

## HARD TIMES IN THE CONFEDERACY.



WITH emotions of mingled pain and pleasure, akin to those that come at hearing once again a familiar air, the echo of whose last cadence vanished years ago, so the reminiscences of the many makeshifts and expedients for maintaining life and a degree of comfort recur to the minds of those who, in the Southern Confederacy, struggled through the period embraced within the years 1861 and 1865. The blood-stained battle-fields where the hosts of contending armies met in deadly conflict witnessed no finer examples of courage and self-abnegation than did the chimneysides and roof-trees of those times, where the ragged rebels had left wives and mothers and children and slaves to keep the household gods together, to raise the stint of corn and wine and oil, and to tend the flocks whereby they all might be clothed and fed.

It savors more of the ludicrous, perhaps, than of the desperately serious to be told in these latter days of how great an amount of money it took then to buy even the scant supplies of food and clothes which served to ward off cold and subdue hunger. If the State militia-officer of the present who arrays his fine figure in the prescribed uniform of his command, at the moderate cost of some fifty or sixty dollars, had worn the Confederate "army worms" on his sleeve some twenty odd years back, he then could not have disported himself in such an outfit of trousers, coat, and vest for a less sum than twelve or fifteen hundred dollars of the currency at that time in vogue south of Mason and Dixon's line. Or had he been then as now, perchance, a *beau sabreur*, as some of that day were, with a love for the pomp and circumstance of war, though possessing withal the fine spirit of the *gants glacés* of De Preslin at Rethel, in the war of the Fronde, he doubtless would have affected the popular fashion of a soft slouch hat with a black plume waving from it and the brim upheld by a glittering star; and this gay headgear would have cost him a cool two hundred dollars of Confederate currency. But they were few in number who could wear fine uniforms even in the earlier days of the conflict; and in the latter years the prices of all commodities rose in a steady scale—save only that of one, which remained for the most part steadfast

and immovable from first to last, and that one was military service.

The privilege of fighting, bleeding, and even dying for one's unhappy country was in those days an inestimable boon which outweighed every sordid consideration of Confederate promises to pay—at least in the opinion of the higher authorities; and when a pound of tea from Nassau brought five hundred dollars, and a pair of cavalry boots six hundred dollars in that ridiculous medium of exchange, the pay of the private soldier of the Army of Northern Virginia was about eight dollars a month! Though there be something ludicrous in it all, the humor of it touches so nearly the outer edge of the heroic as to seem strangely like pathos.

Even where the money was to be had, the materials for handsome uniforms were not; and it is said that the insignia of rank on the sleeves and collar of a distinguished Confederate general were made by his wife from pieces of yellow flannel which before the war had been one of his children's petticoats.

Style and material were, after all, mere matters of individual gratification; for the army cared little what manner of raiment officers or comrades wore, save to make "b'iled" shirts, and a superfluity of finery wherever visible, subjects of infinite jest. The soldiers were as ready to cheer the dingy little forage cap of the puritan Stonewall Jackson when he trotted down the lines as to salute with applause the plumed chapeau of the dashing cavalier Stuart.

The traditional rebel soldier in the persimmon tree, who told his captain that he was eating the green persimmons in order to fit his mouth to the size of his rations, epitomized in his epigrammatic speech the history of the economic conditions of the Southern States, both in the field and at home, during the war of the Rebellion. After the seaports of the South had once become thoroughly blockaded, it was a continuous, and in the end unavailing, struggle on the part of the people of the Confederacy to accommodate the status of supply to that of demand.

After the war ended, a monthly magazine dedicated to perpetuating the records of the war from a Southern standpoint, and soon perishing in the vain endeavor, published a rude wood-cut, which, with its concomitant inscription, expressed with great pith and point

the extremities to which soldiers and homefolk alike were reduced in the latter days of the contest. It represented two lank, lean, lantern-jawed Confederates in a blackberry patch. One of them, on his knees, the more readily to reach the palatable fruit, is looking upward at his comrade with a grim smile, and saying: "They can't starve us, nohow, as long as blackberries last."

The vein of his self-gratulation and assurance is readily acquiesced in and reënforced by the other, who responds in a spirit of apt commendation, and with an even larger and more catholic faith:

"Naw, sir! And not as long as thar 's huckleberries, nuther. And when they 're gone, come 'simmons!"

To the uninitiated stranger who saw and read, the rude cut and its underwritten legend, if considered at all, doubtless were held coarse and witless; but to him who knew the bitter meaning thereof, through his own harsh experience, they spoke with the emphasis of a stern and powerful significance.

We read with a shudder of the dire straits to which the denizens of beleaguered cities are often subjected, when unclean animals and unwholesome refuse become the sole means of subsistence, and rejoice to think that such vicissitudes are few and far between. But it is no exaggeration to say, that, while only in exceptional instances were the Southern people reduced to such a pass, yet, from the day when the Federal fleet blockaded the harbors and forts of the Confederacy, their wants often left them not very many degrees removed from the condition of besieged people in the latter stages of beleaguement.

While the ratio of cold and hunger experienced was in an inverse order to that of comparative physical comfort the country was full of suffering, and thousands of people who had been reared and had lived in the extremes of ease and affluence were for months and years without what are believed, from the standpoint of the present, to be the commonest necessities of daily life.

The blockade-runners made at intervals perilous trips from Wilmington and Charleston to Nassau and back, carrying out cargoes of cotton and bringing in supplies. But these scanty imports were only a drop in the great empty bucket of want; and the South was forced to rely upon its own products, its own industry, and its own ingenuity to meet the demands of physical and social existence. The sudden realization of this duty of the hour was a greater shock to the inert and indolent South of that time than even that of arms; yet the deductive philosopher, speculating upon the origin and progress of the great

material growth and prosperity attained within the last two decades by the States once in rebellion, may well be led to attribute to this growth and prosperity the initial leaven of a highly wrought self-reliance and courage born of the sacrifices and struggles of that period. The women of the Confederacy learned the moral of the chapter even between the hard lines of its beginning; and it is by the men born of these mothers that the new South has been enabled to rise from the ashes of the old.

Forcing its producing capacity to the utmost limit that the crippled condition of labor would allow, and straining its ingenuity until that ingenuity threatened to give way, food and clothing at last failed the people of the South. The want of these things was the indomitable engineer who cleared the way for Sherman's march to the sea, the unanswerable herald who summoned Lee to Grant's presence at Appomattox Court House. It is no reflection upon the great generals of the Union to say, as the historian must, that the Federal navy, bringing the blockade, brought the hard times to the Confederacy, and that the hard times hastened its fall.

With the markets of Europe left open to its cotton, and with powerful friends at the courts of England and of France, whose friendship perhaps would have assumed a more substantial form but for the enviroing Federal fleet, who can prophesy what might not have been the fate of the young Government? But with its most important staple thrown almost valueless upon its hands, the moral no less than the physical effect of the blockade upon its fortunes was tremendous. The land that had laughed aloud with plenty under the bounteous and beneficent rule of King Cotton saw the scepter of that sway depart from it, and was sad. The free-trade, carried on without let or hindrance, wherever any trade was possible among the seceded States, which lay for the most part in a common latitude, and the variety of whose products was very slight, constituted a profoundly insignificant item when weighed in the balance against the no-trade of a vast outside world, producing all things that the wants of man might require. Of manufactures the South of that time knew absolutely nothing. She had no fisheries—or, having them, the blockade would have ended them. The mineral wealth that lay beneath the surface in many of her States was enveloped in a density of ignorance that was only accentuated by the scattered charcoal iron-furnaces set at wide intervals here and there in the Virginia or Georgia or east Tennessee hills, like faintly glimmering stars on the border of the great dark.

And yet during the hard times rude manufactures of various kinds were initiated, and the charcoal furnaces were multiplied. The cotton which could not be sold to Europe was made into cloth at home, and from the iron that ran molten from the scattered furnaces were wrought the death-dealing cannon of an historic army.

The currency of the new Government was from the beginning weighted down with a collateral condition which, though it had small effect on patriotism, caused no slight anxiety in the breast of far-seeing and circumspect men. This weighty condition was the promise to pay the stipulated amount of each note to the bearer of the imprinted piece of paper only at the expiration of a specified period of time "after the ratification of a treaty of peace between the Confederate States and the United States of America." In the final issue the anxiety and doubt of caution were fully justified, for no treaty of peace was ever concluded between the Governments named in the elusive bond. Neither blood nor flesh might redeem the ill-starred paper from the Shylock of defeat.

This element of uncertainty made the value of the currency as shifting and mutable as the fortunes of the armies of its Government; but a cause of depreciation much more potent and far reaching was the diminution and final cessation of the cotton traffic by reason of the blockade.

The continental currency of the Revolution, floated on the tentative credit of a feeble and undeveloped country, did not lose its value any more rapidly than did this money of a confederation of some of the wealthiest and most prosperous States on the North American continent.

The dollar and ten cents of Confederate money which in September, 1861, would buy as much as a gold dollar of the United States, was worth in September, 1864, only about one-twenty-seventh of a gold dollar, and would buy scarcely anything, because it had no circula-

tion anywhere except in the Confederacy, and at that time there was hardly anything in the Confederacy for sale.\* The very color in which the calamitous currency was printed seemed ominous; and with its systematic and rapid decline the fortunes of the embryo Government which it represented took on a cerulean and unpropitious hue. Finally it became so valueless for all purposes of trade that many, looking for an early and untoward ending of the struggle, refused to accept it at all. It was in vain that in many sections indignation meetings were held by the more patriotic in which those who declined it were denounced; for numbers of tradesmen and professional men alike advertised in the current newspapers that they would none of it, and that their dealings would be "by way of barter and exchange alone."

At an earlier period the theory had seemed to prevail that it was impossible for too much money to be afloat; and though the Government presses groaned beneath their steady output of Confederate treasury-notes, and the Register and the Treasurer of the Confederate States were reduced to the extremity of hiring men to sign the almost innumerable bills for them, State treasury-notes were circulated in profusion, while "wild-cat" bank-notes of all sorts, shapes, and sizes vied with the "shin-plaster" utterances of municipalities, private corporations, firms, and individuals in supplying the popular demand.

Counterfeiting must have been an easy task; but if counterfeits were circulated, they were received without question when every man who could hire a printing-press and write his name had the power to make as much money as he would.

This overflowing deluge of fiat money alarmed and dissipated the old-fashioned gold and silver coins of our progenitors, which fled incontinently, as they will do under such circumstances, to the coffers of the cautious and the stockings of the saving. Supplies of food and clothing, with a sturdy contempt

\* The following is a table of values of Confederate money adopted by the courts of Virginia after the war for convenience in settlements of transactions in that currency:

	1861	1862	1863	1864	1865
January.....	.....	\$1.25	\$3.00	\$20.00 to 20.50	\$45.00 to 60.00
February.....	.....	1.25	4.05	22.50 to 25.00	45.00 to 65.00
March.....	.....	1.30	5.00	23.00 to 24.50	60.00 to 70.00
April.....	.....	1.40	5.50	22.00 to 23.00	60.00
May.....	\$1.10	1.50	5.50	18.00 to 21.00	.....
June.....	1.10	1.50	7.00 to 8.00	17.00 to 19.00	.....
July.....	1.10	1.50	9.00	20.00 to 23.00	.....
August.....	1.10	1.50	12.00 to 13.00	22.50 to 25.00	.....
September.....	1.10	2.50	12.00 to 13.00	22.50 to 27.50	.....
October.....	1.15	2.50	14.00	26.00 to 27.00	.....
November.....	1.15	3.00	15.00 to 17.00	27.50 to 33.50	.....
December.....	1.20	3.00	18.00 to 20.00	34.00 to 49.00	.....

for such an absurd financial theory, stoutly declined to lend it any countenance, and became monthly less purchasable than before.

Such a staple and necessary article of food as salt advanced within two months during the first year of the war from ten to eighteen dollars per sack, and from this time on continued to show a steady increase in price to the end, in spite of the fact that the salt springs and "licks" of Virginia, east Tennessee, and the Indian Territory were furnishing constantly large quantities of it.

Every article of food increased in price in a similar ratio; and the market reports of produce and supplies in contemporaneous Confederate journals present a strange contrast from month to month and year to year. Perhaps the most striking instance of the advance in prices of food supplies occurs in the case of flour, which in March, 1863, sold for \$25 per barrel; in January, 1864, for \$95 per barrel; and in January, 1865, for \$1000 per barrel. The spectral army in the Confederate rear, led by General Hard Times, was closing up its ranks, touching elbows, and moving at a double-quick in those days of January, 1865. There was death at the cannon's mouth in front of the hungry, footsore, shivering rebel, and starvation in the rear.

Even so early as February, 1863, the money value of a day's rations for 100 soldiers, which had in the first year of the war been about \$9, was at market prices \$123. In the corresponding month of the following year a day's rations had no estimated market value. From the soldier who possessed them money could not buy them, and he who was without them was unable to procure them at any price.

Side by side with the reports of battles and the records of peace commissions, congresses, and legislatures, the blurred columns of the Confederate press were wont to teem with domestic recipes for cheap dishes, directions for raising and utilizing various vegetable products, instructions for making much of little in matters pertaining to every phase of household life. Hard by a list of dead and wounded would stand a recipe for tanning dog-skins for gloves; while the paragraphs just succeeding the closing column of the description of a naval engagement off Hampton Roads were directions for the use of boneset as a substitute for quinine.

The journals of that day were printed usually upon the poorest paper, made of straw and cotton rags, and so brittle that the slightest touch mutilated it. The ink, like the paper, was of the cheapest and commonest, and left its impression, not only on the face of the

sheet, but on the hands no less than on the mind of the reader. Few fonts of new type found their way into the Confederacy during the war, and at the end of four years the facilities for printing had come to a low ebb. It was no uncommon thing for publishers to issue half-sheets in lieu of a complete paper, with scarcely an apology to subscribers for the curtailment of their literary and news rations. It was generally understood that this happened only through stern necessity, and not from any disposition on the part of the newspaper men to give less than an equivalent for the subscription price. Sometimes the journal which on yesterday appeared in all the glory of a six-column page was to-day cut down to a four-column half-sheet; or publication was suspended with the announcement that the stock of materials had been exhausted, and that as soon as the office could be replenished publication would be resumed. Eagerly as the rough sheets were looked for and closely as they were read, a diminution of matter in them, or a failure to appear, caused only passing comment or dissatisfaction. Men's minds were so filled with the thousand things that each day brought forth about them, there were so many rumors in the air, and news flew so rapidly even without newspaper aid, as to cause them not too greatly to miss that which to-day has come to be one of the veriest necessities of American life—a daily journal full of all the doings of all the world.

Sometimes even the coarse straw-paper failed the publishing fraternity when an edition was absolutely imperative; yet in such emergency the inventive talent never deserted them. It was considered a wonderful journalistic feat on the part of its publishers for the Vicksburg "Citizen," during the siege of that city, to make its appearance, when all other resources had failed, upon wall-paper.

Publishers of books and sheet music occupied a scarcely less helpless condition than the newspaper people. Their sole grounds of superiority consisted in the fact that the demands upon them were not so urgent. The girl who sang to her soldier lover the popular songs of that time, "Lorena," "When this Cruel War is Over," "The Standard-bearer," or "Harp of the South,"—which were all duly advertised "at the retail price of one dollar per sheet; the trade supplied, however, at half off, with an additional discount where one hundred of one piece are ordered,"—did not experience that immediate and insistent need of the song and its music which men and women alike felt for the newspaper that would tell them where the last battle had been fought, which army had been victorious, who had been promoted, and who had fallen. The

fateful column might contain evil or good report of some dear one, and its coming was full of interest and apprehension. Yet the sheet music, printed, like the newspapers, in the roughest style, upon the commonest paper, with now and then a caricatured lithographic likeness of some Confederate general on the title-page, continued to be sold and sung, even though its price ran from one to two dollars per sheet.

War songs and war music were the order of the day; and the soldiers in the camps and the small boys in ragged jackets shouted, with an equal zest,

“The despot’s heel is on thy shore!”

or

“Farewell forever to the Star-spangled Banner!”

from diminutive paper-covered books of martial ballads. The little song-books cost anywhere from two and a half to five Confederate dollars; and their contents, with a few notable exceptions, were as mediocre as the paper on which they were printed. The sentiment was there, nevertheless; and this was cared for by the singers more than the music or the lyrical or literary excellence of the songs.

The missionary and religious publishing houses never ceased their praiseworthy labor of printing tracts and pamphlets for distribution among the soldiers; but publications of a more ambitious or secular standard were very few. Now and then some adventurous firm in Richmond or Charleston or New Orleans would issue a badly printed edition of a new novel, reproduced from a copy smuggled in “through the lines” or brought by the blockade-runners from Nassau. Still, even “John Halifax, Gentleman,” and “Les Misérables,” which first appeared in the South in this way and this dress, lost much of their attractiveness in their Confederate garb of inferior ink, bad type, and worse paper.

Reminiscence of books and papers of the period recalls the dire and unfilled want of every species of stationery in each household, and the rough devices which were resorted to for supplying such deficiencies. It was a time when any individual who wished to use an envelope might be compelled first to make it, after the theory of “first catch your hare,” etc. The manner of their making was to cut them out of paper by a tin or pasteboard pattern, and fasten the flaps either with glue manufactured from the gum of the cherry-tree, or with ordinary flour-paste. Old desks and secretaries were ransacked, and frequently not unsuccessfully, for the red wafers or the sealing wax of an earlier date. Even the most stylish

and fashionable note paper for correspondence had an extremely unstylish texture, to say nothing of its hue, that ill comported with the red wax stamped with a crested coat of arms. The juice of poke-berries, compounded with vinegar, or the distillation of a vegetable product known as “ink balls,” usurped the place of ink, and faded from its original purple or crimson color with great rapidity to one of ugly rust. Steel pens were scarcely to be had for love or Confederate money; and the forgotten accomplishment of trimming a gray goose-quill to a good nib came to be once more an accomplishment with an ascertained value. The mucilage on the backs of the ill-engraved blue ten-cent stamps, adorned with the head of Jefferson Davis, often failed of its purpose; and the fingers, which were not infrequently tired enough after cutting out and making the envelope, trimming the pen, and writing the letter, must need still go through the labor of separating the stamps from each other with a pair of scissors or a penknife, and applying flour-paste to the back of the recalcitrant stamp, to insure the safe carriage of the missive of affection to the far-away soldier whose eyes might never read it.

The boys of that day, bereft of pencils, made them for themselves by melting bullets and pouring the molten lead into the cavity of small reeds from the cane brakes. Trimmed to a point, the home-made pencil, though its mark was faint, sufficed to serve the purposes of the young scribes and mathematicians.

It seems almost a figment of the fancy to recall in detail the array of makeshifts and devices which the hunger and thirst of the hard times compelled. We read with curious interest the item of news in the Virginia newspapers of January, 1865, that

Thompson Taylor, Esq., who had charge of the cooking of the New Year’s dinner for the soldiers of General Lee’s army, sold the surplus grease from the meats cooked to one of the railroad companies for seven dollars per pound.

If we might shut out the memories of the depreciation in value of Confederate money, and of the hardships and want prevalent in the Southern Confederacy at the time, we should doubtless wonder what strange army was this the remnants of whose magnificent viands could fetch so marvelous a sum; and haply recollections of the luxury and effeminacy of that innumerable array which the great king led into ancient Hellas would flit across our bewildered minds. Yet how different the reality; and how sharply the little item accentuates the story of privation and suffering! Provisions, which were plentiful enough in the days when the Yankees were to be “whipped

with corn-stalks," grew constantly scarcer and higher priced. The necessities of the life of to-day were the luxuries of that storm-and-stress time. With "seed-tick" coffee and ordinary brown sugar costing fabulous sums and almost impossible to be obtained, it is small matter of wonder that the unsatisfied appetite of the rebel sharpshooter at his post far to the front often impelled him, though at the risk of detection and death, to call a parley with the Yankee across the line, his nearest neighbor, and persuade him to a barter of the unwonted delicacies for a twist of Virginia home-spun tobacco. Perhaps it never affected the mind of either with a sense of incongruity in their friendly dealings to reflect that the duty and the purpose of each was to shoot the other at the earliest opportunity after the cessation of the temporary truce and the return of each to his post.

Lovers of the fragrant after-dinner Mocha were forced to put up with a decoction of sweet potatoes that first had been cut into minute bits and dried on a scaffold in the sun as country housewives dry fruit, and then roasted and ground in a worn-out coffee-mill, or brayed in a mortar with a pestle. In yet more northern latitudes parched rye furnished even a poorer substitute for the Eastern berry; while coupled with the use of this last makeshift was the vulgar superstition that it produced blindness.

The old women and Dr. Johnsons of the Confederacy who could not exist without their fixed number of cups of tea a day drowned their happy memories of hyson in a solution of raspberry leaves, or the more medicinal preparation of the root of the sassafras bush. It was a gruesome time, and there were those who survived bullet and blade to surrender at last to indigestion and acute dyspepsia.

The number and character of intoxicating drinks were many and varied. Corn and rye whisky abounded; while in some latitudes pine tags and even potato peelings went into the impromptu still to come out pure "mountain dew." No internal revenue system aroused the ire of the untrammelled distillers, and alcoholic liquors were cheaper in proportion than most other commodities; yet the amount of drunkenness was not what might have been expected. A favorite small beer in those sections where the persimmon-trees flourished best was made of the fruit of that tree, and was called in the vernacular of at least one part of the Confederacy "possum toddy."

Housekeepers and cooks racked memory and imagination to make dishes that combined the absolutely essential conditions of being at once cheap and nutritious. Housekeeping, even in old Virginia, famous for its cookery,

hung a dejected head; and the whole South was less in want of the army of cooks, which Horace Greeley said it so much needed when he visited it after the war's end, than of something for the army to cook. A rare and famous dish of those days was "Confederate duck" — a dish which would have done no discredit to the piping period of peace, and which grew rarer and more famous as the hard times came nearer home to the Confederacy. This peculiarly named fowl was no fowl at all, but a tender and juicy beefsteak rolled and pinioned around a stuffing of stale bread crumbs, buttered and duly seasoned, and roasted before a roaring fire with spit and drip-pan.

At home and abroad sorghum came to take the place of the vanished sugar. The children at home ate it in their ginger cakes, and the soldiers in camp drank it in their rye-coffee. The molasses and sugar of Louisiana were procurable in degree till the fall of Vicksburg; but the spirit of independence was rife, and each State desired and determined to rely as much as possible on its own products. The theory of State sovereignty was extended even to sorghum; and its introduction was hailed everywhere as one of the greatest boons of a beneficent Providence. The juice of the cane, extracted in a primitive fashion by crushing the stalks between wooden rollers revolving upon wooden cogs and impelled by horse-and-little-darkey power, was caught in an ordinary trough, boiled down into proper consistency in preserving kettles, kitchen pots, or whatever might be utilized for the purpose, and barreled for use as sorghum molasses. The syrup thus produced was quite a palatable one, with a slightly acidulous and not disagreeable flavor, but with an unpleasant tendency to make the mouth sore. It was known as "long-sweetening," in contradistinction to its predecessor, "short-sweetening," the sugar that was scarce.

From its use in the place of sugar sorghum soon leaped into high repute as an almost universal food staple. It was warranted to cure any case of hunger in man or beast. Writers in the suggestive daily press undertook in elaborate and exhaustive essays to show that sorghum syrup was nearly as nutritious as meat and an exceedingly good substitute for it, while the seed of the sorghum cane was capable of being ground into a meal that made a most excellent and wholesome brown bread. They claimed that the problem of blockaded existence had been solved in the discovery of a plant which produced in itself meat and bread for the human family and provender for cattle. Yet the average denizen of the Confederacy, whether at home or in the army, while rendering due credit to the inge-

nity and skill with which the cause of the "food staple" was advocated by its champions, appealed to the higher arbitrament of his own digestion; and though willing to accord sorghum its real merit as serviceable and useful in the place of something better, he was always ready to exchange it for the more certain and familiar nutriment of bacon and "corn pone." To see it fulfill the functions of sugar in the latest recipe for Confederate coffee and tea was well enough; but quietly to submit to its usurpation of the high places of pork and corn was more than the appetite of hungry rebellion would endure.

There was a secondary use to which sorghum was put, in which it met with decided favor from a select few. This was its use in the manufacture of blacking. The manuscript recipe books of that day say that "wonderful shoe blacking, as good as Mason's best," can be made of sorghum molasses, pinewood soot, neat's-foot oil, and vinegar.

Yet, on the theory of the survival of the fittest, the average Confederate must have been right and the theoretic writers in the newspapers wrong about the value of sorghum; for bacon and corn bread have long since regained their wonted ascendancy in the South, and sorghum has vanished entirely from the fields where it once flourished, save, perhaps, where here and there some man and brother cultivates it yet in his little "truck patch," making "long-sweetening" for the consumption of his family in as primitive a method as that in which he helped his quondam owner to make it "endurin' o' the wah."

In the hardest times of the war period, when provisions were the scarcest, the larder of every Southern housekeeper hung out to each Southern soldier, no matter how ragged or humble. For him the best viands about the place were always prepared; and his was the high prerogative of receiving the last cup of real coffee, sweetened with the solitary remnant of sugar. With compassionate pity the women recognized the hardships in the army life of the Confederate soldier, and were always ungrudgingly ready to mitigate its severities in every possible manner.

"Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy" was a maxim of necessity in the hard times; for there was no raiment the subject of barter or sale which was inexpensive. Sporadic instances taken at random prove the general rule. In August, 1864, a private citizen's coat and vest, made of five yards of coarse homespun cloth, cost two hundred and thirty dollars exclusive of the price paid for the making. The trimmings consisted of old cravats; and for the cutting and putting together, a

country tailor charged fifty dollars. It is safe to say that the private citizen looked a veritable guy in his new suit, in spite of its heavy drain upon his pocket-book.

In January, 1865, the material for a lady's dress which before the war would have cost ten dollars could not be bought for less than five hundred. The masculine mind is unequal to the task of guessing how great a sum might have been had for bonnets "brought through the lines"; for in spite of patient self-sacrifice and unflinching devotion at the bedsides of the wounded in the hospital, or in ministering to the needs of relatives and dependents at home, the Southern women of those days are credited with as keen an interest in the fashions as women everywhere in civilized lands are apt to be in times of peace. It was natural that they should be so interested, even though that interest could in the main not reach beyond theory. Without it they often would have had a charm the less and a pang the more. Any feminine garment in the shape of cloak or bonnet or dress which chanced to come from the North was readily awarded its meed of praise, and reproduced by sharp-eyed observers, so far as the scarcity of materials would admit.

But fashion's rules were necessarily much relaxed in the Southern Confederacy so far as practice went when even such articles as pins brought through the blockade sold for twelve dollars a paper, and needles for ten, with not enough of either.

The superstition expressed in the couplet,

See a pin, and pick it up,  
All the day you 'll have good luck,

gained its converts by the score; more, however, as can be readily imagined, for the sake of the pin itself, which it was a stroke of happy fortune to find and seize, than of any other good luck that was to accompany the finding. The broken needle of Confederate times did not go into the fire or out of the window, but was carefully laid aside until the red sealing wax of the ransacked desks and secretaries lent it a head wherewith to appear as a handsome and useful pin. To obtain the bare materials out of which to fashion garments for the family and for the servants soon became a serious question. The house-carpenter and the blacksmith were called into service to this end, and cotton once more became king, though of a greatly diminished sovereignty. Carding-combs of a rough pattern were constructed for the purpose of converting the raw cotton into batting, and thence into rolls of uniform length and size for spinning. The hum of the spindle and the clank of the loom-treadle were the

martial music with which the women at home met the fierce attacks of the legions of cold and nakedness.

Spinning-wheels, reels, bobbins, looms, and all the appurtenances for the weaving of cloth were made and used at home; and the toilers in the cotton-fields and the spinners in the loom-shed worked on contentedly, with a seemingly sublime indifference to the mighty struggle that was convulsing a continent for their sakes.

Of this dusky people it may here be said that, no matter what philanthropists, politicians, or philosophers have said of them in the past or shall prophesy of them in the future, they were true to every trust reposed in them; and with a most tremendous power for direst evil in their possession, the negroes of the South in the days of the civil war did naught but good. If the "colored troops" of the Union army "fought nobly," the slaves of the Southern plantation so bore themselves in those stirring times as to merit no smaller meed of praise.

Cotton and woolen fabrics of firm and substantial texture were woven, cut, and fashioned into garments for whites and blacks. Plentiful crops of flax reinforced the array of wool and cotton; and many a little flax-wheel which in the days of peace has since moved North to adorn in its newly gilded and beribboned state the boudoir of some æsthetic girl might tell pathetic tales of its former place of residence if the tongue of its tiny spindle had but speech.

The dyes of the forest wood-barks, of the sumac, of the Carolina indigo, and of the coppers from the numerous copperas wells were utilized to color the cloth thus woven. We read in the current newspapers that "a handsome brown dye" is made by a combination of red oak-bark and blue stone in boiling water; and that "a brilliant yellow" may be obtained by pouring boiling water upon other component parts of "sassafras, swamp bay, and butterfly root." The same authorities tell us that "vivid purples, reds, and greens" were produced from a composition of coal-oil and sorghum, tinted with the appropriate tree-bark; though of coal-oil for other purposes there was all too little. If a great similarity of quality and texture existed in the homespun cloth, the enumeration of the foregoing means of dyeing clearly demonstrates that there was at least opportunity for as great diversity of color as distinguished the famous coat of Joseph; though the reader of to-day is apt to look with some suspicion on the conspicuous forwardness of the adjectives "vivid," "brilliant," and "splendid," which always accompanied these talismanic recipes.

Strong thread for sewing was evolved from the little flax-wheels. For any unusually handsome work, if by any odd chance such work should happen to be demanded, sewing silk was procured in an emergency by raveling the fringes of old silk shawls or picking to pieces silk scraps which had survived time's touch, and carding, combing, and twisting them into fine threads. These little silken "hanks" were sometimes so prettily colored by means of the dyes that have been described, as to become in the eyes of the womankind of that generation almost as beautiful as the many shaded, dainty *filoselles* of the present are to the women of to-day.

In the old Greek philosophy the limitations of desire were the boundaries of happiness. Stern necessity inculcated in the minds of the people of the South the folly of desiring much, and they learned the lesson fully; but its knowledge disproved in their case the truth of the old pagan doctrine. There were so many cares and anxieties and apprehensions treading close upon each other's pinched and starving steps that happiness could not always sit, a tranquil guest, at the poverty-smitten fireside.

For hats and caps many were the quaint devices contrived. Men's silk hats were seldom seen, save in some battered and forsaken shape and style that bespoke the halcyon days "before the war." When in occasional instances they appeared trim and new with the nap lying smoothly one way, they were generally recognized to have come from Nassau with a blockade-runner, and known to have cost much money. Their wearers, however, were not objects of envy to those who saw them run the gauntlet of the soldiers' gibes, who with rough wit and often rougher words scoffed at the wearers at Rome of apparel that self-respecting Romans had long since ceased to wear. Even the conventional slouch hat of the South, which had divided the affections of its *jeunesse dorée* with the voluminously skirted broadcloth coat before Fort Sumter fell, and whose popularity was easily renewed after Appomattox, and still holds perennial sway, passed away in large measure with the later months of the Confederacy.

With the growth of "substitutes" in the matter of things inanimate to eat or to wear, "substitutes" decreased in the acceptance of the term as descriptive of those who for pecuniary consideration were willing to take others' places in the ranks. The military draft, which enrolled old men and boys, took also many of the hatters of military age who had been left scattered through the Southern States, and then winter headgear got down to the bed-rock of coon and rabbit skins.



For making summer hats the Carolina palmetto leaf was in the greatest repute. Next in availability came wheat or rye straws, carefully selected with a view to size and quality, and bleached in the sun. The palmetto strips or the straws were first steeped in water to render them more pliable, and then plaited together by hand and sewed into proper shape. What constituted proper shape was usually a question to be solved only by the maker, and varied from the eminently picturesque to the decidedly grotesque or uncouth. If the hat of palmetto or straw was intended to adorn some feminine head, perchance a faded ribbon, redyed, or a gray partridge wing, lent it additional grace and beauty. In winter, home-woven hats, or knitted caps of the 'Tam o' Shanter type, were frequently seen. In spite of fashion's adverse though half-hearted decrees, young faces of those days seemed as sweet and winning under wide-brimmed "sundowns" or old-time "pokes" as ever did those that have laughed beneath a "love of a bonnet" of a more *de rigueur* mode.

With the adjuncts of the female toilet the blockade made sad havoc. Silken stockings became undreamed-of luxuries; and their accompanying articles of apparel, which when first donned by a bride must always be composed of

Something old and something new,  
Something borrowed and something blue,

fell far short of easy silk elastic, being made of knit yarn or cotton. Stockings of wool or cotton were the best that the most luxurious might aspire to. Shoe-strings were made in quantities by the children on little bobbins, or by plaiting or twisting threads together. Ladies' button boots were things almost unknown. Shoes were sometimes made of the pliant leather found in the flaps of disused cartridge-boxes and of the discarded belts of the soldiers. Oftener they were fashioned of cloth cut on the pattern of old shoes and sewed to leathern soles. Crinoline and corsets were constructed of hickory splints in lieu of whalebone and steel springs; and the prepared bark of certain kinds of trees or certain plants furnished the ladies with a supply of braids and switches. Then as now, however, the style of arranging the tresses of the female head frequently changed under the dictates of a fashion feebly endeavoring to assert itself wherever possible; and at one time even a small amount of natural hair easily served the purpose of covering the crescent shaped pillows on which it was put up, the startling names of which were "rats" and "mice."

Buttons, pins, buckles, hooks and eyes dis-

appeared by degrees from the face of the Southern Confederacy. Some wooden buttons were turned upon lathes from maple and similar wood, and there were horn buttons here and there; but both species were for the most part clumsy and ill-shapen. The whites of the Confederacy were content with them, while the slaves skewered their "galluses" to their trousers with wooden pins or the thorns of the locust.

Combs were made of horn or wood; and bristle tooth-brushes were replaced with twigs of the dog-wood, the black-gum, the sweet-gum, and the althea. The latter was especially valued as serving the double purpose of brush and dentifrice at once.

Turkey-wing fans and fans of peacock feathers supplanted those of a more or less artistic and elaborate design and finish; and many other articles of use or ornament, dear to the feminine heart and not easily attainable, were ingeniously simulated.

In February, 1864, it was officially announced that two hundred soldiers of the Stonewall Brigade were entirely without shoes. The statement indicates the great stress of poverty in respect to leather. The slave population in the farther South went barefoot in the summer and wore "wooden bottoms" in the winter. Men of the easiest circumstances, as easy circumstances then went, were forced to be content with shoes of the coarsest. To shoe the Army of Northern Virginia had made a dearth of leather in the South, and every method of economy was practiced to avoid further trouble on this score. The "wooden bottoms" of the slaves resembled in some respects the wooden shoes of the French peasantry. The upper-leather was that of the ordinary shoe, and was fastened by means of small wrought-iron nails to a sole and heel cut carefully to fit the bottom of the foot from a solid block of cypress wood. Their novelty, when first introduced among the negroes, made captive the fancy of the children of both races; and juvenile wooden bottoms were the rage for a long time.

As the years went by and the war went on, household furniture perished in the using and had to be replaced. Worn-out carpets saw themselves renewed in pretty colors and patterns, as bright and serviceable though not so handsome as Wilton. They came from the busy loom rooms with restored capacity to keep out the cold and deaden the clatter of the little wooden bottom shoes. Cozy rugs were made of the most unexpected materials, such as old shawls, flannel petticoats, stockings the heels and toes of which had forsaken them, and the like. Curtains of quaint stripes and figures, woven of stuffs from similar sources,

shut out the winds of winter, and gave comfort and beauty to the rooms. Broken chairs and decrepit sofas were replaced with others constructed of homespun cloth and cotton stuffing upon frames of wood roughly put together, or fashioned entirely of broom straw from the old fields, bound together in ornamental shapes with hickory withes. Sometimes interlaced grapevines made a pretty and not uncomfortable chair or sofa; and the common wooden frames, bottomed with twisted shucks or oak splints, abounded everywhere.

Many persons had their glass and china ware destroyed during the war; and it was almost impossible to replace it, even at ruinous prices. Such articles were always eagerly sought for at auction sales, and he who came determined to purchase must needs have a plethoric purse. Porcelain and earthenware of a coarse kind were manufactured from kaolin found in the Valley of Virginia and at other points in the South.

In their many exigencies and narrow straits the people of the Confederacy were nowhere put to a more crucial test than in the matter of lights. In the cities, gas, the fumes of which were as offensive to the olfactories as its radiating power to the eye, afforded a wretched pretense of illumination. In the country, where even the miserable gas was not to be had, the makeshifts to supply light were many. There was but little coal-oil in the South, and as little sperm-oil; and the tallow of the country went in large measure to the armies for military purposes.

A favorite lamp, and one easily fitted up, was a saucer of lard with a dry sycamore ball floating in the midst of it. A blaze applied to the sycamore ball readily ignited it; and it burned with a feeble, sickly glare until its sea of lard disappeared and left it no longer a fiery island. In the recipes printed in the current newspapers setting forth the proper manner of preparing the sycamore balls for use as candles, special insistence is made that they are to be "gathered from the tree and dried in the sun." If allowed to become over-ripe and fall to the ground before use, their fibrous covering would lose its hold upon the core, and drop away into the lard.

In the slave-quarters, "fat" pine knots blazed upon the hearth through winter and summer nights alike; while the night scenes of the negroes' merry-makings in the open air were illuminated by means either of the same material, or of crude tar piled upon the bowls of broken plantation shovels, set high in the midst on tripods made of three-limbed saplings. The juba-dance and the corn-shucking were equally invested with elements of the unreal and the grotesque, where the flickering

and shifting lights of the unconventional lanterns touched the dusky faces and forms and the smoke of their strange altars rose over them.

Another light in great vogue was the "Confederate," or "endless," candle. It was constructed by dipping a wick in melted wax and resin and wrapping it around a stick, one end of the wick being passed through a wire loop fastened to the end of the stick. The wick burned freely when lighted, but the illumination was very feeble; and unless the candle was watched, and the wick drawn through the loop and trimmed every few minutes, the whole affair was soon aflame. A great advantage of the Confederate candle was the length of time which it would last, its duration, when properly attended, being commensurate with the length of its wick and stick.

By the light of the sycamore ball or of the endless candle thousands throughout the South pored over the news columns of the papers at night to learn how went the battle, or scanned the lists of the wounded and the dead with eyes that ached with their hearts.

At no season of the year did the hard times draw so bitterly near the hearts of the adults as when the little homespun stockings hung about the chimney-place at Christmas, to await the coming of Santa Claus "through the lines." If he did not always bring bounteous profusion of gifts, the innocent fiction of his having been robbed by the armies on his way from the country of sleds and reindeers found many ready little believers, who, taking it for truth, yet did not really know how much of truth there was in it. To the younger children, who had no personal knowledge of the existence of many of the things that made the Christmas times so attractive to their elder brothers and sisters, the season was not so forlorn and pathetic as it often seemed to those who would have done so much for them and yet could do so little. Nor did they comprehend, if perchance they ever saw, the tears that oftentimes crept into unwilling eyes at the severe leanness of the little Christmas stocking, and the poverty that constituted its chief ingredient. Peanuts, known in the vernacular as "goobers," both raw and parched, pop-corn in balls and pop-corn in the ear, Florida oranges, apples, molasses cakes and molasses candy made up the list of confectionery dainties for the young people at that season. There were few of the many thousands of children living in the South when the war ended who had ever seen, even in a store window, a lump of white sugar or a striped stick of peppermint candy. The sorghum cakes of the hard times took the shapes of soldiers with im-

possible legs and arms, waving equally impossible banners; there were also guns, swords, pistols, horses with wonderful riders, and a multitude of curious animals not to be found described in any natural history then or now extant. So the molasses candy of the period was fashioned into baskets, hats, dolls, and manifold kinds of figures. Jumping-jacks, or "supple sawneys," were made of pasteboard, and worked their arms and legs through the medium of a cotton string. Rag doll-babies with eyes, noses, and mouths of ink were in great favor in the absence of those of wax or china; while here and there was the ever-welcome Noah's Ark with its menagerie of animals and its crew of men and women, all curiously carved out of pine-bark. Indestructible linen books for the little ones were made of pieces of cotton-cloth stitched together, on which were pasted pictures cut from old illustrated papers and magazines. Knitted gloves, suspenders, comforters, wristlets, and the like filled up the measure of the Christmas gifts.

Yet none the less gayly for the privation and distress standing so near at hand did the girls of that era trip it in the dances of the Christmas-tide with their brave soldier partners whenever opportunity offered; and none the less beautifully for the hard times did the red holly-berries of the season show from their waxen green, or the mistletoe hang overhead, in the light of the endless candles. For the

young women of the South, full of vim and life and spirit, the period of the war was in many respects a happy one. The girls and their lovers danced, as the soldiers fought, with all their might, and enjoyed it while it lasted. But with them, as with their elders, sorrows crowded on each other's heels, and the bride of yesterday was often the widow of to-day. They affected military dress, and wore brass buttons and epaulets whenever attainable. The demands of society upon them made sad havoc with many relics of earlier days which had been religiously preserved up to that time. The chests of every garret were ransacked; and morocco shoes and satin slippers of a by-gone generation, that had never tripped a livelier measure than a minuet, were held a veritable treasure-trove, and were dragged forth and danced in merrily. Many a lassie at the military "hops" showed her white arms and shoulders above the moth-eaten velvets and time-stained silks that had been worn by her young-lady grandmother.

Out of sight and hearing the hard times in the Confederacy have vanished. The recollection of them is attuned to melancholy; there is many a touch of bitter sorrow and of sharp regret in the strain; but the lapse of years has softened the once familiar air until the minor notes of joy are eloquent amidst the chords of grief.

*A. C. Gordon.*

## THE MOUNTAINEERS ABOUT MONTEAGLE.



AMONG the first signs that the exhausted and poverty-stricken South of 1866 was neither dead nor paralyzed were her attempts to utilize certain natural resources, little valued or considered

in the old easy-going ante-bellum days. One of the early movers along this line was a Tennessee company that opened some coal mines in the neighborhood of Monteagle, and then stretched up a daring arm from the Nashville and Chattanooga Railway, skirting the mountain's base, to their possessions on its summit. Then came the announcement that a house for summer boarders was opened near the arm's terminus.

Responding to this challenge, our party left the Nashville and Chattanooga Railway at Cowan, and from its primitive ticket-office followed a sooty train-man down the track, past several long coal-trains and into a queer

little box of a car, that had, however, its cushioned seats, its polite conductor (not yet visible), its painted tin cooler with the refreshing liquid ice-water, and its nickel-plated cup safely chained — all in grimy completeness.

Two passengers already were sharing these accommodations. One was a big-jointed, long-featured, shrewd-eyed, middle-aged man, dressed in a new suit of blue homespun, while his grave face and iron-gray hair were queerly surmounted by a small parti-colored straw hat — one of the sort oftener seen abloom on the head of some future sovereign, where its pristine freshness is wont to mark such high festivals as "the day of the big show."

On the opposite side of the aisle a small "pyeart" old lady in a brown and white calico dress, and with a large white kerchief folded about her shoulders and crossed over her bosom, sat with bared gray head by an open window.

Before we had had time to choose our seats