

out alloy. From 1865 till 1873 the South shared in the wave of unprecedented prosperity which swept over the Union. It had suffered more from the war than the North, and consequently its prosperity was not quite so great: the dark and disgraceful rule of the carpetbaggers also retarded the return of prosperity. But despite all this the Southern people prospered, and anyone looking over the condition of the Southern States twenty years ago would have been justified in predicting that before the century should close, the prosperity of the South would be completely restored, her people free from debt, and the race problem solved by the common happiness and prosperity of both races. How comes it, then, that before the last decade of the century is well entered upon we find this prosperity vanished? Instead of being free from debt, the people, white and black, are staggering under a burden of indebtedness they are utterly unable to bear. Instead of good prices the products of their farms will barely pay the cost of production. Instead of good wages and steady employment, laborers can hardly get a bare subsistence in return for their labor, while, except in the busy farming seasons, unwillingly idle men are the rule rather than the exception.

I believe there is an explanation for all this, and one explanation only. In 1873 the United States contracted the currency. By direct and open legislation such as the resumption act, and by secret and surreptitious legislation such as the demonetization of silver by a tricky juggling with words, the circulating medium of the nation suffered a tremendous reduction. The result was what might have been anticipated and what was doubtless intended by those who engineered it. As the currency was contracted, prices and wages fell, until it took twice the

quantity of farm produce and twice as many days labor to pay the interest on the farmers' and laborers' mortgages. In the South the contraction of the currency and the resultant fall in prices was felt with especially crushing force. The planters found that the entire product of their farms would barely pay the interest on the money they had borrowed. All hope of paying the principal was gone. Unable any longer to pay for men they had to discharge their hired help, who were thrown into the towns and villages with the inevitable result of lowering the wages there. The negroes and poorer whites who had bought and partly paid for little farms were also caught in the maelstrom; their crops would no longer pay the interest on the unpaid portion of the price their farms. It was hopeless for them to look for days work, for already there were more men than there were jobs. The occurrence of the contraction of the currency and the beginning of the industrial ruin of the South at the same time is not a coincidence merely; the two facts are of the nature of cause and effect. It was contraction of the currency that arrested the returning prosperity of the South, that stilled the song of labor in its fields, and that causes the negro to pause and wonder whether, after all, it had not been better for him to have remained a slave.

If the Southern farmers would turn their attention to mixed farming, I have heard it said, they would overcome their difficulties. What I have seen leads me to doubt it. In North Carolina they have tried it, and without any improvement of their condition. I asked some of them why they did not raise more cattle, pointing out that besides the profit on the cattle they would be saved a heavy outlay for fertilizers. I was told that cattle raising did not pay: that beef