

CONFEDERATE MAKE-SHIFTS.

By MRS. M. P. HANDY.

FOR four years the Federal army and the Federal fleet, with their lines of bayonets and open-mouthed Columbiads, shut in the Southern Confederacy from the rest of the world.

The Federal gun-boats fought their way up the Mississippi, dividing the country in two, and sea-port after sea-port was captured, till at last only Charleston and Wilmington were left as inlets for the outer world—narrow gates which the grim war dogs watched unceasingly.

Think of it, ladies! No hats nor dresses from Paris, no chocolate caramels nor French bonbons, and, alas! no new fashions, save when some daring female went back and forth under flag of truce—a privilege not easily obtained—bringing on her return a limited wardrobe wherewith to excite the admiration and envy of her friends. Sometimes a soldier sent home a magazine found in a captured or deserted camp, and the fashion plates which it perhaps contained gave the recipient some idea of what the world beyond was wearing.

Now and then, under cover of a dark or stormy night, the stealthy blockade-runner, manned by men familiar with every nook and creek along the coast, stole out, carrying cotton and tobacco for Nassau, and crept in again laden with the foreign commodities so sorely needed by the blockaded people. But these vessels were of necessity small, and the stores they brought as nothing to the demand. Moreover, medicines and munitions of war formed large part of their cargoes, and the dry-goods and luxuries offered by their consignees to the general public were held at prices beyond the means of all save cotton and tobacco brokers, or rich government contractors. In the last days of the Confederacy a yard of calico brought forty dollars in Confederate currency, a spool of sewing cotton twenty dollars, and other dry-goods were proportionately dear. Flour rose to twelve hundred dollars a barrel; a ham of bacon cost a hundred and fifty dollars; sugar was seventy-five dollars a pound, and black pepper three hundred dollars.

Money was plenty, it is true, but it took so much to buy so little! The caricature in a Southern illustrated journal of 1863 which represented a lady going to market attended by a servant with her money in a wheelbarrow, and returning with the barrow empty and her purchases in a small hand-bag on her arm, was less exaggerated than are many of the best cartoons in the comic papers of to-day.

Inflation was tried to the fullest extent, with the result that Confederate money became comparatively worthless. This, however, did not occasion the general scarcity.

There was not much to be had even for those who could pay war prices.

Thrown thus on their own resources, the Southern people were forced to provide for themselves. To appreciate this difficulty, it must be remembered that prior to 1861 the Southern States were purely an agricultural community, depending on their staples of tobacco, cotton, and sugar for the means of purchasing every thing else. The West was in large measure their granary and meat-house, while New England supplied them with most manufactured articles. Now the blockade shut them in from these and all other markets, and it was as though some Jersey market-gardener should wake some morning to find around his little farm a stockade through which he could not break, and over which he could not climb without risking his life. Ingenuity, economy, and what New Englanders call "faculty" were taxed to the utmost. Every household became a nest of domestic manufactures, every farm had its cotton patch and its sorghum field. Spinning-wheels and looms, which in former days had been used for clothing the slaves on large plantations, but which during the era of cheap dry-goods were comparatively idle, were again set going. Ladies whose white hands were all unused to such labor learned to card, to spin, and to weave. Knitting became as fashionable in Southern parlors as it is in German homes. Homespun dresses were worn by the first ladies in the land, and she who was cleverest to contrive and deftest to execute had highest praise from her associates. Foreign dyes were well-nigh unattainable, and the woods at home were ransacked for the means of coloring the home-grown flax, wool, and cotton. Black-walnut bark furnished a rich brown, varying in intensity with the strength of the dye; swamp-maple, a clear purple; pokeberries, a solferino, bright, but not durable; wild indigo gave a tolerable blue, and elderberries an unsatisfactory black. Indeed, no experiment with bark, root, leaf, or berry ever resulted in any substitute for logwood; and as black was the dye most needed for Southern garments in those dark days, the blockade-runners learned to make it part of their regular cargo.

At one time in some sections of the South there was fearful destitution of salt. Speculators held it at enormous prices. Even the rich were forced to use it sparingly. The poor seemed likely to suffer for lack of it, and live stock were in many cases denied it altogether.

Barrels and boxes which had been used for packing salt fish or pork were soaked in water afterward, which was boiled down and evaporated for the sake of the salt thus extracted. The earthen floors of smoke-houses, into which the precious mineral had

been trodden year after year, were dug up, and the earth given to cattle, or treated with water after the same manner as the salt-seasoned boards.

The government at Richmond came to the rescue, and seizing the salt-works throughout the country, issued regular rations to each family at nominal prices for the rest of the war. By this high-handed measure the people were saved from a salt famine.

Coffee was a luxury seldom enjoyed, and for which rye or wheat, toasted and ground, was the usual miserable substitute. Some quick-witted person conceived the idea of using sweet-potato chips instead. These made a more palatable drink, but were, after all, only a hollow mockery. Dried raspberry leaves were used for tea, and some people fell back upon sassafras, the North Carolinian beverage, grimly assuring those who scorned it that it was good for the blood and would save doctors' bills. Not a few eschewed all these transparent deceptions—if that may be called deception which deceived nobody—and when unable to afford milk, drank cold water with patient heroism.

Children there were in the Confederacy, born of well-to-do parents, who at the close of the conflict did not know the taste of candy. After the fall of New Orleans, sugar became a luxury, never wholly unattainable, it is true, but enormously dear even for Confederate money values. Previous to the war, the United States government had made an effort to introduce the Chinese sugar-cane, or sorghum, throughout the South and West, principally with reference to its use as food for live stock. It was extensively cultivated in some of the Western States, but Southern planters did not take kindly to the new forage. Politicians denounced its introduction as an attempt to injure the sugar-growing interest of the far South. Amateur farmers who experimented with the seed distributed by the Patent-office preferred Indian corn and clover or oats as food for their cattle, and very few even attempted the manufacture of sorghum molasses. Now, in the general destitution, the despised sorghum became an inestimable boon to the besieged country. Far less exacting than its West Indian congener, it flourishes wherever maize can be grown, and soon it became part of every planter's crop. Every large plantation had its sorghum mill for crushing the cane, and smaller planters brought their little crops to the mills of those who were willing to grind for their neighbors. These mills were for the most part primitive affairs, consisting of three upright wooden cylinders, of which the centre one, turned by horse-power, moved the other two by means of cog-wheels. A tub set underneath the machine caught the juice which flowed from the crushed cane, and this juice, boiled down in huge kettles, and clarified with lime, soda, or even

with lye from hickory ashes, produced the molasses which became a staple article of food throughout the Confederacy. Efforts to reduce the sirup to sugar were, I believe, abortive, and in a copy of General Orders from the Adjutant and Inspector General's Office, C. S. A., for 1862-63, now in possession of the writer, no mention is made of sorghum sugar in the price-list established for military stores.

Prominent among the problems with which Confederate families were forced to grapple was that of lights. The gas-works in the principal cities were kept in operation, but the gas furnished was of the poorest quality and exorbitantly dear. Many private families were unable to afford its use, and the few who could pay for it were not always sure of getting it. On more than one occasion, in crowded churches, pastor and people were given a practical illustration of Egyptian darkness; and on one memorable night the gas in Richmond gave out simultaneously all over the city, in all buildings, public and private, leaving those who depended upon its illuminating powers in total darkness. Pine torches—in Southern parlance, light-wood knots—were to be had in plenty, and in winter their ruddy glow was comfortable and picturesque. But work or reading done by their flickering light was a terrible strain on the eyes, and the heat from the blazing wood was uncomfortable in summer. Moreover, the pitch smoke was objectionable, and blackened the walls.

Tallow-candles were the usual resort, and were often surprisingly hard and white. Old-fashioned lard lamps came again into use for parlors and state occasions, giving a soft, clear lustre, much like that of the favorite French lamp. But lard was costly and scarce.

For sick-rooms and nurseries, and for mills where the machinery ran all night, but where a bright light was not constantly required, the bolls of the sycamore or button-wood tree were dried and used as a wick in a cup of melted grease. During a tedious case of typhoid in the family of the writer, a friend introduced a taper so safe and satisfactory as to merit use in other than war times. A small triangular scrap of soft paper is twisted into a species of miniature fool's cap, the hypotenuse of the triangle forming its base. This, with the knob on top oiled and lighted, and the lower part spread out like a fan, is inserted as a wick in a small saucer of lard. There is no unpleasant odor, and it gives a dim light by which objects in the room are barely distinguishable, but from which a lamp may be instantly lighted. Near the taper its light is sufficient to tell the hour by a watch, to read the label on a vial, and to measure medicine with ease.

But the Confederate candle was, beyond

all else, the light of those days. Wax and resin were melted together in the proportion of two ounces of resin to a pound of wax, and through this mixture a long string of candle-wick was drawn once and again, until thoroughly coated. Making one was always a frolic for the younger members of a household, and occasionally furnished excuse for an afternoon party. It was a matter of pride to have the candle as long as possible, and the work was always done out-of-doors. The saucepan or "skillet" containing the wax rested on a shovelful of hot coals; the ball of wick was unrolled and passed through the liquid, and from hand to hand, until every inch of it had been immersed three times, and the long, irregular string became a smooth waxen rope about the thickness of an ordinary lead-pencil. This was then wound on a wooden stand—the "Confederate candlestick"—first around, then up and down. The free end was drawn through a hole in a strip of tin nailed for the purpose on the upper part of the candlestick, and when the candle was in use was lighted, the long rope unwinding like a reel of yarn as it was gradually consumed. The light was, perhaps, not more than equal to that of a toy candle, yet it was not trying to the eyes, and was sufficient for ordinary purposes. The place next the saucepan was the post of honor and of danger. The wick was held down in the wax by means of a small crocheted stick; but, in spite of this precaution, burned fingers were not infrequently the result of the candle-making.

In view of the scarcity of breadstuffs, the use of edible grains in the manufacture of spirituous liquors was forbidden, under heavy penalties of fine and imprisonment, in addition to the confiscation of such liquors and the implements used in their distillation. Fruit brandies, apple, peach, and blackberry, and the rum distilled from the juice of the sorghum cane, became almost the sole intoxicating beverages of the Confederacy. These brought high prices, and much of the fruit crop was converted into brandy. From this, also, the alcohol for medicinal purposes was distilled. The wine of the scuppernong and of the common wild grape was also extensively manufactured.

Drugs and medicines were extremely scarce, and many lives were lost for lack of them. Prohibited as contraband of war, they were never suffered to form part of the one hundred pounds of baggage allowed each of the few persons granted permits to go South under flag of truce. Much smuggling was carried on along the border, and quinine and opium were standard articles in this dangerous traffic. The Medical Department at Richmond appealed to the women of the South to engage in the culture of opium, and distributed quantities of poppy seed for that purpose. After the flower

dropped its petals, the green capsules were to be pricked with a needle, and the gum which exuded collected and sent to the Medical Director. Large quantities of poppies were raised, but very little opium was gathered. Dried blackberries were a leading article among hospital stores contributed by Soldiers' Aid Societies in country neighborhoods. Flaxseed and the inner bark of the sweet-gum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) and of the slippery-elm (*Ulmus fulva*) were also prominent among such supplies.

The natural resources of the Southern States are immense, and stood the people in good stead. Factories of different kinds were established in districts remote from the seat of war, but the machinery was necessarily imperfect, and the results such as would now be accounted far from satisfactory. It was almost impossible to procure rare chemicals, and where their use was important, the work was of course incomplete.

Confederate paper, in even the finer grades, resembled whity-brown wrapping paper. Confederate ink was pale and sick-looking. Confederate matches came in tiny blocks, from which they were broken as needed: boxes were too costly to be afforded them.

A volume might be written on the ingenious contrivances of the ladies to replenish their wardrobes. Homespun dresses were among the least of these. They made every thing they wore, from hats to shoes, and some of the work was exquisitely done. Such articles as were beyond their skill—and they were few—were substituted some way or another. Large thorns, with the heads tipped with sealing-wax, did duty as hair-pins. Common brass pins, imported from Nassau, sold near the close of the war for forty dollars a paper, and needles and thread were used instead wherever such use was practicable. Economy was an obligatory virtue in those days, and nothing was wasted which could possibly be turned to account. Mr. Hale's ingenious story of the old hoop-skirts which ruined the Confederacy was more far-fetched than even he supposed, for nothing so valuable was ever thrown away—though I must confess that they were often stored in a closet while awaiting the numerous uses to which they were put.

Luxuries were not many, and self-denial of the sternest sort was frequently practiced. Starvation parties, at which no refreshments were furnished, were ordinary entertainments in Richmond during 1864. Housekeepers who wished to give suppers to their friends, but who could not afford to call in the costly aid of a confectioner, resorted to various expedients. Calves'-foot jelly was made without wine or lemons, peach brandy and vinegar being the substitutes, and was not an unpalatable dish. Milk was always procurable, and ice-cream,

in consequence, not unknown. Such deserts as could be made with sorghum molasses were those most frequent. Indeed, there was a surfeit of sorghum to those who used it in lieu of something better, and the word became a slang term for flattery—the equivalent of the Yankee "soft sawder." Preserves put up with sorghum molasses had always a twang which betrayed their origin—a twang barely mitigated by the use of soda. Yet few people could afford the use of sugar for the purpose, and those who could not, gladly availed themselves of the cheaper make-shift.

People whose vanity lay in their feet, and who were in consequence particular about their shoes, had a hard time of it in those days. Ladies not unfrequently made the upper part of their own cloth gaiters, using for pattern an old shoe ripped in pieces, and had them soled by a shoe-maker. Country tanneries were kept busy, and country shoe-makers found themselves in request of those who had hitherto scorned their handiwork. Fine leather was scarce, and beef brought such high prices that calves were usually kept as a growing investment. Now and then one of tender age was sacrificed on the shrine of vanity, and then tanner and shoe-maker had little peace until their work was done to the satisfaction of the fortunate owner. Goats had short lease of their lives, and dogs shook in their skins after somebody discovered that from those skins leather of the finest and softest quality might be manufactured. This known, they were ruthlessly slaughtered. Even the meanest cur was of value for once, and "nothing in his life became him like the leaving of it." Sheep-skins tanned with the wool on were highly prized for saddle blankets; shorn, they made excellent riding gloves; and to these purposes they were usually applied. Remembering the *sabots* of the French peasantry, some one introduced shoes with wooden soles, to which the upper leather was secured by tacks. These were cheap and durable, and became popular for stout walking shoes. Shaped to the foot like a Roman sandal, and with low broad heels, they were not uncomfortable; and the fact that they were almost water-proof compensated in some degree for the difficulty of procuring rubber overshoes. In-doors their clatter on bare floors was objectionable, and many persons kept them in the hall, with hat and wrappings, for use in wet weather alone.

Straw plaiting became a usual accomplishment with Southern girls, and the bundle of wet straws and the constantly lengthening braid were of frequent appearance in the family circles gathered around the Confederate candle. The plait most common was that known as the "rough and ready"—a pointed braid woven with four straws. Ladies wishing for something more stylish

preferred the seven plait of split straw, identical with the popular English straw. An inventive genius produced and, I think, patented, a little machine for splitting the straw. This was a small block of wood with a fragment of steel from an old hoop-skirt inserted at one end and filed into tiny teeth for dividing the straw. A longer scrap of the same steel served as a lever for keeping the straw in place as it was drawn across the teeth of the splitter. Wheat straw was the kind most plentiful, and therefore most used. Rye straw, longer and whiter, was often cultivated expressly for the purpose of plaiting. Oat straw, soft and light, made a pleasant hat to wear, but the straws were short and coarse, and generally so dark that the work had always to be dyed.

The inner shuck of the Indian corn was woven into hats for children. These were as white and as soft as the chip hats of today. Trimmings for them were made from the same materials, intermixed with raveled silk. Ropes and tassels, flowers and leaves, and an exceedingly fine braid for trimming, were all made of straw. Feather bands for trimming saccos and wraps, with aigrettes and feather flowers for hats and bonnets, were exquisitely manufactured by the deft fingers of Confederate women. The feather fans, made by a family of sisters whose name is one of the oldest in Virginia, became famous throughout that State and North Carolina. Many of them are no doubt still preserved as relics of war times by those who were fortunate enough to obtain them.

Never, perhaps, was there more need for ingenuity; rarely has so much been exercised. Many of these make-shifts were contrivances of which the users were honestly proud, or over which they could at least cheerfully laugh; and, after all, it was comparatively easy to dispense with luxuries when all one's neighbors did the same. But there came a day when men told one another the story of the straw-adulterated bread of the Russian serfs, and wondered whether such food could be eaten by those used to better things, looking forward to the time when they might be forced to try the experiment themselves; when every ounce of meat, every spoonful of meal, was precious; when wheaten bread was thought a luxury; when butter was rarely seen except on the tables of the rich; when eggs were treasured as a delicacy for the sick; and when people endured privations so constantly that they ceased to consider them such.

When Lee's army surrendered, it had dwindled to a handful of ragged, starving veterans. The people at home had, in response to an appeal from their idolized general, vainly put themselves on half rations to send him supplies, and one of the first duties of the Federal troops on taking pos-

session of Richmond was to feed the country they had conquered. The war had written its record in blood on well-nigh every Southern hearth-stone, and many of those who had sacrificed most in the fight for secession drew a breath of relief that the struggle was ended, even though they had failed; for watching and waiting were done with, cannon and rifle shot would dig no more graves.

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By ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS.

MY dear, it's my opinion that if all folks that thought of getting married were compelled by State law to spend six months with some respectable family, under the same roof, before they did it, there wouldn't be more than one wedding sift through that sieve to where there's twenty now.

Since you asked me why I never got married, that's why. Bless you, no! I don't say you put it in so many words, but that's what you've been a-saying, every look and motion and tone of you since you sat here, turning your pretty eyes about my room and over me, my dear, quite gentle and uninquisitive, but full of a kind of wonder and a kind of sadness too. I've seen that look in young folks's eyes times and times. But it isn't often Number 13 sees such eyes as yours, my dear, though there's been enough that was kind and enough that was sorrowful in it, for that matter, too. I took a fancy to the look of you, I tell you plainly, the first day you come—three weeks ago come Thursday—with those half dozen lawn petticoats for a fine tuck, you remember, and the insertin that was wore to be taken out from above. I'm set in my fancies, as I am in my ways. It isn't every body one feels a drawin' to. You know you feel a drawin' in you sometimes to folks, when all the folds of your heart seem gathered up toward them like fine gathers—so close you'd hardly see to stroke 'em down. There's folks I've cut and basted this dozen year, and those I've done for by the fortnight, and even those I've made and finished, that I couldn't set and talk to as I'm going on to you, my dear—not for a steady engagement on their trussows or their mournin' for a year to come; and if you thought it was because you made it a dollar a day when I was askin' only eighty-five, I should be sorry; and you did it such a pretty way, how could I help it? And when I heard how Miss Jabez Smithson run on about you for settin' me up to ask more than your neighbors was able to pay me, I'd have—I'd have asked her one thirty-seven and a half, my dear, if I could have got it.

Stand a mite this way, if you will, my dear, nigher to the glass. There! Will you have the walnut silk cut bias for the shirr?

I cut one on the square for Miss Colonel Adams's navy blue repellant. I'll pin it up a scrap, and let you see it for yourself—so!

You see, my dear, he was my cousin, and he come to our house the winter mother was failin'—when we lived down East in Franklin—to help do for us, father being dead and the boys gone. There was two boys, Ned and 'Li'kim. Ned was the one that died, I never did know what of. Our old doctor said he had wind in his brain. My little brother 'Li'kim—there! I needn't keep you standin' any longer in the blazin' light—I always said that 'Li'kim meant well, my dear, and I always, always will, and I'd rather not talk about it just now; but he got into bad company, poor little chap! and after father died he—ran—away. One night I come home from the sewin' circle, and I found his common close and his little skates and things he'd left in a heap, and a little note atop to mother. And mother she just threw up her arms and ran to meet me, screechin' through the entry; and, my dear, it left her ravin' wild from that hour till she died. For she'd had a fever, and been a scrap weakly in her head since father's funeral.

But that doesn't matter now, only it will explain some things to you, and how my cousin Peter Doggett come to live with us. And that doesn't matter, only that when I got through with that job, I didn't want him for a husband, nor no man else. The ways they have with their boots, my dear, and the smell of blacking, I don't like; and the pipes, and laying them against your clean mantel-piece after you have dusted, and the bein' so particular about the pudden sauce when you're wore with watching sick folks all the night, and the sitting still and seeing you bring kindlen and draw water, and the getting used to you, my dear, and snapping of you up. And then the way of speaking to your mother!

My dear, when it all began, I was that fond of Peter Doggett, I'd have carried kindlen, or bore with pipes, or fussed with pudden sauces, or run my feet off for him to all eternity, and thought myself well off. And when it all was over, I wouldn't have lifted a winker, much less an eyelash, for him, come what might. For when we come to set down day by day and meal by meal and worry by worry together, then all the temper and all the selfishness and all the meanness there was in us come up. And I don't know what he thought of mine, my dear. Temper enough, the Lord knows, but I *couldn't* have snapped him up, my dear, as he did me; and if I'd spoke to his mother as he spoke one afternoon to mine—she very troublesome in the head that day, poor old lady, and requirin' all the patient love of son and daughter both to keep her strong and still—if I had, I'd have looked to be