

# President Harding on Alaska

(By HENRY C. WALLACE, Secretary of Agriculture)

ening up of the alleged burdensome restrictions upon the use of her resources. It was this increasing clamor which led President Harding to go to Alaska himself and study the situation on the ground.

Before starting on this long western trip the President took the precaution to have an analysis made of Alaska's population, trade, and commerce, and to quietly gather other information which would be helpful to him in getting at the truth. This basic statistical information, together with personal contact with the Alaskans at most of the principal settlements in the territory, and personal observation of Alaskan conditions during the three weeks' travel, qualified him to speak with authority and made his Seattle speech the thoughtful and deliberate utterance of a statesman seeking to act justly and wisely, both for Alaska and the nation of which she is a very important part.

The speech began with a beautiful word picture of the scenic wonders of Alaska and a tribute to her fine citizenship, in which "is the assurance of Alaska's ultimate and adequate development," and in this introduction his audience got a hint of what was to come later on when he said: "The processes of development and establishment of a permanent and ample civilization lie in the citizenship with homes in Alaska, not in investors who are seeking Alaskan wealth to enrich homes elsewhere."

In answer to those who pointed to a supposed loss of 15 per cent. in population from 1910 to 1920 as indicating a process of strangulation, the President said: "Judgments adverse to Alaska will not be based on such adventitious conditions, save by the unintelligent or by those who would deliberately cry down the country's availability as a land of homes in the hope of getting it turned over to wholesale exploitation of a scale that would ruin it for all the future. Against a program of ruinous exploitation we must stand firm."

The fact is that a study of the census returns in 1910 and 1920 had satisfied the President that there was little to the talk of a declining population; that even if there had been a decline of 15 per cent., as was indicated on the surface, it was simply a decline in the floating population which moves in and out overnight according to the ebb and flow of frontier industries. He found that there had in fact been a substantial increase in those elements of the population which make for real development. In 1910 there were 500 white men for each 100 white women; in 1920 this proportion had changed to 282 men for each 100 women. In 1910 the total female white population of Alaska was 6,006; in 1920 it was 7,297, an increase of 20 per cent. During the same period there were 16,612 dwellings in the territory; in 1920, 17,037. In 1910 there were 17,807 families; in 1920, 18,352. In 1910 there were 79 towns, villages and settlements; in 1920, 184. In 1910 there were 120 teachers; in 1920, 245. These statistics tell the story of the slow but substantial growth in permanent population. Large increases or decreases in floating population in a new country simply reveal a growth or decline of the exploitation of its resources.

During the period when placer mining was at its height there was a large male population in Alaska. As the placer mines payed out, this population rapidly decreased. At Skagway we had a perfect illustration of what has happened. Skagway is the point at which the gold seekers disembarked for the rush over White Horse Pass. In 1900 its population is given as 3,117; in 1910, 872; in 1920, 494. It is said that during the height of the stamped Skagway at times had a floating population of ten or fifteen thousand. We stopped there for two or three hours and saw the vacant buildings, stores and houses. It is located on an inlet and there is apparently little to support the town, with the playing out of the mining industry near about. As the boat was leaving the harbor a group of us were standing at the back rail, when one of the observant newspaper men dryly remarked: "Well, suppose that town furnishes an illustration of how Federal red tape is strangling Alaska." It was the beginning of the revelation of the fairy-like character of some of the stories which had been continuously circulated in Washington for years past.

None, another mining town too far to the northwest to be reached by the Presidential party, furnishes a similar illustration. In 1900 Nome is credited with a population of 12,488; in 1910 with 2,600; and in 1920, with 852. There was no Fairbanks in 1900; in 1910 there was a town with a population of 3,541; in 1920 this population had decreased to 1,155. Fairbanks, however, differs from Nome and Skagway in that industries are being built up there. Farms are increasing, and the indications are that there will be a substantial growth in population.

As to the population of Alaska President Harding found that exactly the same thing has happened that has happened in all the mining sections of the United States. He compared the so-called loss of 15 per cent. in Alaska with a loss of 80 per cent. in one province in Canada and 60 per cent. in another; and so with substantial losses in population of several of the States, and said: "Alaska is once more gaining in everything which testifies to prosperity. In these latter days we have come to appraise population by its quality rather than its quantity, and Alaska will loom big in any quality test."

Referring to the falling off in gold production he said that while Alaskan production had decreased one-half since 1915, the decrease in the United States as a whole fell off by almost the same percentage; that Australian gold production had decreased about one-fourth. He concluded, "We all know perfectly well that this has been the result of the world-wide economic conditions. Gold is buying power as before the war. The wonder is not that Alaska's gold production has fallen off, but that it has fallen relatively so little." His remarks on the copper industry were along the same line.

Referring to Alaskan fisheries, her most important industry, the President said that if this industry should continue as it has, without more general and effective regulation, the fish would soon be exhausted and the industry would disappear.

settlors on our great eastern coast and with the problems connected with the northwestern territory and later California and Oregon. He said, "The problem of Alaska has been thrust into our ears a great deal at Washington. Somehow in Alaska one doesn't hear much of it or feel acutely conscious of its existence. In Alaska one gets the feeling that the sturdy, vigorous and highly intelligent people of the territory, under the leadership of our old friend, Manifest Destiny, will solve the problem."

There has been much misunderstanding, no little misrepresentation, and some disposition to hysteria at times about Alaska. It long since passed beyond the wild west, mining camp stage, and is as sober, settled and normal a community as will be found anywhere. I am altogether an optimist on Alaska and its future. I do not believe Alaska can be forced, or that it should be. There is no need of Government managed, Federally paid for, hot house development. There must be no reckless sacrificing of resources which ought to be held permanent in order to turn them into immediate profits. There is no broad problem of Alaska, despite the insistence on its existence. Alaska is all right and is doing well. It has more wealth and more population, even now, than some of the States when they were admitted into the Union."

However much he may have been impressed before coming to Alaska with the need of a general reorganization of the Federal activities there, President Harding came away very definitely of the opinion that such suggestions were not well considered. On this point he said with emphasis, "Where there is possibility of betterment in the Federal machinery of administration, improvement should and will be effected, but there is no need for a sweeping reorganization. The Federal government's processes have not paralyzed, but rather have promoted the right sort of Alaskan development. The territory needs their continuance."

President Harding did not find any justification for the charges of muddling or mismanagement of public business by the Federal agencies in Alaska. Neither did he find that the Alaskans themselves took any stock in such stories. He found that the Alaskans of the Government doing exactly the same kind of work in Alaska that they are doing in forty-eight States. He found that the representatives of these Departments, or at least most of them, are performing their work with a clear understanding of conditions and needs in the territory, and with an evident spirit of co-operation and helpfulness. His speech on Alaska is a vigorous presentation of definite opinions, based on accurate knowledge and investigation at first hand, and it ought to put an end once and for all to the agitation which has been hurtful to Alaska.

The fact is that those industries in Alaska which have had the benefit of conservation policies are the industries which are developing and growing. While those industries which will be built, while those industries which have been thrown open to exploitation are the vanishing industries, the looting of which has enriched not the people of Alaska but outside exploiters who took their money away with them.

The conclusions reached by President Harding are the conclusions reached by every man who studies Alaska with an open mind. They are the conclusions reached by the Alaskans themselves. W. P. Thompson, the veteran editor at Fairbanks, expresses the same general thought, but in more direct language when he says, "There never was a mining law, or an agricultural law, or a timber law in interior Alaska which ever worked a hardship upon a miner or a farmer or a wood-cutter, or one of which any of them complained. All that talk about Alaska being handicapped by bureau control is the rottenest kind of rot. Where such control is working hardest is where it is needed the most. Alaskans who are Alaskans pray, 'Bless God for bureau control.' The sick Alaska's propaganda emanates from those who expect to profit from it. It gives Alaskans a slight nausea to hear the quick doctors of the country denounce us sick and prescribing in the newspapers for our non-existent ills."

As President Harding said, Alaska is destined to become one of the bright stars in the union of states. The rapidity of her development will be governed by economic conditions. She is now growing, slowly but surely, in those directions which make for a sound, intelligent and enduring population.

**MRS. VANDERBILT WILL PAY \$25,000 IN COUNTY TAXES**

Income From Her Estate Will Pay the Salaries of All County Officers and Then Some.

Asheville, Aug. 28.—Salaries of the three county commissioners, register of deeds, county treasurer, sheriff and county auditor can be paid and a margin left from the taxes that will be paid to Buncombe county this year by Mrs. Edith S. Vanderbilt, county tax books disclose. Taxes on the Vanderbilt property for 1923 will be \$25,539.

Mrs. Vanderbilt pays taxes on property valued at \$2,387,217. Baltimore house, one of the finest private homes in America, is on the tax books at a value of \$1,500,000, in which is included 50 acres of land surrounding the mansion. In Biltmore ward is included 3,999 1-2 acres, on which is located the Biltmore farm and dairy. Other property is scattered over the county.

"Personal property valuation is \$160,692. The tax inventory includes 32 horses, valued at \$4,620; 12 mules, \$1,830; 227 milk cattle, \$16,180; and 61 head of other cattle, \$4,135; and nine dogs, \$90.

The only assessment here against Miss Cornelia Vanderbilt, heiress to the Vanderbilt millions, is on 29 acres of land valued for tax purposes at \$69,000.

**JURORS TO GET MORE PAY IN MECKLENBURG COUNTY**

Regular and Grand Jurors to Receive \$4 a Day and Taxismen to Receive \$2 a Day.

Charlotte Observer.

The pay of superior court jurors, grand, regular and tales, was ordered increased in Mecklenburg county Thursday by the county commissioners, in session at the courthouse.

The regular and grand jurors will in the future receive \$4 per day for their services instead of the former \$3 a day while talesmen will receive \$2 for the first day and \$4 for each additional day instead of \$1.50 as heretofore.

This action by the commissioners was taken through a popular demand that the pay of jurors be increased. Two years ago Chairman McLaughlin had County Treasurer Stinson look up the law on the matter and found that a \$4 limit was placed on the jurors' pay. Grand juries have recommended that the rise be permitted.

**Sold Short Ton of Coal, Indicted.**

Greensboro, Aug. 30.—Although it is generally recognized that a ton of coal weighs 2,000 pounds, it developed in Magistrate O. W. Duke's court this morning that N. R. Lewis Coal Company, dealers on Lewis street, this city, delivered a ton on August 2 that weighed only 1,725 pounds.

Lewis, who was indicted by W. R. Young, standard keeper, was found guilty of giving short weight in the case, and he was fined \$40 and taxed with the cost, \$2.65, after he admitted the shortage in open court.

Mr. Young informed the court that this was the second offense, in that he, Mr. Young, had informed Mr. Lewis that should be caught giving short weight he would have him indicted.

After Lewis had been found guilty,

**To Members of Cotton Growers Association**

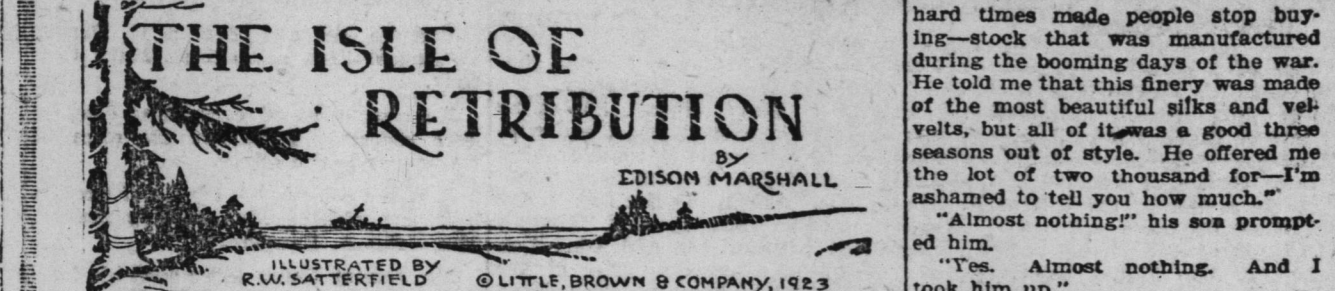
We will be glad to handle without cost, your shipments of cotton to this Association.

We pay you the day you ship.

**The Concord National Bank**

CAPITAL \$100,000.00 SURPLUS \$100,000.00

# THE ISLE OF RETRIBUTION



**BEGIN HERE TODAY**

Ned Cornet, son of wealthy Godfrey Cornet, celebrates with his friend, Rodney Coburn, the return of the latter from Canada. Ned leaves a letter in a happy frame of mind and drives home in the drizzling rain.

Ned's car goes into a perilous skid, knocking down Bes Gilbert, a shopgirl, on her way home. A policeman tells Cornet to report to Judge Rossman in the morning and advises Ned to settle for damage done to a passing jitney.

Ned is allowed to continue on his way when the girl is found to be unhurt. He asks her to ride to her home in his car. Ned returns home to tell his father of the accident.

**NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY**

Godfrey had fought upward from utter poverty to the presidency and ownership of one of the greatest fur houses of his country, partly through the exercise of the principle of absolute business integrity, mostly through the sheer dynamic force of the man. His competitors knew him as a fair but remorseless fighter; but his fame carried far beyond the confines of his resident city. Bearded trappers, running their lines through the desolate wastes of the North, were used to seeing him come venturing up their gray rivers in the spring, fur-clad and wind-tanned—finding his relaxation and keeping fit by personally attending to the buying of some of his furs. True it was hard for a soft man to feel easy in his presence.

Ned Cornet was somewhat downcast and sullen as he entered the cheerfully lighted hallway of his father's house.

In the soft light it was immediately evident that he was his father's son, yet there were certain marked differences between them. Warlike blood had some way failed to come down to Ned. For all his stalwart body, he gave no particular image of strength.

He took his place at the stately table so gravely and quietly that his father's interest was at once awakened. His father smiled quietly at him across the board.

"Well, Ned," he asked at last. "What is it today?"

"Nothing very much. A very close call, though, to real tragedy. I might as well tell you about it, as likely enough it'll be in the papers tomorrow. I went into a bad skid at Fourth and Madison, hit a jitney, and before we got quite stopped managed to knock a girl over on the pavement. Didn't hurt her a particle. But there's a hundred dollars' damage to the jit—and a pretty severe scare for your young son."

As he talked, his eyes met those of his father, almost as if he were afraid to look away. The older man made little comment. He went on with his dessert, and soon the talk veered to other matters.

The older man finished his coffee, slowly lit a long, sleek cigar, and for a moment rested with elbows on the table.

"Well, Ned, I suppose I might as well get this off my chest," he began at last. "Now is as auspicious a time as any. You say you got a good scare today. I'm hoping that it put you in a mood so that at least you can give me a good hearing."

The man spoke rather humbly. The air was electric when he paused. Ned leaned forward.

"You've been a very attentive son," Godfrey Cornet paused again when he said, "I'm afraid, is that I haven't been a very attentive father. I've attended to my business—and little else—and now I'm paying the piper."

"Please bear with me. It was only a little accident, as you say. The trouble of it is that at points the way that things are going. It could very easily have been a terrible accident—a dead girl under your speeding



THEIR EYES MET OVER THE TABLE.

wheels, a charge of manslaughter instead of the good joke of being arrested for speeding, a term in the penitentiary instead of a fine. Ned, if you had killed the girl it would have been fully right and just for you to spend a good many of the best years of your life behind prison walls. I ask myself whether or not I would bring my influence to bear, in that case, to keep you from going there. I'm ashamed to say that I would.

"You may wonder about that. I would know, in my heart, that you should go there. I can't accuse you without also accusing myself. Therefore I would try to keep you out of prison. In doing that, I would see in myself further proof of my old weakness—a weak desire to spare you when the prison might make a man of you."

Ned recoiled at the words, but his father threw him a quick smile.

"Your mother and I have a lot to answer for. Both of us were busy, I with my business, she with her household cares and social duties, and it was easier to give you what you wanted than to refuse you things for your own good. It was easier to let you go soft than to please and to give in than to hold out; and we loved you too much to put you through what we should have put you through."

"This thing we've talked over before. I've never been firm. I've let you grow to man's years—29, I believe—and still be a child in experience. The work you do around my business could be done by a 17-year-old boy. Ned, I want to make a man of you."

He paused again, and his eyes met over the table. All too plainly the older Cornet saw that his appeal had failed to go home. His son was smiling grimly, his eyes sardonic, unmistakable contempt in the curl of his lips.

Ned's bitter smile had seemingly passed to his own lips. "I suppose there's no use of going on," he said. "By all means go on, since you are so warmed up to your subject." Ned answered coldly. "I wouldn't like to deprive you of the pleasure. You had something on your mind; what is it?"

"It's simply this," his father went on. "Today I met Leo Schaffner at lunch, and in our talk he gave me what I consider a real business inspiration. He tells me, in his various jobbing houses, he has several thousand silk and velvet gowns and coats and wraps left on his hands in the financial depression that immediately followed the war. He was cursing his luck because he didn't know what to do with them. Of course they were part of the surplus that helped gut the markets when

hard times made people stop buying—stock that was manufactured during the booming days of the war. He told me that this finery was made of the most beautiful silks and velvets, but all of it was a good three seasons out of style. He offered me the lot of two thousand for—I'm ashamed to tell you how much."

"Almost nothing!" his son promptly chimed.

"Yes. Almost nothing. And I took him up."

His son leaned back, keenly interested for the first time. "Good Lord, why? You can't go into business selling out-of-date women's clothes?"

"Can't, eh? Son, while he was talking to me, it occurred to me all at once that the least of those gowns, the poorest one in the lot, was worth at least a marten skin! Think of it! A marten skin, from Northern Canada and Alaska, returned the trapper around \$60 in 1920. Now let me get down to brass tacks."

"It's true I don't intend to sell any of those hairy old white trappers any women's silk gowns. But this was what I was going to have you do: first you were to hire a good auxiliary schooner—a strong, sturdy, seaworthy two-masted craft such as is used in northern trading. You'd fit that craft out with a few weeks' supplies and fill the hold with a couple of thousand of those gowns. You'd need two or three men to run the launch—I believe the usual crew is a pilot, a first and second engineer, and a cook—and you'd have to have a seamstress to do fitting and make minor alterations. Then you'd start up for Bering Sea."

"You may not know it, but along the coast of Alaska, and throughout the islands of Bering Sea there are hundreds of little, scattered tribes of Indians, all of them trappers of the most high-priced furs. Nor do their women dress in furs and skins altogether, either as regular wear or would have you believe through their hot, long summer days they wear dresses like American women, and the gayer and prettier the dresses, the better they like 'em. To my knowledge, no one has ever fed them silk—simply because silk was too high—but being women, red or white, they'd simply go crazy over it."

"The other factor in the combination is that the Intrepid, due to its unsettled fur market, failed to do any extensive buying on her last annual trading trip through the islands, and as a result practically all the Indians have their full catch on hand. The Intrepid is the only trader through the particular chain of islands I have in mind—the Skopin group, north and east of the Aleutian chain—and she's not counting on going up again till spring. Then she'll reap a rich harvest—unless you get there first."

"The Skopin Islands are charted—any that are inhabited at all—easy to find, easy to get to with a seaworthy launch. Every one of those islands you'll find with a few Indians to show off in, during the summer, and pay for it with a fine piece of fur."

"This is August. I'm already arranging for a license. You'd have to get going in a week. Hit as far north as you want—the farther you go the better you will do—and then work south. Making a big chain that cuts off the currents and surrounds the Skopin group is surrounded by an unbroken ice sheet in mid-winter, so you have to count on rounding the Aleutian Peninsula into Pacific waters some time in November. If you wait much longer you're apt not to get out before spring."

"That's the whole story. The cargo of furs you should bring out should be worth close to a hundred thousand. Expenses won't be fifteen thousand in all. It would mean work; dealing with a bunch of crafty redskins isn't play for boys! Maybe there'd be cold and rough weather for Bering Sea deserves no man's trust. But it would be the finest sport in the world, an opportunity to take Alaskan bear and tundra caribou—plenty of adventure and excitement and tremendous profits to boot. It would be a man's job, Ned—but you'd get a kick out of it you never got out of a booze party in your life. And we split the profits 75-25—the lion's share to you."

(Continued in Our Next Issue)