LIVING WITHOUT OUR IMPORTS

(Continued from page 197.)

makers after the war. It has been reported that the Standard Oil Company, which produces many of the basic products, is contemplating the erection of a large chemical and dye plant. Mr. I. F. Stone, President of the National Aniline and Chemical Company, said recently that his company stood ready to invest more than one million dollars immediately, and be ready to supply customers within six months' time if the Government would guarantee sufficient protection to the industry. He says that his plant is ready to supply the general line of dyes for the textile mills at prices somewhat higher than formerly because of the increased cost due to using domestic raw materials.

We have been relying upon Europe for antimony, a low grade metal used in the manufacture of type metal. As was recently pointed out by Secretary Lane, it can easily be extracted from many low grade ores, which we have in great quantities in at least seven States, and there is no reason why we should not make this extraction and be independent of other countries both as to supply and prices. Similar conditions hold in the case of arsenic, and it is only within ten years that we have freed ourselves from Sicily's monopolistic control of the sulphur supply.

The National Association of Finishers of Cotton Fabrics appointed a committee a few days after the war started to learn what could be done toward producing dyes in this country. It is generally admitted that we have the raw products here, if we consider coal tar and the benzoate derived from it, which is the real basis, as the raw product. Many of our leading chemists believe that, if our manufacturers once take up the question of competing seriously with German-made dyes and other coal tar products, chemicals and drugs, the advantage of the cheap foreign labor can be overcome through more efficient management and a greater abundance of raw materials.

Domestic textile mills should prosper from the present situation. The only serious difficulty confronting them is the scarcity of dye stuffs, and this I believe will not prove lasting, for American manufacturers will not sit idle and wait until Germany can again supply us. We have our own cotton. Our domestic supply of wool can be supplemented by imports from South America and Oceanica. Some raw silk can be secured from France, while large amounts are available in Japan and China. The textile mills of Europe have long been successful competitors and have been able to undersell the domestic mills both here and in foreign markets. This condition is more than likely to be remedied, and a long period of prosperity is bound to result.

In linens, laces and embroideries the situation is somewhat more difficult. We have been almost entirely dependent upon Europe for both our raw and finished products. Recently, however, a Canadian agricultural implement company succeeded in inventing a machine for pulling flax from the ground, thus enabling us to accomplish by machinery what Russia has done by hand. We should soon be in a position to compete with Europe in the raising of flax, and there is no complaint concerning the quality of the flax which we can produce. Our direct labor costs have been too high. To some extent we may be able to substitute cottons and linen mixtures for the higher priced European goods.

The war has stimulated the hosiery and underwear industries, in which America is supreme. Large export orders have been received by a number of mills, and it seems likely that the little competition which we have had from Europe in our domestic markets is a thing of the past.

The United States has been importing cabinet woods in large quantities from England, where they have been shipped from Central and South America and other countries to be dyed and partially finished. Manufacturers of musical instruments are, however, finding very satisfactory substitutes here for many of the woods used in making piano and organ cases, and other cabinets. For example, red gum, of which we have large quantities, is being used instead of Circassian walnut. Other domestic woods can be utilized in their natural colors or dyed with American dyes.

Hides and leather are imported into the United States in large amounts. So are leather manufactures. While it is true that our American tanneries are in a serious condition at the present time owing to the lack of materials with which to work, the condition is not likely to continue. Instead
of coming from Europe, hides and skins will be imported in an unfinished state from producing countries rather than in the finished state indirectly from these countries through Europe. The demand for beef to feed the armies will induce a resumption of activity in South America. Large stocks of hides are now accumulating in some of the foreign shipping centers, particularly in Latin America, and stocks are beginning to pile up in the domestic market owing to the continued inactivity of the tanneries. With supplies of the raw material fairly liberal, it is not likely that the heavier grades of leather will advance materially in price. Fifty per cent. of our calf-skin supply is now cut off, coming as it does from Russia, Germany and France. Skins from China and India—the latter the largest market for supplies in the world—can be secured just as soon as our bankers make arrangements to finance the shipments which have been handled heretofore with London exchange. We can reasonably expect that this will soon take place under our new banking law, and when it does, the domestic tanneries should profit.

During 1913, the United States imported seven million dollars' worth of leather gloves, mostly for women. Our glove industry will not need to meet this competition this year, and an expansion is probable. The fine glacé goods from Europe probably cannot be made in this country because of the absence of skilled workmen. The scarcity of the finer grades of kid gloves, together with the strike among American glove cutters, will have a strong tendency to cause the substitution of silk gloves, in the manufacture of which America stands supreme.

In food stuffs of almost every kind, we have been offenders against American industry. Instead of growing sugar beets occasionally in order to loosen the soil, we buy dynamite and jar it loose. The Germans plant beets, benefit the soil, and make a large per cent. of all the sugar produced, but not so with us. We must have cane sugar and go to Cuba for the cane. The dyed French peas are already under the pure food ban, because the sulphate of copper used to color them is a deadly poison. Why should they be preferred to ours? In the making of dairy products we are infants, yet we gave the world the milk and cream separator. The cheeses of Herkimer County and New York State are made in plants much more sanitary than those of Europe. We have not been successful imitators of the imported grades, but the quality of our own product is high. The protein and heat caloric content of American cheese is greater than that of beef—a fact which comparatively few housewives are aware of, and which, if better known, might lead to more frequent use of this cheese in our home menus.

For years we exported cotton seed oil to Italy only to buy it back refined and labeled "olive." We paid the freight both ways, paid for a Belgian bottle and a German label, and lost the profit in refining. American cotton seed oil is used extensively in the manufacture of soaps and cooking oils. But Europe has taught us how to use it and has furnished us with much of the product. It has been in disrepute in our markets solely because it was sold as olive oil for so many years.

European lentils, perhaps the most nourishing and oldest of foods, have not been successfully produced in this country. Our Southern coalfield or "cow" peas, of which we have an abundance, are nearly as nutritious and very cheap. The pearl onions from Germany are a luxury, but none are superior to our own "Texas Bermudas." The Strangenspargel (asparagus) from Germany finds a ready substitute in the California white or Long Island green products. The Southdown mutton from England is no better than our own, when raised with equal care. Red German sauerkraut is largely an American product, being manufactured here successfully. Servian prunes are better than the Californian product only because the domestic article is bleached with sulphur. The Servian product comes unbleached.

These are only a few of the many things which we have been importing from the war zone and which can be got in America or for which a satisfactory domestic substitute can be found.

But we must not forget that in the long run it is quality that wins. "Made in America" will be a conquering trademark if American goods are the best that can be got at the price. The law of the survival of the fittest will continue to operate.

Editor's Note: Additional weight is lent to the foregoing authoritative article by the fact that the School of Commerce has been appointed by the Government to investigate and report on this important subject.