than needed, despite the fact that it is authoritatively stated this very week that there are seven million fewer textile operatives employed in America than there were a few years ago. Likewise, as the conditions develop abroad with respect to other commodities, similar excess bodies of laborers will be found here and there.

It will be the height of folly to undertake to retain all this excess of labor in the industries in which they are no longer needed. The trouble and the hard times come while adjustments are made to absorb those laborers in other industries and employments.

Fortunately, we have boundless resources, despite the exploitation and waste of them for two centuries. With land aplenty and machines galore, there is no reason for anybody to be poor in America. Yet millions are poor and have been poor all the time, even when our foreign trade was at its height.

The Real Problems Still Home Problems.

The loss of foreign trade need prove only a temporary trouble. We have gone on for decades producing goods for foreign consumption when our own people needed decent homes, comfortable furniture, wholesome food, education, books, and scores of other things for the production of which we have abundant materials and labor going to waste.

What has prevented everybody's having a plenty all these years will still prevent it unless the very axioms of economy are recognized and applied in the solution of the problems never solved, and unsolvable so long as those axioms are disregarded.

But the immediate problem is to provide employment for the excess of cotton and wheat growers and of textile workers. A little common sense applied would make this no trouble at all. In the old days when a man had plenty of land and his income depended upon the number of hands he had employed, he would have found it no embarrassment to discover that he had a score of able-bodied fellows who were feeding upon him anyway, and could be sent